intersections

Winter 2009
intersections
# TABLE OF CONTENTS • PART 1

The Role of Law in Othering Moroccan Immigrants and Preventing Their Integration into Host Societies: The Contradictions of Immigration Law and Policy in the Netherlands and Spain  
*By Mina Barahimi – University of Washington, Seattle*  
1

Resisting the National Narrative: Charisma and the Venezuelan Cooperative Movement Within the Context of the Bolivarian Revolution  
*By Laura Adrienne Brady – University of Washington, Seattle*  
27

Justice Denied: Impunity During and After the Salvadoran Civil War  
*By Liam McGivern – University of Washington, Bothell*  
169

Examination of US Cities as Forces in Environmental Policy  
*By Phaedra W. Boyle – University of Washington, Seattle*  
181

Moving Beyond Borders: The Creation of Nomadic Space Through Travel  
*By Erin Bestrom – University of Washington, Seattle*  
199

Marriage in Black and White: Women’s Support for Law Against Interracial Marriage, 1972-2000  
*By Madeline Baars – University of Washington, Seattle*  
219

Speaking “out”: Ideologies, identities, and individuals in coming out stories  
*By Alex Kim – University of Washington, Seattle*  
239

The Similarities of Difference: A Comparative Analysis of the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin  
*By Lisa Mahlum – University of Washington, Seattle*  
279

Child Soldiers in Chad: A Policy Window for Change  
*By Mary Jonasen – University of Washington, Bothell*  
309

ABSTRACT

A study of how clashing cultures and religion, the principle of human rights, and the politics of citizenship, identity, and place-making define the boundaries that delineate notions of legality and illegality. This comparative analysis of the immigration laws and policies of Spain and the Netherlands reveals that in spite of historical, social and political disparities between the two countries, which might indicate differences in the way the law treats the immigrant population, both Spanish and Dutch law construct and reconstruct immigrant difference and marginality and thereby reproduce inequalities even as they purport to facilitate the integration of immigrants. At the heart of this issue is the contradiction between the economic incentive for the host governments to maintain a ready source of cheap labor and their need to appease Dutch and Spanish societies’ widespread fear of an established, permanent immigrant settlement. The central paradox is that, in order to achieve these dueling goals, Dutch and Spanish immigration law and public policy ultimately protect those who are already citizens.


© 2009 intersections, Mina Barahimi. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of intersections and the author
The Role of Law in Othering Moroccan Immigrants and Preventing Their Integration into Host Societies:
The Contradictions of Immigration Law and Policy in the Netherlands and Spain

By Mina Barahimi
University of Washington, Seattle

Introduction

Both Spain and the Netherlands have experienced a recent, large-scale immigration of Moroccans seeking to escape the economic and social malaise of their home country. Although the Moroccan economy has been improving overall, it has been unable to keep up with recent growth in population, a trend that will likely continue for some time. Worldwide economic crises and globalization have resulted in soaring unemployment, especially for young people. Among Moroccan youth, the unemployment rate is 16 percent. This is particularly problematic given that that 36 percent of Morocco’s population is between the ages of 15 and 34. These circumstances have prompted many young Moroccans to seek job opportunities outside their country.

Spain's situation—its proximity to Morocco, and its reputation as a “brand-new country of mass immigration” within the European context—contrasts with that of the Netherlands, which has for decades been characterized as a “culturally pluralist” society receptive to immigration. In the Netherlands, however, this openness was to change after the murder of a prominent Dutch filmmaker by a

---

1 My research was made possible in part through the financial support of the Mary Gates Endowment, and the kind support and advice of Michael McCann, Director of the Law, Societies, and Justice Program at the University of Washington, and Clarke K. Speed, Lecturer, University of Washington Honors Program and the Department of African Studies.
4 Sadiqi and Ennaji, 62.
6 Ibid.
7 According to the ministry responsible for Moroccans residing in Europe, in 1992, 77.5 percent of Moroccans migrated Europe, a figure which does not include illegal migrants (Sadiqui and Ennaji).
Moroccan man. Consequently, Moroccan immigrants in both countries have been a source and a target of media fodder, popular fear, and governmental concern. Today, newspaper headlines warn the masses of “Europe’s angry young Muslims” and portray the anger and resentment of the host societies towards these outsiders over recent violence that has changed the social disposition of their communities.

It is against this backdrop that I analyze the struggle that young male Moroccan immigrants face in navigating the legal labyrinths erected by the governments of Spain and the Netherlands. I argue here that both countries enact immigration laws that purposely hinder the integration of this demographic into their societies. Despite their stated effort to integrate Moroccans immigrants, Dutch and Spanish immigration law and policy have paradoxically served to create a greater level of social, political and economic stratification and segregation in Dutch and Spanish society. Consequently Moroccan immigrants remain trapped in a vicious cycle of social and political exclusion for generations.

Initially, Dutch and Spanish immigration law and policy developed with divergent stated intentions. From the 1960s to the 1990s, Dutch immigration policy emphasized multiculturalism, which purported the support of an equal standing among cohesive, distinct ethnicities. Only recently has the Netherlands promoted an integrationist agenda. Conversely, the official Spanish integrationist policy has been consistent since its inception in 1985. In spite of these differences, immigration law and policy in both countries consistently serves to Other the Moroccan immigrant demographic, distancing them from any notion of sameness or belonging and thereby relegating them to the status of non-citizens. Rather than facilitating their integration, the law paradoxically reproduces the inequalities that prevent immigrants from gaining recognition as citizens of their host society.

---

12 While Moroccan immigration is a world-wide phenomenon, it is the most diffuse throughout Europe, following Turkish migration (Sadiqi and Ennaji).
13 In both countries, however, there was an (incorrect) assumption by both government officials and the immigrants themselves that the immigrants would eventually return to their country of origin. This prompted the subsequent social backlash in both host countries, which will be elaborated on below.
14 Calavita, Immigrants at the margins, 117. Calavita states that “Marginalized work, inadequate healthcare, and substandard housing expose immigrants’ exclusion and amplify their Otherness.”
Moreover, there is a notable distinction to be made between the way the law treats immigrants from the developed and developing regions of the world. In essence, immigration law “sort[s] people according to their suitability for inclusion in the national territory”\textsuperscript{15} based on factors such as age, economic activity and qualifications for work. What makes this especially problematic for Moroccan immigrants is that their attributes make them suitable for menial jobs (i.e. jobs that members of those host societies refuse to do) at wages comparably lower than those received by local workers.\textsuperscript{16} In fact, since the 1980s, the average Moroccan immigrant has been characteristically young (60 percent are less than 25 years old), male, single, poor and unemployed.\textsuperscript{17}

Because Moroccan immigrants tend to work “in sectors where irregular contracts and the underground economy are the norm,”\textsuperscript{18} even those who manage to obtain legal status have a difficult time maintaining it. The legalization process is purposely rife with obstacles\textsuperscript{19} which ensure that the quality of immigrant Otherness remains ingrained in the public perception, and contributes to their marginality. In many ways then, “there is no clear dichotomy between the illegal and temporarily legal populations.”\textsuperscript{20} Not only do their jobs relegate them to the periphery of their host societies, but their contingent and often illusory legal status reinforces the perception that these immigrants have no tangible ties to society.

While immigration to Europe has traditionally been characterized as a source of cheap labor, more recently it has been associated as a security risk, especially when those immigrants have been from developing countries.\textsuperscript{21} The fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Europe and the Maghreb\textsuperscript{22} both increased migration and prompted these concerns in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{23} More recently, the terrorist attacks in New York City\textsuperscript{24} on September 11, 2001,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 12.
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 68.
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Sadiqi and Ennaji, 63.
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Calavita, \textit{Immigrants at the margins}, 39.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Ibid. “Those who are legalized…are given only temporary legal status and have to demonstrate continued formal employment and navigate a maze of government bureaucracies to renew their permits” (5).
  \item \textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 101.
  \item \textsuperscript{21}Hein de Haas, “Morocco: From Emigration Country to Africa’s Migration Passage to Europe,” Migration Policy Institute, October 2005, \url{http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=339}, (accessed January 3, 2008).
  \item \textsuperscript{22}An Arabic term meaning “place of sunset” or “west”. In common use \textit{Maghreb} refers to the NW African nations of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.
  \item \textsuperscript{23}Sadiqi and Ennaji, 63.
  \item \textsuperscript{24}Ambrose Evan-Pritchard writes that “The Dutch intelligence service, AIVD, has warned that the al-Qa’eda network is ‘stealthily taking root in Dutch society’ by preying on disaffected Muslim youth with
\end{itemize}
and those on the commuter trains in Madrid in March 2004, have compounded these societies’ fear of outsiders, in particular Moroccans—several of whom were responsible for the latter attacks. Consequently, Moroccans are today associated with Islamic fundamentalism and “negative stereotypes of dishonesty, untrustworthiness, and criminality.”

Recent violence between Moroccan immigrants and locals has only fueled this negative perception and reinforced the government’s tough stance on immigration. Moroccans who leave their home country in search of a better quality of life in a developed Europe have only found that their outsider status is created and perpetuated by these laws, which construct and reconstruct their difference as black, Muslim Others. As a result, social and political integration remains elusive generation after generation for Moroccan immigrants. In spite of these obstacles, the rate at which Moroccans have been migrating has never stopped increasing.

The following questions guide my research. First, how does the law construct and protect identity in a society? How does it not do this? Does it construct and protect the identity of non-citizens? Should the law seek to protect the identity of non-citizens? How are immigrants expected to negotiate a space within their host society if the law does not protect their identity? Additionally, law is often a reflection of the tensions within society, even though it is supposed to triumph over them. What does it say about the law if it is not carrying out its intended role to provide equal protection? Lastly, why do Moroccan immigrants continue to come to these countries in large numbers in the face of these inherent obstacles?

This comparative study seeks to shed some light on the contradictory nature of the law. To answer these questions, I draw upon newspaper accounts that document the conflict between Moroccan immigrants and citizens of Dutch and Spanish society. I am also using the work of a number of Dutch, Spanish and Moroccan authors and human rights organizations that detail the ways in which the law has criminalized Moroccan immigrants and racialized the larger issue of immigration policy.

25 Rodríguez-Melguizo and King, 63.
26 Sadiqi and Ennaji, 62.
27 Law here is defined as the set of regulations which govern who has power (i.e. access to rule and resources) within a system, and perhaps more importantly, who does not. Often, the law is a reflection of the dominant culture and institutions of a distinct group that comprise a society.
Spain: A Purported Integrationist Policy Leads Paradoxically to a Segregationist Society

The Strait of Gibraltar separates Morocco from the Spanish coast by a mere nine miles, making Spain the main entrance to Europe for Africans attempting to cross over, and Morocco the “single most important country of origin” for immigrants trying to make their way to Spain. However, no formal policy on immigration or legislation concerning the treatment of foreign residents existed in Spain until 1985, when a law known popularly as ley extranjería, or “Foreigners’ Law,” was adopted. The measures of this aptly named law reflect society’s explicit averseness toward both immigrants and immigrants’ status as outsiders. One of the law’s main objectives was “to guarantee acceptable working conditions for foreigners, as well as to assist them to integrate, avoiding illegality and marginalization.”

While the policy’s stated intention is integrationist, recent events have shown that it is not based on a definition of social integration which encourages:

the indigenous population and a minority group settled in the same place [to] gradually intermingle and move towards equality on the socio-economic, cultural and political levels.

On the contrary, Spanish immigration policy is more consistent with the model of differential exclusion. According to this model, migrants are provided access to and participation in certain sectors of society, such as the labor market, but are barred from areas such as welfare and education systems, citizenship and the political arena. Furthermore, their exclusion is reinforced by legal mechanisms, which further entrenches their status as Others and makes it more difficult to overcome. Strict naturalization laws and the stark differences between the rights bestowed upon citizens, as opposed to non-citizens, are just two examples of this exclusion. Informal practices, such as discrimination and racism, are bred in Spanish society as these legal mechanisms come to shape daily interactions, and thereby further contribute to migrant exclusion.

28 Calavita, Immigrants at the margins, 137.
29 In the 1970s, when the economic levels of the two countries were the same, Moroccans did not emigrate to Spain. However, poverty and unemployment prompted an exodus in the next decade (Abend and Pingree [see note 36]).
32 Ibid., 74.
These marginalizing factors tend to define some immigrant groups more adversely than others, as evidenced by the law’s disparate treatment of different groups of immigrants depending on their social and economic utility within Spanish society. Based on this criterion for desirability, immigrants fall into two basic categories: ‘elite’ and ‘marginal.’ The ‘elite’ category consists of Europeans, Americans, and a smaller percentage of Latin Americans who have high levels of qualification. They tend to be older than the ‘marginal’ immigrants (i.e. the undesirable migrants), who are mainly from less developed countries. Moroccans fall into this latter category, which is made up of immigrants whose primary motive for immigrating is to find employment and better the quality of their lives. They also happen to be young; the average age of a Moroccan immigrant is 28.5 years old and an overwhelming 75 percent of Moroccan immigrants are between the ages of 20 and 39 years, which makes them suitable for hard labor. Furthermore, a few years ago, Spain adopted a policy whereby all apprehended minor immigrants are permitted to stay in the country. As a result, the number of Moroccan immigrant minors in Spain has increased dramatically.

Moreover, because they lack many qualifications needed for skilled work, Moroccan immigrants occupy positions “at the very bottom of the labor hierarchy,” such as jobs in construction, agriculture, industry and personal services that Spanish citizens don’t want. These qualities only perpetuate their already marginal status within their host society, as does the government’s stance that “the admission of migrants is only a temporary phenomenon.” This is another key aspect of the differential exclusion model. The need for unskilled labor has thus opened up the contradictions in immigration law and policy. By placing restrictions on residence rights and preventing family reunion, the law prevents immigrants from establishing ties with society. The fleeting nature of their existence and their provisional membership in Spanish society contribute to the quality of their Otherness. Over time, the perception of immigrants as

---

13 Apap, 173.
14 Sadiqi and Ennaji, 64.
15 The agreement between the two countries was that all apprehended adult immigrants would be returned to Morocco within 24 hours, but Spanish law requires that the parents of minors be located first before they are sent back. However, oftentimes, parents try to evade authorities so that they are not located and their children can remain in Spain. Interestingly, many Moroccan parents will call the absorption centers in Spain to make sure their children arrived safely (Socolovsky).
17 Rodriguez-Melguizo and King, 73.
transients, which is created by these laws, becomes deeply ingrained into the fabric of this host society.

What’s notable is that in a fundamental sense, the law constructs legality and, conversely, the concept of illegality. Along this line of thinking, if the boundary-making tenets of the law did not exist, neither would the notion of “outlaws,” or in this case, “illegal” immigrants. This is aptly illustrated by a study of pre-1985 Moroccan immigrants (i.e. before the inception of a formal Spanish immigration policy), which found that, compared to those who came later, they were better integrated into Spanish society, more likely to be self-employed, and often had their families with them. Due to this “legislative void,” immigrants existed in a “benign legal limbo” where they were able to live in their host society “without a consciousness of being illegal” or feeling like they somehow existed outside the Spanish social realm. Interestingly enough, Moroccans’ high level of illegality (and thus their tendency to have to work in the underground economy) is one of the main reasons why this group of migrants, more than any other, experiences social exclusion.

While there are less ‘marginal’ immigrants than ‘elite’ ones (only taking into account legally situated immigrants), new data indicates ‘elite’ immigration in Spain is declining while ‘marginal’ immigration is increasing at a very rapid rate. This trend can be traced from 1980, when about 66 percent of foreign residents in Spain were Western Europeans and North Americans, often looking for a place to retire. By the 1990s, this group had fallen to a little over 50 percent, with the other half consisting of developing world migrants seeking work. The figures used to track what the Spanish government considers this unsavory trend don’t even take into account the burgeoning number of illegal immigrants, whose marginality is even more pronounced. The permanent settlement of ‘marginal’ immigrants, both legal and illegal, is considered a threat to the host society, a perception which the government justifies by pointing to the social costs they claim will accrue as a result of encouraging immigrants to stay. These costs include the demand on social services and the danger of the emergence of what they deem the ‘underclass.’

39 Calavita, Immigrants at the margins, 27.
40 Ibid., 27.
41 Rodriguez-Melguizo and King, 63.
42 Apap, 190.
43 Calavita, Immigrants at the margins, 27.
The Foreigners’ Law seemingly targeted non-EU immigrants and was intended to stave off these “undesirables,” as is indicated by measures taken to tighten Spanish border controls and strengthen the powers of the police to deal with illegal immigrants already in the country. In fact, the law required these ‘marginal’ migrants to overcome a number of administrative hurdles, such as providing authorities with a contract from an employer, proof of earnings and a passport from their country of origin, before being granted an official work permit and a temporary residence permit. However, fulfilling all these requirements often takes years, which means that in the meantime, large numbers of migrants remain in an illegal state, working in the informal economy. During both the 1985 and 1991 regularizations, even though Moroccans represented the largest proportion of illegal immigrants who were granted amnesty, the influx of illegal Moroccan immigrants never ceased. The dangerous journey across the Strait of Gibraltar has also apparently not been a deterrent for Moroccans looking to escape economic hardship; bodies continue to wash up on the Spanish shore every week.

Furthermore, while the flow of illegal Moroccan immigration continues at an increasing rate, many (temporarily) legal migrants are also forced to assume a clandestine lifestyle. Oftentimes, Spanish immigration law systematically "irregularizes people by making it all but impossible to retain legal status over time." For example, the law stipulates that whenever an immigrant changes his job, he must re-apply for both a residence and work permit. The contradiction therein is that if a ‘legal’ migrant becomes unemployed, he loses his resident’s status and must thus leave the country. Therefore there is more incentive for immigrants (and their employers) to participate in the underground economy and go undocumented, rather than to attempt to acquire a legality that is purposely precarious. These “lapses into illegality,” which are built into Spanish law.

---

44 Rodriguez-Melguizo and King, 58.
45 Ibid. The ley conciencia granted police the power to stop migrants on the street and demand documents, which gave a lot of discretion to officers. Because they were easy to differentiate from most people, the implication is that Moroccans and black Africans were the main targets of the law.
46 Rodriguez-Melguizo and King, 64.
47 Ibid. In 1985, out of 58,000 illegal immigrants to be legalized, 18.1 percent were Moroccan. In 1991, Moroccans accounted for an overwhelming 44.5 percent of the total. The latter regularization significantly changed the demographic and social composition of the migrant population in Spain to more accurately reflect the young male Moroccan presence in the country.
49 Calavita, “Immigration, Law, and Marginalization”, 5.
immigration law,\textsuperscript{50} make the boundary between a legal status and an illegal status a blurry one.

The Foreigners’ Law was followed in January 2000 with another piece of legislation titled “Law on the Rights and Liberties of Foreigners in Spain and Their Social Integration,”\textsuperscript{51} and then again by LO 8/2000, also known as the “Counter-Reformation,”\textsuperscript{52} so named because it constituted a conservative backlash against the more liberal LO 4/2000 law that expanded the rights of immigrants and their access to social services and education. Along with a new legalization program, LO 4/2000 provided the right to public education to all immigrant children (regardless of their legal status), the right to access the national health care system, public housing services and social security protections.\textsuperscript{53} It was passed amidst fierce opposition from Prime Minister Aznar’s center-right government, which repealed many of its most generous provisions only months later with LO 8/2000.

Aznar’s party won the national elections and came to power on a wave of popular resentment that occurred following the violent events in El Ejido,\textsuperscript{54} which Aznar claimed transpired because the lax nature of LO 4/2000 “implicitly encourage[ed] immigration.”\textsuperscript{55} LO 8/2000 currently denies illegal immigrants the rights of assembly, collective bargaining, striking, and joining labor unions. It also eliminates most of their rights to social services. In addition, in a blatant shift toward a more “policing orientation”\textsuperscript{56} and the criminalization of immigration itself, the law has provided the Department of Interior with more responsibility for immigration issues.

In spite of the differences between LO 4/2000 and LO 8/2000, both retained integration as the stated intention. Paradoxically however, the effect of LO 8/2000 has been essentially to reduce the rights of both legal and illegal immigrants.\textsuperscript{57} In addition, Spanish immigration policy has increasingly adopted a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} This law is also known as LO 4/2000 (Calavita, \textit{Immigrants at the margins}).
  \item \textsuperscript{52} Calavita, \textit{Immigrants at the margins}, 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} El Ejido is a small town in Andalusia, Spain’s southernmost province. In February 2000, several thousand local men and women went on a four-day rampage, destroying businesses owned by Moroccans. The violence erupted at the funeral of a 26 year-old Spanish woman who had been murdered by a Moroccan. Her death had been preceded two weeks earlier by the murder of two Spanish farmers, also at the hands of a Moroccan (Webster - see note 141).
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Calavita, \textit{Immigrants at the margins}, 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 34.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 34.
\end{itemize}
The role of law in othering Moroccan immigrants

police function that endeavors more to control inflows than it does to ensure the welfare of immigrants who already reside there. It has become increasingly evident that the Spanish government’s attempt at a proper integration policy has not only been ineffective, but it has gone so far as to promote the marginalization of migrants. This exclusion of developing world immigrants is so pervasive that it is socially and culturally entrenched in Spanish society.

The distinction between the ‘marginal’ and ‘elite’ immigrants discussed earlier is portrayed by popular parlance, in which:

a distinction is made between ‘extranjeros’ [foreigners] and ‘inmigrantes’ [immigrants], with the latter reserved for people who come from less developed countries seeking work.

This popular attitude towards immigrants is reflected in survey results from the mid-nineties, which indicate a lack of faith on the part of Spanish society in the ability of Black Africans to effectively integrate. According to a 1994 survey conducted by the Centro de Investigaciones sobre la Realidad Social (CIRES), the perception of Spanish citizens regarding North Africans and Black Africans is that “integration would be problematic for the Africans…due basically to linguistic and cultural factors.” What this indicates is that Spanish society’s perception of integration is an assimilationist one which demands that migrants forgo their “distinctive linguistic, religious and other socio-cultural characteristics” in order to conform to those of the host population.

Therein lies the contradiction that these policies pose. The laws not only create but foster an atmosphere of exclusion so that Moroccan immigrants are never made to feel like citizens of their host society. As a result, they tend to cling to their own traditions and fraternize in their own Muslim circles and communities. This then validates the claims of Spanish society that the Moroccan immigrants are not making an effort to integrate themselves, even though Spanish society claims that this is what these laws strive to accomplish. Thus there is a dual assumption that the Moroccans need to integrate but that they are unwilling to. In a sense then, Spanish society feels justified in assuming its discriminatory stance.

58 Rodriguez-Melguizo and King, 66.
59 Calavita, Immigrants at the margins, 57.
60 This was in contrast to their assessment of Latin American immigrants, whom survey respondents said could integrate easier than Africans, and were thus more accepted (Rodriguez-Melguizo and King).
61 Rodriguez-Melguizo and King, 74.
62 Ibid., 62.
However, the tendency of Moroccan immigrants to keep to their own circles feeds on Spanish society’s deep-rooted negative image of Islam and fears of a “Muslim menace.” The large numbers of young, male Moroccans also contributes to these apprehensions. In 2007, the imam of Madrid’s largest mosque described the heavy presence of African Muslims as a “time bomb.” His characterization was upsetting to many native Spanish people because it seemingly alluded to the bombing of the commuter trains that occurred in 2004, allegedly by young Moroccans who touted Al Qaeda’s ideology. However, he was only affirming the concerns that many Muslim leaders have expressed over Spain’s increasingly stringent immigration policies, which encourage the deportation of the young immigrants. Their belief is that these policies of control will only increase the likelihood of radicalization among young Moroccans, who feel slighted by their host society’s unwillingness to integrate them.

For these reasons, Moroccan immigration is perceived by Spanish society as the least desirable and the most problematic, challenging and ‘threatening’, both for Spanish society in general, and the authorities. In fact, what the Spanish survey data presented by the CIRES strongly indicates is that “there is a significant and worrying level of apprehension and scorn towards illegal migrants without employment and stable housing, and towards Moroccans in particular.”

Ironically, by nature, Spanish immigration policy deprives immigrants of the very things, such as housing and employment, which make them citizens in the eyes of the society. The perverse effect here is to reinforce the perception that this group has no connection to the host society and that it is unwilling to integrate. This thereby justifies the host government’s defensive immigration policies, all as part of a vicious cycle.

What the approach of Spanish immigration policy lacks is a sound consideration of the fact that integration is a process and a constant negotiation between the host society and the immigrants. It is not merely an end. Integration is a result of “a path of…cultural understanding” and requires “tolerance for difference among

---

63 Rodriguez-Melguizo and King, 68.
65 Ibid.
66 Muslim leaders have suggested that Spanish officials should focus their efforts on integrating them into society and helping them find jobs, something which current immigration policies fail to do (Socolovsky).
67 Rodriguez-Melguizo and King, 63.
the native population.\textsuperscript{68} However, according to the Minister of Immigration in 2002, “at most, Spain might be a ‘multi-ethnic’ society—presumably comprised of those who have shed their foreign ‘cultures.’”\textsuperscript{69} The head of the Forum for Social Integration of Immigrants has gone so far as to publicly characterize multiculturalism as “unacceptable,” a “gangrene”\textsuperscript{70} that plagues Spanish society, as if multiculturalism will somehow cause its decay. What this suggests is unwillingness on the part of government officials to create laws which protect the identity of outsiders, perhaps out of a fear that such laws, which encourage the preservation of national culture and language, would change the social disposition of their communities. This is the reality that officials in the Netherlands are now faced with in their society; after three decades of having in place an immigration policy that emphasized multiculturalism, the Dutch government is scrambling to deal with the paradoxically divisive effect the policy has had on its society.

The Netherlands: A Policy of Multiculturalism Leads to Social and Political Backlash

For many groups of immigrants, the lure of the Netherlands has long been the country’s reputation for tolerance and acceptance of people based in difference. Thus, the reception of Dutch society to the presence of Moroccan migrants in their country was markedly different from that of Spanish society—at least initially. Indeed, for decades the Netherlands has been perceived as “a glowing example of multi-ethnic tolerance, making huge efforts to make immigrants feel at home.”\textsuperscript{71} In the 1960s, the government imported tens of thousands of young males from Islamic countries to work temporarily in Holland’s burgeoning industries. Among these were migrants from the Rif Mountains of Morocco, most of who were illiterate and had a very basic understanding of spoken Dutch.\textsuperscript{72}

Although the demand for this unskilled labor, and thus the need for more migrants, declined in the 1980s and 1990s, this surplus of “guest workers” did not return to Morocco\textsuperscript{73} due to poor labor market conditions in that source

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{68} Calavita, \textit{Immigrants at the margin}, 77.
\bibitem{69} Ibid., 95. Emphasis added.
\bibitem{70} Ibid., 77.
\bibitem{71} Evans-Pritchard.
\end{thebibliography}
country and to the Netherlands' relatively lax immigration policy. As part of the Dutch government’s adherence to a multicultural tradition, the migrants were not only permitted to stay but were also encouraged to maintain their linguistic and cultural identities.\(^{74}\) Furthermore, they were provided with extensive social benefits and the opportunity to have their family in Morocco come up and reunite with them.\(^{75}\) As a result, Moroccan immigration to the Netherlands increased dramatically during that period of time and “seemed to run out of control.”\(^{76}\) This brought forth new concerns on the part of the government regarding the place of immigrants and their offspring within Dutch society.\(^{77}\) The unease stemmed from the fact that functioning of the Netherlands as a highly developed welfare state “depends on a…system of ‘pluralistic integration,’”\(^{78}\) to which multiculturalism’s segregating effect poses an obstacle. The existence of ethnic minorities, or Others, is completely contrary to the notion of a welfare state, and is in fact considered a threat to it since “permanently marginalized groups are likely to form sources of conflict and tension.”\(^{79}\)

What a system of pluralistic integration emphasizes is a common Dutch culture to which all individuals within the society have access, but it also insists on “sustaining minorities’ efforts to preserve and enhance their integrity.”\(^{80}\) Thus value is attributed to the “ethnic nuclei” of immigrant groups, but their boundaries remain permeable, an approach which acknowledges that “members of most groups identify with their ethnic groups with varying degrees of intensity while also pursuing some aspects of integration into the host society.”\(^{81}\) This becomes more ingrained with each succeeding generation. Thus there’s recognition of the need for a national cultural community, and, in that sense, a notion of solidarity and unification, but it does not undermine the existence of ethnic sub-cultures. According to pluralistic integration, immigrant organizations and their leadership have the potential to play an important role in social and

---


\(^{75}\) de Winter.


\(^{77}\) Ibid. These concerns were initially brought up in a White Paper published by the government in 1983.

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 136: “The Dutch government guarantees every inhabitant a certain level of income, a certain standard of housing, access to health care and has a system of compulsory education for all inhabitants between five and sixteen years of age.”

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 156.


\(^{81}\) Ibid., 173.
political integration. The Dutch government’s implementation of the Minorities Policy in the 1980s attempted to take advantage of this but was unsuccessful due to society’s misperception of the role of these organizations.

In contrast to pluralistic integration, the implementation of the Minorities Policy in the 1980s aptly portrays how inherently isolationist multiculturalism tends to be, despite its intention to increase the participation of immigrants. The creators of the policy “saw the Netherlands as a multi-ethnic society \(^{82}\) with the expression of ethnic differences by immigrants an important part of their social identity, which should be protected.” \(^{83}\) However, this policy was not directed at the immigrant population in general. At this point in time, Dutch government officials were becoming aware that the position and participation of some groups of immigrants in the areas of education, employment and housing were “far weaker” than those of native Dutch people. \(^{84}\) Thus, the Minorities Policy was intended for those immigrant groups who:

\[
\text{do not participate on an equal base in Dutch society and whose low participation tends to be continued over the generations. The general aim of this policy is to enhance the participation in society of these immigrant groups.}^{85}\]

In this sense, the same distinction that is made by Spanish society between ‘marginal’ and ‘elite’ immigrants within its borders is also evident in the Netherlands, where the attitude towards migration from the developed world is positive but, conversely, “at least reserved if not outright negative for migration from the less-developed world.” \(^{86}\) While in neither society were immigrants outright accepted into mainstream society, the distinction between the treatment of developing world immigrants in the two countries is that in Spain, the cultural differences between immigrants and locals were actively discouraged, whereas for a period of time in the Netherlands, they were essentially promoted.

In the spirit of multiculturalism, the Minorities Policy sought to use immigrant organizations and leadership as conduits through which to lower the high unemployment and improve young immigrants’ access to education. In Amsterdam, for example, the local government published a Framework Paper

\(^{82}\) Recall that the Spanish government was completely opposed to a multi-ethnic society.


\(^{85}\) van Amersfoort, 155.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., 136.
on Municipal Minorities Policy in 1989, which argued that migrant organizations should “play a key role in the formation and implementation of minorities policies.” The paper reasoned that these organizations could act as liaisons for groups and communities that are difficult to reach by government and could thus serve to facilitate a better working relationship between these two parties. Furthermore, migrant organizations were to play a more active role in implementing policies by working more closely with mainstream organizations. However, this endeavor ultimately backfired due to native Dutch citizens’ shortsighted view of the role of these organizations in their society. To them, the persistence of Muslim organizations in particular was a testament to the fact that the integration of Moroccan immigrants was not happening. Moroccan immigrants’ affiliation with these organizations suggested to Dutch society that they carried some sort of “cultural baggage from the country of origin.” The Dutch perception that these organizations constituted some sort of “source of cultural continuity” fueled society’s opinion that Moroccans were not making an effort to participate in Dutch society.

Furthermore, the secular Dutch society was becoming increasingly intolerant of religious expression, which exacerbated the situation, creating more tension between them and the Moroccan immigrant minority. The Muslim organizations were seen as a breeding ground for Islamic fundamentalists, and Moroccans’ affiliation with them was viewed by Dutch society with fear. Islam thus became disconnected from the social context in which it was embedded, i.e. as an intermediary between the migrant ‘community’ and the host society. To native Dutch people, it became the defining aspect of Moroccan social identity, something that clearly set them apart from native Dutch citizens. In this way, the Minorities Policy was very divisive and supported flawed assumptions of native Dutch people about the inability and unwillingness of Moroccan immigrants to partake in Dutch society. However, these assumptions failed to account for the fact that “Islamic organizations increasingly perform[ed] duties and services which

88 Ibid., 92.
89 Sunier, 129.
90 Ibid., 129.
92 Sunier, 128.
[went] beyond strictly religious matters,†93 namely those that Dutch society was not providing the immigrants.

In this way, the introduction of the Minorities Policy actually created the perception that immigration was producing social problems. No longer were Moroccans merely a group of non-integrated migrants; instead, they came to be seen as a fifth column in Dutch society.†94 Thus when the objectives of the Minorities Policy were not easily attained, those involved in implementing the policy became convinced that strict regulation of the flow of developing world migrants into the Netherlands was a prerequisite for an effective integration policy.†95 In this sense, Dutch immigration policy developed during the mid-1990s along the same lines that Spain’s did—that is, towards a policy of control. Ironically, the pursuit for more control over migration contradicted with the purported objective of the Minorities Policy “to include the immigrant populations as soon as possible in the social fabric of society.”†96

These control mechanisms included the use of both internal and external regulation. The purpose of external controls was to prevent unwanted, i.e. undesirable, immigrants from entering the country. In Rotterdam, for example, measures were taken to deter more poor immigrants. The city also closed itself off to new asylum seekers for four years starting in 2004.†97 The work permit, which was originally a means to protect the indigenous worker on the labor market, is now used to control migration to the Netherlands.†98 In spite of these external control mechanisms, many immigrants still managed to make their way into the Netherlands, where the government’s strategy was to exclude them from society and the labor market through sanctions against employers, identification obligations and a more selective approach to deciding recipients of welfare benefits.†99 These internal control mechanisms were intended to make illegal residency more challenging but were implemented under the guise of discouraging fraud and tax evasion.†100

†93 Ibid., 129.
†94 Ibid., 137.
†95 van Amersfoort, 157.
†96 Ibid., 165.
†97 Evans-Pritchard.
†98 The use of the work permit as a tool of control is not exclusive to the Netherlands and was also used extensively in Spain to control who was allowed into the country.
†99 van Amersfoort, 164.
†100 Ibid., 164.
Conversely, if immigrants wanted to obtain legal residency, they were made to undergo rigorous and often lengthy examination procedures,\textsuperscript{101} which precluded them from entering the labor market unless they were granted stay by the government. For those who were refused, a small portion returned to their country of origin, but as much as 70 percent disappeared to the peripheries of Dutch society, adding to the number of illegal residents.\textsuperscript{102} Thus, the objective of controlling immigrant flows also had the perverse and paradoxical effect of creating more illegality rather than reducing it, which was the same problem created by the Spanish immigration policy. Moreover, the ineffective control mechanisms resulted in an unanticipated and far more serious problem: the creation of a marginalized subpopulation of nearly one million Muslims in a country with a population of 16 million people.\textsuperscript{103} Thus the effect of thirty years of multiculturalism and the implementation of the Minorities Policy had been essentially to create a group of disaffected and disillusioned Muslims, who lived their lives in “their own parallel society…alienated from the Dutch mainstream.”\textsuperscript{104} Ironically, the formation of groups of ‘ethnic minorities’ was precisely what Dutch society had feared and policymakers had tried to prevent from happening all along.

During the mid to late 1990s, the Dutch government’s doubts regarding multiculturalism’s tangibility and desirability were replaced altogether by a growing aversion to the policy. Society was questioning the definition and purpose of multiculturalism, i.e. “whether it meant there was one society of many cultures, or effectively multiple societies that would ultimately clash.”\textsuperscript{105} The situation became more worrisome as the Dutch population increased. The Muslim subculture was also growing quickly in large cities, with between 70 and 80 percent of Dutch-born members of immigrant families importing their spouse from their home country.\textsuperscript{106} In response, where integration was lacking from previous policies,\textsuperscript{107} it became central at this period of time. In 1994, new legislation replaced the Minorities Policy with integration policy, whereby

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 164.
\item \textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 164.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Baker.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Evans-Pritchard, \textit{UK Daily Telegraph}.
\item \textsuperscript{107} “‘Integration’ was explicitly not chosen as a policy objective, as it was not considered a viable notion for implementing [immigration] policy” (Fennema and Tillie 92).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
integration was redefined as “a process leading to the full and equal participation of individuals and groups in society, for which mutual respect for identity is seen as a necessary condition.”

Andre Krouwel, a political scientist at the Free University in Amsterdam, characterized the new approach to immigration policy in the following way:

No longer is the model that ethnic minorities should basically organize themselves, have separate organizations, cultural organizations, sports organizations, political organization in terms of unions, and all kinds of representational organizations. That is no longer the case. They now have to participate in the Dutch mainstream organizations.

In Amsterdam, for example, the policy focus shifted abruptly away from migrant organizations and focused more on individuals, as a result of a fear that “an inward-looking attitude” on the part of these organizations would be detrimental to the “emancipation process.” This was reflected in a new policy paper, titled De Kracht van een Diverse Stad (‘The Strength of a Diverse City’), which was meant to replace the outdated Minorities Policy paper published ten years earlier.

Furthermore, the integration policy emphasized the need for more participation in Dutch society by immigrants, implying that some identification with and commitment to Dutch society was expected from newcomers. In stark contrast to earlier Dutch immigration policies, new ones were “phrased in such a way as if a preservation of one’s culture would inhibit a full-fledged participation in the central institutions of society.”

The ultimate demise of multiculturalism, accompanied by the return of the citizen, came about as a result of the rise in 2001 of the populist Pim Fortuyn, who rigorously defended the Dutch identity against what he characterized as the “Islamification of Dutch culture.” Fortuyn deemed Islam a “backwards religion” and blamed it for the deterioration of the Dutch quality of life. His political success was attributed to his ability to voice the resentment and fear of native Dutch citizens in urban neighborhoods, who felt threatened by the “unrelenting

---

108 Geddes, 116.
109 Baker.
110 Fennema and Tillie, 93.
111 Ibid., 93.
112 Geddes, 116.
113 Sunier, 136-137.
114 Peter Maarten Vink, Limits of European citizenship: European integration and domestic immigration policies, Migration, minorities, and citizenship (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 166.
influx of immigrants.” Ironcally, they felt marginalized within their own society by what once were ethnic minorities but were now ethnic majorities. Fortuyn’s party was able to harness this discontentment and win the election in 2001, one week after his assassination at the hands of an animal rights activist. This victory dramatically altered the policy approach of the Dutch political system with regard to immigration.

Fortuyn’s influence was pervasive and far-reaching, even posthumously. In 2004, the Dutch Parliament produced a 2500 all-party report in response to his critique of Dutch immigration policy, which he claimed was breeding militant Islam and facilitating over-crowding. The root of the problem was found to be cultural and was attributed to the failure of first-generation immigrants to integrate when they first arrived to the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s. Fortuyn’s concern was that the “fast-growing Muslim sub-culture” was threatening Holland’s way of life. Among the mistakes the report claims the government made was encouraging children to speak their native language, rather than Dutch, in primary schools. In many Moroccan-Dutch households, the children are raised speaking Berber or Arabic and are thus at a great disadvantage when they start school with their Dutch-speaking peers. Their inability to communicate in the host society’s language is an Othering label, as is their dark skin color. As a result, Moroccan youth are deemed society’s “poor black sheep” well into the second and third generation. The report’s conclusion was that “Holland’s 850,000 Muslims must become Dutch if the country was to hold together.”

Today, in spite of the barriers put into place by the Dutch government and the hostility they face from Dutch society, Moroccan immigrants continue to make their way to the Netherlands. In fact, the settled immigrant population has become the most important factor in the further development of legal Moroccan immigration into the Netherlands. They are highly concentrated in urban areas where they have formed their own communities, with their own religious and cultural institutions. Moreover, these communities of settled immigrants offer a

117 Evans-Pritchard.
118 Priemus, 111.
119 Evans-Pritchard.
120 van Amersfoort, 149.
stepping-stone for ‘overstaying visitors’ and other forms of illegal immigration.\textsuperscript{121} Multiculturalism has paradoxically served as a “policy of cultural segregation,”\textsuperscript{122} forcing Moroccan immigrants to the peripheries of society, where they naturally congregate together. The large gatherings of Muslims have only increased the fear of Islamic radicalism in Dutch society and reinforced the defensive immigration policies already in place, which attempt to control their movement into the country.

These policies of control have in turn increased the amount of illegal immigration to the country by providing immigrants the opportunity to participate in the underground economy and live their whole lives as undocumented workers. As a result, their children never get to experience the benefits of citizenship and belonging that they expected to. Instead, generation after generation, Dutch-born Moroccan youth experience the same alienation and Othering as their first generation predecessors did. These youth are more sensitive to this exclusion than their parents, and are thus more prone to expressing their frustration through violence against the society which never accepts them. These acts of violence only justify more defensive immigration policies of the Dutch government and seemingly substantiate the opinion of society that Moroccans are unable and unwilling to integrate. Similar to Moroccans’ experience in Spain, these immigrants are caught up in an unbreakable cycle of Othering and exclusion.

Identity Politics vs. the Politics of Belonging Create the Inevitable Culture Clash Between Citizen and Non-Citizen

There are striking similarities between the treatment of Moroccan immigrants by the immigration law and polices of Spain and the Netherlands. In spite of their differing policy histories and traditions, both countries have implemented laws which have effectively served to stigmatize the genre of “immigrant,” to demonize and criminalize it. Ultimately, neither policy has protected the identities of these non-citizens, nor has it helped immigrants achieve the status of citizen. In fact, in many ways, both policies have only hindered immigrant efforts to integrate.

In Spain, “the lack of consistent integration policies, and a (real or perceived) stagnation of integration processes” has created a predominantly negative perception of migration and of immigrants, thereby strengthening the

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 111.
government’s case for more defensive policies. Moreover, this rhetoric of control and integration has had the effect of controlling the immigrant rather than controlling immigration by “defin[ing] the parameters of foreigners’ inclusion or exclusion in the national community and the corresponding limitations on their rights and freedoms.” Their selective exclusion from sectors of society such as the labor market, housing and education has been completely contrary to any notion of integration that these polices may have purported to achieve, and suggests that these laws intended to keep immigrants in their temporary state because that was a category which made them most useful to Spanish society, not merely for economic purposes, but for a sense of national security as well. It was convenient to have the category of “Other” in order to define and legitimate the category of “citizen”:

Legal decision systems of place making within a society require the establishment of boundaries between what something is and what it is not…Such a binary, ‘Eurocentric’ view…is imperialist [and] self-legitimating rather than self-reflexive…

The dichotomies of immigrant/citizen or stranger/member, which these laws have inculcated into Spanish and Dutch society, have served to displace Other minority ethnic identities. Indeed, this has become increasingly evident in the Netherlands as well. Whether proponents of a policy of multiculturalism realize it or not, multiculturalism is inherently difference-centered and was used as a divisive tool in Dutch society. It set up barriers under the guise of protecting social and cultural identity, but was in reality:

merely a tokenistic gift of the powerful to the weak which simply serves to confront the weak with a double bind, in which to refuse the gift is to lose; to accept the gift is to lose.

In other words, a policy of multiculturalism became an excuse for the government to ignore the feelings and perceptions of ethnic and native people within Dutch society. Tolerance has been confused with a blatant denial of the

126 Calavita, “Immigration, Law, and Marginalization”, 22.
127 Hillier, 83.
problems created by this policy.\textsuperscript{128} Simply encouraging the existence of multiple cultures or ethnicities is not sufficient; instead “the ontologies of other peoples need to be understood and engaged with in active partnerships,”\textsuperscript{129} such as those promoted between migrant organizations and mainstream ones by the system of pluralistic integration. The Netherlands' tradition of tolerance is well-intentioned but it is also flawed because it inevitably creates an us/them dichotomy. If the Netherlands wants to move towards a truly integrated but multi-ethnic society, place-making must be negotiated and inclusive, which requires that the transformation to citizen must not only “be concerned with ‘them,’ the ‘Others,’” but rather, “it must also dislocate the position and rupture the prerogative of ‘us.’”\textsuperscript{130}

The demographic of young, often Dutch or Spanish-born, mostly Muslim Moroccan immigrants is a particularly subversive category. Today, resentment is brewing among children of disappointed Islamic immigrants\textsuperscript{131} and Moroccan youth in general, whose dreams of a better life in Dutch and Spanish society are yet to be fulfilled. For many first generation immigrants, the option of returning to Morocco serves as a sort of survival strategy, which makes them “more or less immune to stigmatization and discrimination.”\textsuperscript{132} However, this alienation remains poignant for their offspring, for whom the psychological function of the option of returning to their country of origin does not serve the same purpose. Because of this weaker connection with their homeland, the orientation of second and third generation Moroccans towards their host society is stronger and their expectation of what it will provide them in socio-economic terms is thus naturally higher than that of first generation immigrants.\textsuperscript{133} As a result, young Moroccan immigrants are often “more sensitive to mechanisms of real or perceived exclusion” by the law, and they are more disposed to resist this.\textsuperscript{134} Their resistance, however, is often portrayed by the media as radicalism, and perceived by Dutch society as an unnecessarily aggressive and violent reaction towards their society and its values. One popular newspaper characterized the situation in the Netherlands in the following way:

In the longer term, we must somehow stimulate young Muslims to identify with the Calvinist values of the majority. The radicalization among small groups

\textsuperscript{128} Priemus, 107.
\textsuperscript{129} Hillier, 83.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{131} de Winter.
\textsuperscript{132} Sunier, 141.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 139.
of young Muslims, a threat that cannot be fought within Holland's borders alone, is a time bomb.\textsuperscript{135} 

This account, however, does not discuss the law’s role in Othering this group over generations or their frustration and alienation and their subsequent disillusionment with Dutch society. There is an inherent unawareness, in both Spain and the Netherlands, of what Islam signifies for young Moroccan immigrants in their new society; there is only fear. For young second and third generation Moroccan immigrants, Islam is a system of ethics in which “fragmented life experiences are symbolically linked together in a new discourse.”\textsuperscript{136} The notion of “religious community” is constantly being reproduced and renegotiated within the context of their changing circumstances.\textsuperscript{137} However, host societies seem unable or perhaps unwilling to separate Moroccans from their context of Otherness, a reflection of the exclusivity expressed by immigration policies and something which is quite contrary to the notion of citizenship altogether.\textsuperscript{138} Clashes occur when young Moroccans with expectations of socio-economic success encounter a closed society, where there is no room for further integration, cooperation or compromise between their Islamic principles and the principles of the host society. Thus, this resistance is emblematic of more egregious social problems which have been essentially overlooked or even worse, ignored, by the government and have come to beleaguer both Spanish and Dutch society. In those cases, it should not be surprising that a radical discourse is produced.

Recent violent events in both Spain and the Netherlands suggest that this is exactly what is happening. In Amsterdam, Theodore van Gogh, a popular documentary filmmaker and great grand nephew to Vincent van Gogh, was murdered by a 26 year-old Dutch-born Moroccan immigrant, who sought to quell van Gogh’s insults against the prophet Mohamed. When this shocking incident occurred in 2004, it confirmed what many native Dutch people already perceived to be true about Islam, i.e. that it is a very dangerous, violent religion and that those who practice it do not belong as part of their society.\textsuperscript{139} Many felt that van Gogh was simply practicing his freedom of expression, as was apt in such a tolerant society. What’s ironic is that this society, which was so proud of its

\textsuperscript{135} de Winter. \textsuperscript{136} Sunier, 140. \textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 140. \textsuperscript{138} Vink, 9. \textsuperscript{139} Jeroen Doomernik, “The state of multiculturalism in the Netherlands,” Amsterdam University, 2006 http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/imes/publications/documents/1583_jDoomernik1.pdf, (accessed November 20, 2007).
tradition of tolerance, could not see that it was not applying this same tradition in its treatment of Moroccan immigrants.

Similarly, in the Spanish town of El Ejido, the murder of a 26 year-old Spanish woman in 2000, again by a young Dutch-born Moroccan male, sparked a rampage by locals, who took to the streets destroying Moroccan-owned businesses and beating up Moroccans. In this town alone, there is anywhere between 5,000 and 12,000 unregistered immigrants who have helped turn El Ejido from one of the poorest towns in Andalusia into the wealthiest in per capita income, all in a single generation. When these riots occurred, the Moroccans, who make up most of the workforce in the town, went on strike, causing £15 million in lost production. When asked about the more liberal immigration laws going into effect at the national level, Juan Enciso, the mayor of El Ejido at the time, stated that:

[The immigrants] can’t stay here. We don’t want camps here…We have got to organize it so we can import workers, temporarily, and then they can go back to their own countries. My party has understood perfectly what the people of this town want.

His words are widely representative of the views of native Spanish people and their government, as well as the views of the anti-immigrant mood in both his native Spain and in the Netherlands. It is also indicative of the fact that immigration policies in modern states are often a “a statement of communal self-determination because they are about a group of people committed to dividing, exchanging, and sharing social goods, first of all among themselves.”

It is no wonder then, that following these violent events in both Spain and the Netherlands, the government response was to create more stringent policies of control, which, as elaborated on previously, have only had the effect of increasing illegality and creating more problems.

The attempt to control immigration seems to confirm that “citizenship in liberal democracy is after all a protection of relative privilege rather than a bundle of rights that appeal to universalistic values.” In other words, the notion of

---

140 It went on for four days and was the worst racial violence in recent Spanish history (Webster, see below).
142 Ibid.
143 Vink, 9.
144 Ibid., 9.
citizenship is often very exclusionary. It is intended to protect a certain group of people (i.e. citizens) and simultaneously to keep out those who don’t belong. That’s what is paradoxical about the Dutch and Spanish immigration policies—they ultimately only protect those who are citizens. Thus, neither law nor citizenship is a neutral category and both are inextricably linked.

However, in spite of the obstacles that Moroccan immigrants face, as long as the economy of their home country is suffering and as long as they are searching for a job, they will find a way to make the journey to Spain and the Netherlands in search of a better quality of life. Even during the strike in El Ejido, small boats filled with illegal immigrants were showing up on the beaches a few miles away. What is not so certain are the implications for Spanish and Dutch societies if their governments don’t start meeting some of these expectations, or at least drastically altering their approach to immigration policy to break the cycle of exclusion and Othering. The aforementioned bouts of violence, and others that have occurred since then, suggest that tensions are reaching a head and many young Moroccan immigrants are no longer going to tolerate the treatment they have been receiving by their host society and the immigration laws they largely support.

Mina Barahimi is a 2008 graduate of the Law, Societies and Justice Department at the University of Washington, where she also obtained minors in Anthropology and African Studies. She hopes to pursue a PhD in Political Science with a focus in international relations and comparative politics. She is presently developing her research interests in human rights, European law and politics, comparative legal culture, and African diaspora studies.

**ABSTRACT**

The promotion of cooperatives has been a core project of President Hugo Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution. Before he came to power there were less than 1,000 cooperatives in Venezuela, but by 2006 that number had risen to 108,000. However, in July 2007, Chávez declared the program a failure; a surprise given his critique of exclusionary nationalist rhetoric and his populist appeals. By examining CECOSESOLA, one of the most successful cooperatives worldwide, I argue that a cooperative’s success is tied to its ability to develop both a sense of personal agency and a collective narrative of resistance. Unlike CECOSESOLA, which has maintained organizational and political autonomy, and developed its own narrative of belonging, Chávez’s program provided cooperatives with a politicized and state-centric narrative of cooperative identity underwritten by Chávez’s personal charisma. My research ultimately suggests that though Chávez discursively encourages citizen mobilization, the Bolivarian narrative perpetuates patterns of exclusion and may consequently undermine the creation of a strong civil society.

http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Winter_2009/Laura_Brady_Charisma_and_the_Venezuelan_Cooperative_Movement.pdf

© 2009 *intersections*, Laura Adrienne Brady. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author.
Resisting the National Narrative
Charisma and the Venezuelan Cooperative Movement
Within the Context of the Bolivarian Revolution

By Laura Adrienne Brady
University of Washington, Seattle

Hugo Chavez
I first traveled to Venezuela in August 2006, eager to witness first-hand the country that I was convinced had become the site of a revolutionary social movement. A year prior, Venezuela had invoked little in me beyond a vague notion of oil, Caribbean beaches, and strangely colored rainforest parrots. However, after watching *The revolution will not be televised*, an independent film that followed the 2002 coup attempt on President Hugo Chávez, my interest was instantly peaked. Here, it seemed, were the sprigs of grass roots, community-driven participatory change, without the typical accompaniment of a totalitarian leader and oppressive regime.

The Bolivarian Revolution, Chávez’s name for Venezuela’s movement towards *Socialismo del siglo XXI*, or Socialism of the 21st Century, is the rallying point for these changes. Relying on a newly crafted constitution, globally unique for its protection of certain positive rights such as health and education, Chávez has begun to institutionalize a new norm of “participatory democracy.” The stated goal of the Revolution is to foster citizen mobilization from the ground-up through programs designed to increase literacy, education, and employment. Simultaneously, the government is implementing new infrastructure to engage historically poor and marginalized communities in the political process. Rather than imposing rigid programs and telling groups how to achieve development, the Revolution hinges on the cooperation and empowerment of lower levels of society in the creation of their own pathways to modernization.²

---

1 I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the Cramer Scholarship, which funded my field research trip to Venezuela, and the Mary Gates Research Scholarship, which provided financial support during my months of data analysis and writing. Their financial support allowed me to dedicate myself fully to this project. I extend my gratitude for the support and advice of my two thesis advisors, Deborah Porter and Anand Yang.

Many thanks to all of the associates of Cecosesola who shared their experiences and wisdom. The associates in the Escuela equipo helped make my stay in Venezuela as safe and comfortable as possible. A lifelong friend, Callie Arnold, had the brilliant idea of being my research assistant in Venezuela. This project would never have been possible without her help.

Mijail Benitez offered assistance as a friend and a critic. Calla Hummel edited my full draft. I would also like to acknowledge the debt in friendship I owe to Kalila Jackson-Spicker, and to Alice, Anna, Ariana, Brittany, Claire, Junko, Kris, Joel, and Lucy from the P-Patch house.

2 This is the rhetoric of the Revolution—as expressed through new laws, the Constitution, and governmental speeches/propaganda—not necessarily the reality.
Organizational Abbreviations

AD  Acción Democrática. Venezuela’s Democratic Action political party.


CECOSESOLA  Organismo de Integración Cooperativa. Organism for Cooperative Integration, formerly Central Cooperativa del Estado Lara, or Central Cooperative of Lara State.

COPEI  Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente. The Social-Christian Committee for Independent Political Electoral Organization (Venezuelan political party).


MINEP  Ministerio para la Economía Popular. Ministry for the Popular Economy (now MINEC).

PDVSA  Petróleos de Venezuela. Venezuela’s state-owned petroleum company.


The Revolution has so far been distinguished by the creation of many new social programs. These include the Misiones, “mission” projects with goals that range from increasing literacy to providing housing to teaching technical job skills, the Círculos Bolivarianos, community governance groups funded by the government, and the Mercal, a state-run discount supermarket chain. In efforts to promote
Venezuelan independence from historically dominating neighboring countries, Chavez has also nationalized the state oil company (PDVSA), called for endogenous development, and promoted agrarian reform aimed at redistributing wasted land and encouraging domestic food growth. The aspect of the revolution that struck me most, however, was the implementation of incentives for the creation of cooperatives. Though cooperatives constitute an important form of social organization (according to the United Nations, 800 million people belong to cooperatives, and for 100 million, cooperatives are the primary means of employment) they are by no means a prominent feature in most development discourse. Additionally, except for in Cuba, they have rarely been adopted as a central aspect of a given state’s policy.

Chavez’s interest in cooperatives seemed natural, however, given his goals of fostering endogenous development, community participation, and a strong social economy. Cooperatives, by definition, are conceived as tools for achieving these transformations. According to the International Alliance of Cooperatives, a cooperative is:

an autonomous association of people that have come together voluntarily to face their shared economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through the means of a business with communal property and democratic decision-making.

---

3 In particular, the United States.
4 A new form of import substitution development that does not limit exports but does seek to promote internal sovereignty.
7 Some NGOs have embraced cooperatives as a tool of development, but to my knowledge, very little has been written in the scholarly realm about cooperatives.
8 This paper will not address the cooperative movements in China, North Korea, and Soviet Russia given that their authoritarian and centralized nature makes using them as a tool for social attitudes impossible.
In Venezuela, specifically, the *Superintendencia Nacional de Cooperativas* (SUNACOOP), or National Superintendence of Cooperatives, contributes the following definition:

> The cooperative is a form of organizing businesses with economic and social goals in which the greatest importance is to work by common consent to achieve a benefit. It can be differentiated from other types of businesses in that the work of the associates is more important than the money they generate.  

Aided by *La Misión Vuelvan Caras*, a program aimed at teaching job skills and the basics of forming a cooperative, Chávez has embraced the development of a cooperative program as a means for implementing the objectives of the Bolivarian Revolution. According to the initial cooperative proposal, “while the neoliberal plans are based on the inhuman premise that ‘the best social policy is a good economic policy,’ the *Agenda Alternativa Bolivariana* is based on the principle that the best social policy is that which responds to the population’s needs.”

Though Venezuela has witnessed cooperative growth in the form of a cooperative social movement since the beginning of the 20th century, and though the movement emerged “as an institution formally recognized by the state” in the 1960s, Chávez’s administration has set a new precedent for the level of governmental involvement. Encouraging cooperatives is now an established figment of national policy, with the Constitution actively asserting “that the State should promote and protect cooperatives as a popular economic alternative” and also guarantee “training, technical assistance and appropriate financing.”

What is most striking about the current movement in Venezuela, however, is its scope and success. When Chávez came to power in 1998, 762 cooperatives were legally registered in the country. Upon passing the Special Law on Cooperative Associations in 2001, though, and with the Ministry of Popular Economy’s (MINEP) implementation of a loans program in 2003, this number exploded. By

---


11 Literally, Mission “About Face.”

12 In English, “The Alternative Bolivarian Agenda.” Refers to the reforms undertaken as part of the ‘Bolivarian Revolution’.


14 Froilán Barrios in Lucena et al., 84.

the end of 2001, there were almost one-thousand cooperatives, by 2002, there were two-thousand, and in 2003, the total had grown to eight-thousand.\textsuperscript{16} The latest report from SUNACOOP, released in 2006, places the current number of cooperatives at 185,000,\textsuperscript{17} more than any other country.\textsuperscript{18}

This fact was enough to overcome anything I had read about Chávez’s corrupt regime or secret desire to transform Venezuela into another “Cuba.” I knew that I needed to see the country in person to decide for myself whether Chávez was indeed revolutionizing participatory democracy and mobilizing the poorer classes. Against the better judgment of friends and family, I boarded a plane in August 2006 to study abroad in Mérida, Venezuela for four months. Though research was not the explicit purpose of my trip, I hoped that my time on the ground would reveal the nature of the Bolivarian Revolution and the actual substance of these booming cooperatives. I was convinced that the spectacular growth in cooperatives represented a new Venezuelan social obsession\textsuperscript{19} and could not be ignored for its implicit commentary on the condition of the Venezuelan social fabric and the national psyche. I was prepared to witness cooperatives mobilizing the popular classes to re-write themselves into the narrative of a nation from which they had been historically excluded. By examining cooperatives, which embodied the Bolivarian Revolution, I hoped to finally provide a scholarly witness to the success of Venezuela’s transformation.\textsuperscript{20}

Needless to say, my experience did not progress as planned. During my time in Venezuela, I encountered one small cooperative, a women’s baking collective,


\textsuperscript{17} Oscar Bastidas-Delgado in \textit{La autogestión como innovación social en las cooperativas. el caso de las ferias de consumo de lara en Venezuela} (Caracas: Centro de Estudios de la Participación, la Autogestión y el Cooperativismo, 2007), 13.

\textsuperscript{18} Malinalco.

\textsuperscript{19} In the style of Laura Kipnis, who argues in \textit{Against love} that the emergence of a US obsession with adultery and the private lives of its politicians indicates a deeper mistrust of US political institutions, I hoped to propose that cooperatives are equally important social features for understanding the emergence of the “new” Venezuela.

\textsuperscript{20} Information about Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution is limited, but in general, can be characterized as extremely biased. Most accounts originate from either leftist or anti-Chavista sides and the scholarly literature tends to follow this pattern (or is, in most cases, absent). Information about cooperatives, specifically, is generally purely qualitative or only available in unscholarly personal accounts. Quantitative data, although available from SUNACOOP, does not reveal specifics about cooperative successes or failures. According to Bastidas-Delgado, interviewed in the article “Cooperativas pierden fanática” by Ramón Sahmkow, “The census only measures how many cooperatives exist and their type of activity, but it does not work with figures that reference volume of operations, management of finances, [or] cooperative capital; it does not allow the integration of cooperatives from a financial perspective to provide a vision of their true contribution. It is a census that does not contribute anything” [my translation].
with friendly women but no apparent cooperative network or social vision that extended beyond their economic success. Several times, I was lucky enough to glimpse the international cooperative symbol, two evergreen trees, perched at the edge of a restaurant or sewing shop name plaque. The majority of my contact with this social movement that I had read so much about came from the multitude of governmental billboards plastered with Chávez’s smiling or defiant face.

Where were all the cooperatives? Though the disjunction of my expectations and perceptions troubled me, it was not until my return home that I began to fixate more on these confusing elements of my Venezuela trip. Why did the reality of my tangible experience contrast so vividly with what I had read regarding the Venezuelan revolution?

Unable to let go of my hopes for how Chávez was reshaping Venezuela, and still a fierce believer in the potential for cooperatives to create true community-mobilized change—in contrast to traditional top-down models of development—I returned to Venezuela this summer to get to the bottom of my discomfort about the apparent invisibility of the cooperative movement. My plan was to start my research with a visit to Cecosesola, Organismo de Integración Cooperativa21 (Organism for Cooperative Integration), one of the oldest and, according to everything I had read, most successful cooperatives in Venezuela.22 It is also distinguished by its separation from government programs, and therefore appeared to be a strong indicator of pure citizen mobilizations. I then planned to move on to build a comparative analysis with several of Chávez’s new cooperatives. I hoped to gather data to argue that cooperatives were popular because they allowed Venezuelan citizens to express their disillusionment with their historic lack of power and exclusion from the rhetoric of what “being Venezuelan” meant.

My first day in Venezuela, however, I received the first of many shocks throughout my trip. Despite the unprecedented growth in Venezuelan cooperatives and significant applause from the international leftist community, I

21 Formerly, Central de Cooperativas del Estado Lara (Central Cooperative of Lara State). The cooperative chose to preserve the initials CECOSESOLA because they have played an important role in the history of the group’s formation.
learned that during the summer, Chávez had declared the program a failure, condemning it for its inability to truly eliminate capitalistic relations within the economy. In his assessment, the cooperative program had not been contributing to the development of a "social economy." It also appeared that cooperatives could not be quite the social obsession that I hoped for—rather than creating cooperatives as a response to exclusion, Chávez’s analysis declared that people had instead been forming cooperatives to take advantage of government money for personal gain.

Devastated, more for my crushed hopes about a socialist reform than for lack of a thesis topic, I wallowed briefly in despair only to gradually awaken and take notice of my surroundings. Though not a new cooperative, I began to realize that Cecosesola was a community locus for a brand of development, organization, and participation that I had never read about or expected to encounter. Every day I spent with the cooperative convinced me more of the transformative potential for a social organization without hierarchy to construct strong communities and support the participation of historically underrepresented sectors of society.

Cecosesola is an umbrella organization for cooperatives, with 350 core members and roughly 1,000 total associates distributed among the 75 associated cooperatives and civil associations. Over the past forty years, Cecosesola has become a strong economic force in Barquisimeto, Venezuela. The cooperative runs three large Ferias de Consumo Popular (discount food markets for ‘popular consumption’) throughout the city, primarily stocked with fruit, vegetables, and goods produced by affiliated cooperatives; six community health centers, which provide free primary care to Cecosesola associates and greatly discounted rates to the public; a funerary service; a savings/loans and financing service; and is in the process of constructing a hospital, which will be communally owned by all 1,000 associates.

Cecosesola’s activities play a large role in the surrounding community and the Barquisimeto economy. In 1998, the ferias alone served 40,000 families, and as of August 2007, every week they serve 55,000 families and distribute 450,000 kilos of produce a week. As such, the ferias serve roughly one-third of Barquisimeto’s 1.5 million residents. According to Luis Gómez Calcaño:

---

23 See Appendix A for a fuller description of the roles of these various actors. Though I distinguish there between ‘direct members’ and ‘associates,’ I use these terms interchangeably throughout because Cecosesola members/associates do not make such a distinction themselves.

24 Cecosesola, “Que es Cecosesola?” (August 2007).

25 Fox.
The market system is the main supplier of groceries and commodities for Barquisimeto on a range comparable to the large national marketing chains, and at prices considerably lower than retail. This implies direct annual savings for approximately $11 million.26

Furthermore, Cecosesola’s funerary service is the largest in the region, serving 17,400 families, and its health network reaches 155,000 community members and associates.

Most astounding is that Cecosesola provides these services without the guidance of any hierarchical organizational structures, such as a board of directors or president, or even set jobs. Each member participates in every aspect of the cooperative that he or she desires through rotating equipos.27 In meetings that occur nearly every day of the week, members assemble to discuss problems, politics, and the goals of the cooperative. Freedom of information is widely practiced, with all associates granted equal access to budget information and no decisions made ‘behind doors.’ Though several of the original members are still involved, the cooperative is now primarily maintained through a continuous influx of new, young members and, as a result, appears to be functioning sustainably without reliance upon the direction or guidance of Cecosesola’s founders.

The more I saw of Cecosesola, the more convinced I became that this was a successful cooperative28—and the exact model for what Chávez’s program had attempted to accomplish. However, Cecosesola had emerged external to any governmental program and without large government loans, quite unlike Chávez’s

26 Luis Gómez Calcaño, Family markets in Lara, Venezuela: a participatory initiative as part of the seminar “Social Programs, Poverty and Citizen Participation,” co-sponsored by Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in Cartagena, Colombia March 12-13, 1998 (Inter-American Development Bank, State and Society Division), 3.
27 In English, “teams.” See Appendix A for a fuller description of this element.
28 I will draw from the guidelines outlined by Bastidas-Delgado as well as the collection edited by Lucena et al. to formulate my definition of a successful cooperative. I will define a cooperative as successful if it follows the following guidelines:

`»` Combats social exclusion (Lucena in Lucena et al., 75)
`»` Operates without a hierarchical structure, or if set positions are allocated, that such a structure does not impede a process of consensus decision-making
`»` Exists for the benefit of a communal good, rather than personal or group profit and gain, and develops social responsibility (Bastidas-Delgado, 32)
`»` Is sustainable—can persist without outside financial support
`»` Foments the participation of all members
`»` Members share equally in all profits
`»` Is an organization of the social economy and functions along its logic (Bastidas-Delgado, 32)
`»` Develops cooperation with other cooperatives
`»` In the language of the International Cooperative Alliance, is based “in the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity... consisting of members who assume the ethical values of honesty, transparency, responsibility and social vocation” (cited in Bastidas-Delgado, 49 [my translation])
`»` According to Bastidas-Delgado, Cecosesola is a prime example of a cooperative that meets these guidelines.
cooperatives, which received bountiful resources. With this realization, my final research question emerged: In light of Cecosesola’s survival, why did Chávez’s cooperative movement end in widespread failure?

In this thesis, I argue that cooperatives permit the contestation of exclusionary national narratives and in fact emerge as means through which marginalized groups and individuals can write new narratives to facilitate their empowerment and participation within the nation. Most importantly, these elements define, and are necessary for the creation of, successful cooperatives. My case study of Cecosesola suggests that the presence of individual purpose and initiative in a self-managed process of narrative construction can foster strong communities and create a new dialogue between the state and civil society.

Following from these observations, I argue that the failure of Chávez’s cooperatives resulted from the overt politicization of the program with the national narrative of revolution. The presence of Chávez’s charismatic linkages with the masses furthered a national narrative that removed the role of individual agency and prescribed a set “narrative of resistance.” As a result, Chávez’s program actually stifled citizen mobilization through the imposition of a new—yet still state-centric—national narrative.

These conclusions provide many insights into the Bolivarian Revolution as a whole. Although the Revolution espouses a powerful rhetoric of change, and even goes so far as to conceptualize a new idea of Venezuelan citizenship, the experience of Chávez’s cooperative program suggests that the Chávez’s administration may be founded upon yet another exclusionary national narrative. Poor Venezuelans are discursively included as never before (and have certainly received many important benefits from Chávez’s social programs), but Chávez’s presence as a charismatic leader contradicts his stated goals to foster citizen mobilization. Though Chávez defends popular power, his simultaneous insistence that all change take place under the Bolivarian banner undermines citizen agency—and thus resistance—in engaging with the state vision of Venezuela’s future.

29 By dialogue, I mean filling in the void of civil society (historically absent in Venezuela) through a new relationship between traditionally excluded citizens and the government. This concept will be explored further in the section of the literature review titled “Chávez’s Cooperatives and Cecosesola: Background for the Case Study.”

30 By agency, I mean an individual’s ability to shape and envision his or her own life’s course. See the “Structure and Agency” section for a further analysis of this concept.
II. National Narratives and Social Exclusion

Pro-Chavez graffiti prior to the December 2006 presidential election.
A discussion of the role that cooperatives play in contesting and re-writing national narratives must begin with an analysis of what role such narratives play in the nation and how they may be related to the social exclusion of certain groups. In the sense that I will be using it, a national narrative includes all of the symbolism, rhetoric, and communication within a given nation that serves as the “language” of nationalism and legitimizes the current structure of power within society. Thus, discussions of national narratives are intimately connected to studies about the formation of national consciousness or nationalism in the context of the nation-state system.

Benedict Anderson and Thongchai Winichakul focus on how national identity is constructed through both internal modes of connection and exclusion of the ‘other.’ Anderson argues that internally, the development of print technology and the proliferation of accessible literature, newspapers, and other communication forms allowed individuals to begin “to identify with public communities that were vastly larger than the local world in which they lived their daily lives.” Winichakul focuses on the other side of nation formation or, namely, how nations create unity and a cohesive sense of identity by dehumanizing other nations. Nationalism, therefore, is generated largely through emphasizing what a given nation “is not.”

Though these scholars are important for the attention they have drawn to the concept of nationalism and, more significantly, to the state narratives that uphold it either through fortifying connections or emphasizing exceptionality, they do not adequately address the relationships between different sectors of society. E.J. Hobsbawn, particularly, points to the importance of understanding the role of economic transformations in modern nationalism. He argues that national identity is not as homogeneous and powerful as Anderson stipulates. Rather, modernization and the expansion of capitalism have complicated the social picture within which national narratives are situated. In his analysis, nationalism “is a powerful political and cultural expression of modernizing economic processes that have destroyed older social hierarchies, generated new social anxieties, and produced new legitimating ideologies.” National rhetoric, in this sense, becomes a tool of new capitalist elites to justify social changes related to modernization. This approach melds well with work by Liah Greenfeld, who

---

sees social modernization and nation-building as virtually inseparable. If this is the case, Anderson’s analysis fails to critically question the role that national narratives may play in modernization and the legitimization of the social divides that result.

This perspective is important because it takes into account the reality that the nation is not always “a deep, horizontal comradeship.” National narratives frequently emerge to combat societal divides and their strength is often derived from internal processes of exclusion. Julie Skurski’s work is especially relevant in this regard. She critiques Anderson’s analysis that a cohesive national identity or an “imagined community” actually exists, for one, and also, how such ideas are upheld. In her analysis, Anderson is naïve in assuming that “the “fraternal” bond that unites the national community…is achieved apart from existing practices of domination.”

According to Anderson, “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.” Skurski, conversely, argues that such an analysis is weak because it assumes that an elite construct will be unanimously accepted across multiple social boundaries. In other words, Anderson presumes that the idea of nation is inclusive enough to equally motivate “masses and elites to fight on its behalf.” Consequently, Skurski, as well as Carol Pateman, argue that Anderson’s preoccupation with fraternity as the primary means of creating communal associations ignores the role that social exclusions have in fact played in the development of the national narrative.

For this reason, some scholars have recently begun to focus on a so-called “multicultural” explanation of nations “that focuses on the competing languages and narratives within a society rather than the unity of communications or the unity of ‘imagined communities.’” Though the strength of the state or dominant groups’ “language of nation” (used to strengthen nationalism and uphold norms) is not disregarded in this analysis, extra focus is directed towards the fact that multiple layers of society exist within a nation. Most importantly, it recognizes that these excluded groups generally contest, in some manner, the national narrative. As Lloyd Kramer describes:

---

36 Anderson, 6-7.
37 Ibid.
39 Kramer, 537.
The history of nationalism is thus a history of conflicts over competing narratives that seek to define a social community. More specifically, it is a history of contestation between those who seek a fully coherent narrative of the community’s existence and those whose presence, ideas, color or culture undermine the possibility of that coherence. It is this contestation that becomes particularly relevant to my analysis of the cooperative movement in Venezuela, largely because some scholars have begun to move beyond purely economic or “populist” explanations for social movements. Instead, some, such as Ariel and Victor Armony and Donald E. Pease, have proposed that social upheaval occurs as part of a process of contesting an idea of nationalism from which some are excluded. As national narratives serve to perpetuate and deepen national norms and the strength of the “imagined community,” social resistance is frequently an expression of excluded-group resentment to a national reality so distanced from their own. Pease, for example, argues that movements materialize “with the collective recognition of the marked disequilibrium in the allocation of social empowerments and resources in the national narrative.” Specifically avoiding economical or political explanations for public outburst, A. and V. Armony propose, instead, that “citizen mobilization and the “indictment” of the political class are connected to longstanding conceptions of national identity, particularly to national myths.” A. and V. Armony and Pease both agree that these social movements fight not only for the inclusion of marginalized communities in the national narrative, but also seek to contest the most basic social arrangements that permit the narrative’s existence. In this way, Pease argues that social movements “expose national identity as an artifact rather than a tacit assumption, a purely contingent social construction rather than a meta-social universal.” As such, “National identities are always contested, always political, and always a choice between narratives.” This sort of analysis demands a fresh look at both the stimulus for the Bolivarian Revolution and, in regards to the cooperative movement, some aspects of its failure. Using Pease and Armony as a basis, I will take this argument one step farther and propose that in the case of Cecosesola and the Venezuelan cooperatives, contestation of national narratives becomes an important factor in also gauging the success of a movement.

40 Ibid., 537.
42 Armony, 27.
43 Ibid.
44 Pease, 5.
National Narratives in Venezuela

Understanding national narrative contestation in the context of Venezuelan cooperatives requires taking one step back to examine the historical development of nationalism and exclusion in Venezuela. Venezuelan national narratives can be separated into three historical discourse groups: anti-colonial discourse, the discourse of authenticity epitomized by the novel *Doña Bárbara* during the middle of the 20th century and, more recently, the narrative of Venezuelan exceptionalism. These narratives—and the exclusion of the poor majority that I will argue they have all generated—will provide the basis for my analysis of the role that cooperatives play in Venezuela and explain the specific significance of Chávez and his cooperative program.

*Anti-Colonial Discourse.* The foundations of modern narratives of nation in Venezuela developed during the struggle for independence and can be traced most specifically to the role of The Liberator, Simón Bolívar. Anderson attributes the birth of modern nationalism to the Creole elites who engineered the anti-colonial movement in Latin America. Venezuela was distinct from other nations, however, in that it lacked an indigenous past with one visible institutionalized state and culture. Rather, Venezuela was marked by a collection of different indigenous cultures, smaller and less culturally homogenous, with a “strong rebellious spirit” as revealed through their tough resistance against Spanish civilization. In the elite’s eyes, these native cultures were “of a lower order than the acknowledged great civilizations of ancient Mexico and Peru.” Therefore, anti-colonial discourse could not rely on reconstructing a cohesive “original” identity or appealing to common origins. Instead, Bolívar and others conceptualized of the nation through the very act of forgetting the past, defined as barbaric, and moving forward to a new phase of civilization based upon the principles of reason and citizens’ rights. This new concept of citizenship gave birth to the notion of an “imagined” nation space, composed of equal citizens bonded by “horizontal and undifferentiated unity.” From the beginning, new narratives emerged to defend the principles of nation and unity. In his concluding injunction to the Republic, Bolívar remarked:

All our moral powers will not suffice to save our infant republic from this chaos unless we fuse the mass of the people, the government, the legislation, and the national spirit into a single united body. Unity, unity, unity must be our motto.

46 Skurski, 611.
in all things. The blood of our citizens is varied: let it be mixed for the sake of unity. 48

Bolívar’s statement is key in that it defends the possibility of “mixing,” or drawing together the different racial and social groups into one conglomerate of nation. Additionally, it clearly represents his goal to create “a single united body,” in other words, a strongly bonded nation. This statement also highlights the fact that the concept of unity in anti-colonial discourse became quickly associated with patriotism. 49

Despite Bolivar’s emphasis on unity, nevertheless, from the beginning, the Venezuelan notion of “nation” possessed internal sources of deep contradiction. The dual roles of the Creole elite created fragmentation—this class existed as an elite group, thereby inherently linked to the colonizing presence of the Spanish, but existed equally as a force of resistance against the Colonial Power. In what Skurski deems “duality and ambiguity” in the system of collective authority,

Venezuela’s colonial elite, composed largely of slave-owning cacao planters, opted for independence from Spain in part because they believed that the metropolis’s recent policy of relaxing the caste system threatened their control over slaves and free people of color. 50

Thus, the anti-colonial process, while discursively upholding the principles of reason and citizenship, was by its very nature linked to the Creole elite’s quest to maintain power and influence in the wake of Spanish rule. Rather than seeking independence purely for political freedom, the elite saw this change necessary for the protection of its own interests. For these reasons, “violent conflicts over citizenship, including civil wars infected by class and race campaigns to suppress indigenous peoples,” 51 as well as the Creole elite’s attempts to consolidate continued influence over labor and land, continued well through the end of the century, acting as a continuous reminder of the contradictions inherent in the national identity. The result, ultimately, was an institutionalization of “a divorce between the state’s unifying claims and the exclusionary practices and beliefs they sustained.” 52 In essence, though a national narrative espousing unity became

51 Skurski, 609.
52 Ibid., 611.
discursively engrained, it relied upon, and inherently created, exclusion. More importantly, such exclusion was considered discursively ‘invisible’ because any acknowledgment of its existence would be questioning the unity, and therefore validity, of the nation.  

Narrative Redrafted: Doña Bárbara and the Discourse of Authenticity

The abstract systems of rhetoric and law that emerged from this internally fractured idea of nation were unsuccessful at creating a stable state and thus resulted in decades of successive strong-man regimes. These dictatorships would not end until General Juan Vicente Gómez (in office from 1908-35) came to power. His rule marked the end of this system as the post World War I era ushered in a new set of demands for reform and modernization. Such demands threatened the deeply imbedded structure of oligarchic rule and in an effort to preserve historical power arrangements, middle class elites, “a class composed largely of mestizos (in Venezuela, persons of some combination of European, indigenous and African heritage),” began to espouse a new narrative of nation: the discourse of authenticity. Dependent on both idealist and “rationalist” thought influences, this discourse criticized the traditional Creole elite for ignoring the pueblo and called instead for the creation of a “new” elite that could adequately represent the people. This new elite would facilitate the symbolic marriage between the state/elite and pueblo, creating a stronger and more civilized nation. According to Skurski, “From this perspective, the hybrid racial makeup of Latin America was both a source of creative energy and a threat to civilized order.” Venezuela was re-imagined as a unique conglomerate of disparate cultures that, if brought together, “could revitalize world civilization.” Such transformation would only be possible, however, with the taming of the pueblo, which was still conceived of as dangerous and barbaric. As Yarrington argues, those of white or even mixed ancestry feared the potential of the poor, darker skinned masses to rise up and overcome their society with

---

53 Lasso.
54 Yarrington, 68.
55 In Spanish, pueblo means “village,” but it is also used in common speech to refer to the everyday “people” that make up the nation. The usage of this word is somewhat charged. According to Coronil and Skurski (in “Dismembering”), “The term pueblo has a dual set of meanings. On the one hand, it encompasses the entire citizenry of Venezuela and is invoked in relation to the nation’s defense and the memory of its independence. On the other hand, the term refers to people who have lower-class (popular) origins and is widely used as a substitute for social class categories when referring to the poor, who are the majority of the population. Its connotations, charged with ambiguity, vary with context, speaker, and audience.”
56 Skurski, 606.
57 Ibid.
violence. Symbolic marriage, in this sense, became the encouragement of immigration by white Europeans and, most importantly, miscegenation. Thus, “unity” in the discourse signaled exclusion and cultural suppression in practice.

The 1929 novel *Doña Bárbara*, written by Rómulo Gallegos, became the focal point of this discourse in society and the main symbolic proponent of such a solution. The book tells the story of Santos Luzardo, a cultured lawyer from the city, who seeks to reorder *los llanos*\(^{58}\) by imposing a civilized rule of law. To accomplish this goal, he must contend with Doña Bárbara, a “primitive mestiza…who devours land and men,”\(^{59}\) and her voracious Yankee companion, Mr. Danger. Luzardo’s cultivation and domestication of Marisela, Doña Bárbara’s abandoned daughter, and their union, ultimately suggests the symbolic modernization of the nation into a harmonious whole. Written during Gómez’s regime as a critique of his despotism,\(^{60}\) it is ironic that Gómez in fact deeply appreciated the novel, going so far as to appoint Gallegos as a Senator (a position that he declined in favor of exile until Gómez’s death). Gallegos returned to Venezuela in 1936 to found and become president of Acción Democrática (AD), a new political party that claimed to be neither conservative nor Marxist. With democratic rule at last, and AD in power from 1945-48, the state “launched a capitalist reform project that party followers believed mirrored the novel’s vision.”\(^{61}\) By this point, Gallegos’ book had already been dubbed “national novel,” by no subtle means becoming in every shape and form the national narrative, and Gallegos had been elected president in the first fair elections.

As Doris Sommer argues in her innovative analysis:

> this novel is the populist version of the national romance. It allegorically depicts the political union between the state and popular classes as simultaneously reflected in and dependent on the achievement of a romantic union between lovers of disparate class and racial origins. By bridging vertical class differences to create a bond based on love, the couple ultimately legitimizes the “nation-family.”\(^{62}\)

From this perspective, the narrative suggests that the possibility of Venezuelan progress depends upon watering down the poor, colored, rural masses with a

---

\(^{58}\) In English, “the plains.”
\(^{59}\) Skurski, 617.
\(^{60}\) Some scholars argue that the character Doña Bárbara, despotic ruler of the plains, represents the tyranny of Gómez.
\(^{61}\) Skurski, 621.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., 607.
strong dose of white, cultured civilization. Venezuela’s poor, conceived of through a feminized lens, can only become true Venezuelans if their simultaneously wild and passive nature is submitted to the masculine forces of progress. By both relying on and creating exclusion—namely, delegitimizing the realities of a Venezuelan majority—this narrative, which coincided with the birth of the Venezuelan cooperative movement, is important for understanding the role of the cooperative in Venezuelan society. Additionally, by once again minimizing the agency of the marginalized classes, it forms yet another piece in the fabric of exclusion that Chávez’s Bolivarian Revolution allegedly attempts to counter.

Narrative of Venezuelan Exceptionalism

This discourse of authenticity eventually fed into and became the basis for what Steve Ellner terms the “Venezuelan exceptionalism thesis,” a new national narrative upheld by elites and foreign scholars alike that touted Venezuela as an exemplary case of Latin American development and democracy. The end of Gómez’s dictatorship and the rise of the AD party in what became Venezuela’s first democratic system was highlighted “as a veritable ‘revolution,’ a break with one hundred years of backwardness.” Though this democratic period lasted only from 1945-48, in 1958, with the overthrow of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez (who ruled in the intermediary years), a stable era of Venezuelan democracy appeared to have finally emerged.

In little time at all, Venezuela became heralded as the “model” of Latin America for its stability, class and racial unity, strong political parties, and civic culture. In the dominant rhetoric, the taming of Doña Bárbara had been achieved, the pueblo had at last become governable, and the vestiges of a wild past had been abandoned in the pursuit of progress. This new narrative of exceptionalism reduced the regime changes and struggles that had characterized Venezuelan society after 1830 to “personalism in the form of ambition to gain power,” or caudillismo, “which was made possible by the state of backwardness of the population.” This idea of Venezuela having been “re-born,” or having finally moved beyond an unstable past to optimize its possibilities, gained strength through the rhetoric of AD (founded on the premises of Doña Bárbara) and

---

---

63 Ellner and Salas, 6.
64 Ibid., 5.
65 A political system in which caudillo strong-men hold power.
various Venezuelan administrations. President Carlos Andrés Pérez remarked during his initial presidency (1974-1979):

Our history was characterized by perpetual personalism…the same authoritarianism, oppression and reduction of the people to insignificance…The people were apathetic spectators and failed to control their destiny, as if their lives and futures were the booty of the caudillo.  

This sort of rhetoric, which downplayed past struggles of “the people,” served to create a new discursive reality in which the present symbolized fresh representation and, finally, the unity and democracy that had so long been sought.

The narratives of unity and exceptionalism did not flourish entirely without substance. With the end of authoritarian regimes in 1958, the dominant parties, AD and the social-Christian Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI), instituted policies of import-substitution that increased government intervention in the economy and dramatically amplified social services. According to Ellner, these policies “enhanced regime legitimacy and the popularity of pro-establishment political leaders.” Additionally, the expansion of the Venezuelan oil industry, which experienced its greatest rents between 1973 and 1978, led to a significant change in the overall Venezuelan standard of living. Indicators measured improvement in health standards, levels of education, life expectancy, infant mortality, and employment.

Though by the early 1980s per capita oil income had begun to decrease, state narratives continued to celebrate democratic changes that set Venezuela apart from other developing nations. Declining state legitimacy (discussed in further detail later), however, prompted a new style of governance. Seeking to separate the “new” Venezuela from an unstable past, politicians upheld a discourse emphasizing reform through modernization, democratization, and decentralization in an effort to distance the government from past corrupt party control. The new goal was to reduce the state role in social support, thereby creating an antipolitical Venezuela upheld through traditionally absent citizen

---

68 Ellner and Salas, 4.
70 Ibid., 22.
participation, directed through the figure of the “neighbor-citizen.” According to Lander:

An antipolitical and antiparty discourse was reflected in the media, establishing a Manichean opposition between the state (characterized as corrupt, inefficient, and clientelist) and a mythical civil society (which included the media), understood as a synthesis of all virtue: creativity, initiative, efficacy, honesty, and participation.

This narrative celebrated Venezuela’s new wealth and democracy as well as the final incorporation of the entire population into a participatory system. It was, in every sense, a narrative of exceptionalism. At the same time, however, it soon became clear that this narrative, though perhaps representing mild changes on behalf of privileged sectors of the population, had not materialized for the grand majority. Instead of creating a new civil society and participation, it was yet another narrative that ignored and disguised exclusion.

The Narratives Shatter

The riots of 1989 called the celebrated stability and ingrained social cohesion of Venezuela into question, rupturing the myth of exceptionalism and triggering significant changes to the national narrative and the idea of being Venezuelan. From February 27th to March 3rd, an estimated one million Venezuelans took to the street in Caracas and other major cities, looting thousands of stores and factories and taking control of the streets. The government retaliated with military force—killing 277 people by official count, though thousands are estimated to have died. According to Fernando Coronil and Skurski, the massacre, named the Caracazo, constituted “by far the most massive and severely repressed such riots in the history of Latin America.” The explanation given at the time for the massive social upheaval relied on simple economic logic: bus fares had been increased by over one hundred percent after the government doubled gasoline prices, and the poor were angry. Coronil and Skurski, however, have moved beyond such arguments and instead analyze the action as the “accumulated frustration with the nation’s rapid economic decline.”

---

71 This name emerged from the growth of neighborhood organizations in middle and upper-class neighborhoods. Initially established to uphold democracy, their “central concern...has been defence of property and protection from threats by the excluded sectors of the population” (Ibid., 24).
72 Ibid.
73 Lander, 25.
and its political and economic corruption." In their perspective, the trigger for this explosion was newly elected president Pérez’s decision to sign on with the International Monetary Fund and accept the accompanying stringent structural adjustment program, part of his overall restructuring of the economy along neoliberal lines (which ran in direct opposition to promises he had made during his campaign to explicitly avoid such reforms).

In my own analysis, this event is significant as a tangible example of the public responding to disillusionment with the national narrative. By breaking his promise and implementing reforms that had direct and dire consequences for the majority of the Venezuelan population, Pérez provided the necessary fuel for a long excluded group, the poor pueblo majority, to express frustration. Though the dominant narrative preached inclusion, and even went so far as to deem this group nearly assimilated into national culture (due to democratic reform and growth in wealth), the Caracazo revealed the continued presence of exclusion and spoke to the continued disillusionment of the pueblo with the national identity. In this sense, the Caracazo was not a random, inexplicable fluke—it was merely an expression of repressed feelings of social exclusion.

While building and exploding from the platform of an unrepresentative national narrative, the uprising also had profound effects after the fact in changing Venezuelan perceptions of nation and the national narrative. Most significantly, the Caracazo deeply questioned the prominent notion of Venezuelan exceptionalism in regards to other Latin American and impoverished nations. According to Ellner, “Those who had previously defended exceptionalism generally came to recognize that the system of “pacted democracy” was fashioned by political elites and was therefore inherently exclusionary.” Beneath a powerful rhetoric of progress, modernization, and democracy dwelt a much more deeply ingrained stratum of decidedly undemocratic behavior, including widespread corruption, electoral fraud, repression, and most importantly revealed, state violence. Political exclusion was perhaps the norm, not the exception, in Venezuelan society.

---

75 Coronil and Skurski, 291.
76 Lander, 25.
77 Ellner and Salas, 8.
Lead-Up to the Riots: Stories the National Narrative Didn’t Tell

An examination of the Caracazo in the context of the national narrative upheld through Doña Bárbara and the exceptionalism thesis reveals how exclusion from nation identity may spur social action. Despite a narrative of cohesion and democracy, the harsh day-to-day reality of poverty in Venezuela continued virtually unabated throughout the period of wealth. These realities are important for understanding public perceptions about being Venezuelan, both in the lead-up to the Caracazo and, eventually, in the election of Chávez. A brief examination of the history leading up to this uprising and the shattering of the myth of Venezuelan exceptionalism will provide an important lens for understanding the current state of the narrative and the role that cooperatives play in the contestation process.

Despite the relative increases in wealth during the 1960s and 1970s with the oil boom in Venezuela, by the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s the country found itself deep in the midst of the economic debt crisis that characterized so many other developing countries during this time. In Venezuela, however, it took hold and dramatically transformed society throughout the rest of the century. Between 1970-1997, per capita income decreased by eight percent and workers’ income was reduced by roughly half. Income distribution changed markedly, reducing the relative power of labor as capital’s share of production income increased 15 percent. Perhaps most revealing, Armando Martel estimates that the percent of the population living in poverty increased from 36 percent to 68 percent between 1984 and 1991.78

In this manner, though the debt crisis came later to Venezuela, Edgardo Lander argues that it was even more profound than in other Latin American countries because the “expectations of sustained growth and improved living conditions had sunk deep roots in the Venezuelan mode of thinking.”79 In other words, though the exceptionalism thesis had not signified tangible changes in inclusion for much of Venezuela’s excluded lower social classes, it had begun to gain importance because it offered a source of hope for future change and possibility. Thus, the contrast of the debt crisis to what had been discursively portrayed as the beginning of a “golden age” signaled not merely an economic recession but, rather, the failure of an idea of continued progress and, for the excluded

---

79 Lander, 22.
majority, confirmation that they had never truly belonged within the national narrative or story of national advancement. According to Lander, “poverty and exclusion ceased to be seen as temporary phenomena in a “developing” or “modernizing” society or as conditions that might be overcome through individual effort. These crises-like conditions increasingly became permanent features of society.”

In the face of such realizations, the Caracazo represented the turning point—or place of no return—in regards to the myth of exceptionalism and also uncovered many of the exclusions beneath the façade of the national discourse that had formed the secret base of Venezuelan society. As Lander summarizes, “Historical and more recent forms of social division and exclusions that had been forgotten in the dominant political discourse and political culture became increasingly difficult to ignore.”

According to Chesa Boudin et al., the years following the Caracazo were characterized by an average of 4.5 protests per day across the country. Clearly, at this moment, exclusion in Venezuela was at least somewhat revealed, and for the first time it became increasingly evident that two countries existed: “a 'Venezuela imaginaria' that was disconnected from 'Venezuela profunda'—the everyday life of the majority of the population.”

The Rise of Chávez and the “Bolivarian Narrative”

Then Lieutenant-Colonel Hugo Chávez Frías would answer the dire call for change in Venezuela with his coup attempt against President Pérez in 1992. Although unsuccessful, his statement on national television before being sent to jail that the coup had failed only “por ahora” circulated rapidly among poor sectors of the population, soon becoming a mantra of hope that a true revolution was nearing. Tension continued to build in the country, leading to the impeachment of Pérez in 1993. In 1994, newly elected president Rafael Caldera pardoned Chávez, freeing the man who had quickly become a national hero. Released from jail, and now with significant support generated by his famous parting words, Chávez entered the presidential race in 1998, espousing a radical

---

80 Ibid., 23.
81 Ibid., 22.
82 Boudin, González, and Rumbos, 1.
83 Lander, 24.
84 In English, “for now.”
85 In a 74 second television clip, Chávez said: “Comrades, the objectives we have set for ourselves to achieve have not been possible to achieve for now—“por ahora”—but new possibilities will arise again, and the country will be able to move forward to a better future…. I alone take responsibility for this Bolivarian military uprising,” (cited in Boudin, González, and Rumbos ,2).
86 Boudin, González, and Rumbos ,2.
narrative of potential Venezuelan political and social reform. Unlike his competitors, who failed to distance themselves from the traditional political parties, Chávez ran on an anti-corruption and anti-\textit{puntofijismo}\textsuperscript{87} platform, speaking directly to the \textit{pueblo} with promises to increase social services and end poverty. To worldwide surprise, given the extreme nature of his rhetoric, he was elected president in 1998 with 56.20 percent of the votes in an election with 63.76 percent voter turn-out. His main competitor, Henrique Salas Römer, received a mere 39.97 percent of votes.\textsuperscript{88}

Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis to argue explicitly for why Chávez was elected, my analysis of national narratives until this point suggests the importance that his new discourse and platform may have played: Chávez spoke directly to excluded Venezuelans, promising to include them in the restructuring of Venezuelan society. His narrative at his time of election was, and has continued to be, significantly different from any previous Venezuelan national narrative in his assertive attention towards the poor and renewed emphasis on the birth of the nation. Ellner describes:

"The key word in Chávez’s speeches, to which he returns again and again in the most diverse contexts, is \textit{pueblo} (people), which is a synthesizing term taking in the popular and the national. He often uses the concept “el soberano” (sovereign) synonymously with “el pueblo.” [In] this reiterated appeal to the popular and the national… he defends sovereignty by invoking the founding myths of the nation…."\textsuperscript{89}

By speaking directly to the poor and invoking their power through the lens of historical precedence—that is, the legendary birth of Venezuela during Bolívar’s time—Chávez’s discourse holds both the appeal of empowerment and the return to a past glory of popular nationalism. Though former Venezuelan narratives did attempt to appeal to the excluded poor through promises of change and a “new elite,” Chávez’s rhetoric can be clearly distinguished by the fact that it is in many ways directly threatening to “the upper-middle and upper classes and a large proportion of the country’s intellectuals.”\textsuperscript{90} His promises and most basic intents

\textsuperscript{87} This term references a 1958 pact between Venezuela’s political parties that essentially limited future elections to a competition between two parties. Initially seen as a positive reform, the term emerged in a derogatory sense to encompass the negative consolidation of power in what was seen as a corrupt, two-party system.


\textsuperscript{89} Lander, 27.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
have, thus far, largely been taken seriously, likely because his discourse has been accompanied by tangible governmental actions designed to at least visibly restructure Venezuelan society. As mentioned earlier, these changes include both symbolic reforms, such as rewriting the constitution to defend previously ignored rights, and concrete reforms, such as guaranteeing free healthcare and education and creating a government-supported cooperative program. For this reason, even though material living conditions did not improve markedly during the initial years of the Chávez administration, Chávez has “continued to be popular among nonprivileged sectors because his symbolically integrative discourse cultivates an extraordinary sense of identity.”

Given Chávez’s focus on creating a social economy through direct citizen mobilization and participation, however, the failure of his cooperative program to accomplish such a transformation on a mass scale remains puzzling. After the popular power expressed during the Caracazo and the continued deepening gulf between rich and poor since then, the lack of energy or social change stimulated through the cooperative program is counterintuitive. In the following section, I suggest that the relationship between the state and the cooperative movement—influenced greatly by a new narrative founded upon Chávez’s charisma—is key to understanding the failure of Chávez’s cooperative movement.

---

91 The exact percentage reduction in poverty during this time period is highly contested.
92 Lander, 28.
Volunteers form a barricade in preparation for Chavez's arrival at a campaign event in Mérida, Venezuela (November 2006).
Linkages with the State

Arguments abound for how states should or should not involve themselves in social movements. Many European scholars have historically focused on the negative repercussions of social movements connecting with the state. However, much scholarship that originates elsewhere has continued to take the alternate perspective, namely that social movements benefit significantly from linkages with the state. Rather than restricting independence, Joe Foweraker proposes that linkages can strengthen the identity of movements, particularly after social victories. Sidney Tarrow, similarly, argues that movements benefit from governmental ties because they can expand during certain political opportunities, such as inter-elite fragmentation. 93

Recently, nonetheless, some scholars have begun to move beyond explanations that explain movement success by linkages with the state or political parties. Though he acknowledges the importance of state involvement, Ellner sees the structural cohesion and organization of a movement as the most significant factor in permitting influence at the state and local level. From his perspective, national structure can strengthen a social movement without weakening its message. He writes:

Just as cooperation with political structures may represent a middle ground between dependence on political parties and the state, at one extreme, and a skeptical apoliticism, at the other, nation-wide organisations may stop short of the extreme centralism of the ‘old’ social movements. 94

Ellner applies this argument to his analysis of the failure of the Venezuelan Neighborhood Movement to become widespread and influential.

Kirk A. Hawkins and David R. Hansen, who write about the Círculos Bolivarianos, community groups that the Chávez administration has supported to further the goals of the Revolution, take a slightly different approach to understanding why social movements may have less power than expected or, in the case of the Círculos, do “not significantly enhance the level of pluralism in the broader civil society.” 95 They move even farther beyond Ellner by suggesting that linkages

---

94 Ellner, 96.
with the state can actually be harmful to a movement, and in this way share more commonalities with the European social movements perspective. Hawkins and Hansen argue that the institutionalization of civil society is key for the success of movements and organizations in effecting the democracy. 96 They argue that the Círculos lacked a strong level of institutionalization and, more specifically, that they “embodied a charismatic mode of linkage between Chávez and his supporters,”97 meaning that votes and support were given primarily in exchange for Chávez’s promises of reform as a charismatic leader and less for the strength of particular policies or in relation to received benefits. As a result, “this mode of linkage created an internal contradiction or tension between the Círculos’ stated goals of autonomy/internal democracy and serving Chávez, and it undermined their efforts at institutionalization.”98 Though the Círculos increased the plurality of civil society within the Chavista99 movement, they largely excluded and disenfranchised citizens and other groups who did not espouse a political orientation or who identified con la Oposición. Thus, in the particular case of Venezuela, Hawkins and Hansen show that symbolic connections with the state, or in this instance, Chávez, can weaken the autonomy and power of social movements across society.

Charisma as Narrative: A New Form of Social Exclusion?

Building from Hawkins and Hansen, I propose that state linkages can undermine social movements because the existence of charismatic linkages impedes groups from independently challenging national narratives through the creation of alternate narratives. In this process, the role of charisma is particularly relevant. Critics and fans alike frequently characterize Chávez as possessing a strong charismatic appeal and some authors, such as Hawkins and Sylvia and Danopoulos, consider this a significant factor in his electability and continued high popularity ratings:

First, charismatic appeal. Chávez began forming his strongman populist image with his defiance in the face of defeat during his 1992 coup. Second, his dark complexion and coarse hair identifies him racially with the vast majority of Venezuelans. Third, he invokes the image of Bolivar and the spirit of revolution against foreigners…

96 Hawkins and Hansen, p. 119.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 In popular rhetoric, a “Chavista” is anyone ardently in favor of Chávez, and anyone who feels differently is con la Oposición, or with the “Opposition.”
100 Sylvia and Danopoulos, 67.
What, though, is charisma? According to Ariel de la Fuente, charisma has too often been dismissed as a mere “phenomenon of personal magnetism,”\(^{101}\) which thereby attributes the degree of popular support almost purely to the personal qualities of the leader at hand. A more recent trend, thus, has been to view charisma “as a reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers.”\(^{102}\) In other words, the very act of conferring the status of ‘charismatic’ to a leader represents a social decision and reflects the values and needs of the followers. As such, “cultural and social expectations…exercise a controlling or, at least, limiting influence over the would-be charismatic figure.”\(^{103}\) In Chávez’s particular case, it therefore becomes important to consider why he is so frequently cited as charismatic and appealing to the poor masses. Clearly, this charisma has more to do with the degree of symbolism that ‘the followers’ have attributed to Chávez than his actual personal magnetism. Hawkins describes this appeal through the Venezuelan book *Habla el Commandante*, which he says “paints a picture of [Chávez as] a humble yet gifted leader, a messiah likely to end the cycle of pillaging, appropriation, and extermination of the ‘pueblo-pobreza’ that Venezuela has experienced since the arrival of Columbus and the conquest of American lands…”\(^{104}\) The elevation of Chávez to charismatic leader is thus tightly bound to the desire of the *pueblo* to find a strong president capable of reversing their historic social exclusion.

As such it is by no means insignificant that Chávez has been frequently compared to the legendary *caudillos* of Venezuela’s past, also celebrated for their charisma and ability to lead the masses. Chávez is in fact “the purported great-grandson of a revolutionary *caudillo*.”\(^{105}\) In *Habla el Commandante*, Muñoz writes:

> It should not be forgotten that we are standing before a spent model, in conditions of existence that herald new times. Nevertheless, at the beginning, the agent of change that comes into action is one that we could call traditional, that is, the old and familiar savior-caudillo with its messianic accent, purpose, and projection.\(^{106}\)

---


\(^{102}\) Fuente, 505.

\(^{103}\) Scott, 221.

\(^{104}\) Hawkins, 1147.


Invoked among the *pueblo* as a legendary figure arisen from the past, Chávez is imbued with a deeply symbolic charismatic power. As Scott points out, however, charisma is a relationship, and Chávez fulfills his side of the bargain. According to Sylvia and Danopoulos:

> When international media observers review Chávez as a politician they acknowledge that his dark skin resonates with the *mestizo* masses. They also note his fiery rhetoric and televised diatribes and suggest that he is unstable and possibly dangerous. What they fail to appreciate is the level of desperation among the masses and Chávez’s *mastery of the symbolic and practical uses of politics*\(^{107}\) [emphasis added].

In other words, Chávez is able to present himself as the leader that represents the “cultural and social expectations”\(^ {108}\) of Venezuela’s excluded poor. Given the context of Chávez’s arrival into Venezuelan politics and his efforts to symbolize popular concerns and ideas, his elevation to the place of charismatic leader among the excluded majority is not surprising. This particular milieu also explains in large part the presence of the charismatic linkages that Hawkins and Hansen identify. According to Max Weber, “charismatic linkages are the product of crises or period of ‘distress,’ moments when existing institutions have clearly failed to generate solutions to society’s deepest problems.”\(^ {109}\) Such linkages are detrimental, according to Hawkins, because they “are based upon a Manichaean discourse of ‘the people versus the elite’ that naturally encourages an ‘anything goes’ attitude among Chávez’s supporters.” As such, he finds that “these populist qualities undermine the [Bolivarian] movement’s democratic potential.”\(^ {110}\)

Hawkins, however, does not adequately address how, specifically, such charismatic linkages undermine democracy. In my analysis, I delve deeper into the role of charisma as regards the mobilization and formation of a participatory civil society. As such, I propose that connections to Chávez’s charisma explain the weakness of the *Círculos* because their dependence on Chávez’s populist and socialist narrative prevented their independent formation and power as an empowering social mechanism for the excluded classes. Though Chávez’s narrative may preach inclusion in an attempt to distance itself from past exclusionary narratives and gain popular support, his elevation to charismatic

---

\(^{107}\) Sylvia and Danopoulos, 75.

\(^{108}\) Scott, 221.


leader in fact legitimates a state model that is equally reliant upon historic patterns of exclusion and ‘otherness.’ By fulfilling the charismatic criteria of his followers, Chávez receives high popular support but, as a consequence, he in turn imbues his social programs with an already scripted narrative of being and resistance that is innately politicized. In this manner, though Chávez’s verbal narrative is new, his charisma is a vehicle that carries the Bolivarian narrative forward in the same exclusionary pattern of past Venezuelan narratives.

I will argue that Cecosesola’s experience sheds light on how important it may be for social movements to maintain distance from government structure and interference and for leaders to not assume positions of legendary status. The failure of Chávez’s cooperatives, not only regulated by the government but also initiated by the government, must thus be explained by the role of the state in the narrative resistance process and its impedance of group-initiated alternative narratives.

Cooperatives as Sites of Resistance and Alternative Narrative Construction

The next step in understanding this phenomenon naturally involves an analysis of the role that cooperatives play as social movements questioning exclusionary national narratives. In this section, I first discuss the origins of the cooperative model, both internationally and in Venezuela, while orienting my analysis within the history of Venezuelan national narratives that I proposed earlier. I argue that cooperatives can serve as vehicles for social inclusion because they allow members to contest historic power arrangements implied by the national narrative. I then delve more deeply into the goals and structures of Chávez’s cooperative program, reviewing several preliminary explanations that have been offered for the failure of the program. Finally, I discuss briefly the history and development of Cecosesola, placing emphasis on why it is defined as a successful cooperative.\footnote{Refer to footnote 28 [page 36] for my rubric of what constitutes a successful cooperative.}

Background on Cooperatives

Though the birth of the term “cooperative” in development discourse is a rather new phenomenon, the concept itself has a much longer history; in fact, the cooperative is arguably one of the oldest structures of human society. Studies
suggest that the earliest human communities centered primarily on cooperative operations for their daily existence. In what Riane Eisler terms “partnership models” of society, individuals worked together in egalitarian relationships to achieve greater prosperity than would have been possible through mere isolated efforts.¹¹² In ancient Babylonia, for example, peasants practiced cooperative farming and, in China, early cooperatives appeared in the form of savings and loan associations.¹¹³

Cooperative modes of living survived in various forms despite the huge transformations away from this structure during the last several thousand years, but they did so primarily in isolated, sporadic episodes or in societies still primarily untouched by the changing global community. Dissatisfaction with the pervasiveness of capitalism as the new world language of commerce, and its multitude of negative effects, however, has triggered a resurgence in the idea of cooperatives since their modern birth during the Industrial Revolution, and they have become the basis of a global cooperative movement which now serves, in some way, half of the world population.¹¹⁴ Today, though, they exist in a much more formal and defined sense than previously, when cooperatives persisted as normal modes of interaction rather than as part of an established ideology.

Unlike cooperative movements during the 19th and early 20th centuries,¹¹⁵ many of which possessed a decidedly radical Marxist flavor, the contemporary global

¹¹⁵ Cooperatives, in the modern sense, emerged from growing dissolution among working class people in Europe during the Industrial Revolution (late 18th and 19th centuries) as increased polarization of wealth and heightened migration into cities escalated class tensions and poverty. Families that moved into cities and could no longer grow their own food became dependent on storeowners for their basic needs, often with disastrous results as these businessmen adulterated their products or paid workers in “chits,” credit at their own company stores. In frustration, workers began forming collectives to purchase goods wholesale to distribute among themselves. Eventually, these ideas came to full fruition in Rochdale, England in 1843 when mill workers went on strike. Although the strike failed, several individuals decided that the most effective means to improve their lives was to create a worker-run store as an alternative to the company store. Though not the first co-op, the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society is considered the true origin of the cooperative movement because it was the first group to make its co-op “succeed and endure” (Karen Zimbelman, “The History of Cooperatives,” Employee Orientation Handbook on Co-op History, Cooperative Development Institute, http://www.cdi.coop/historyofcoops.php (accessed April 21, 2007)). Its list of operating principles has become a guide for defining the contemporary global cooperative movement. Since then, cooperatives have continued to grow in popularity and strength around the world. Spain is famous for its Mondragón Cooperative Corporation (MCC), accepted as “the largest and most successful cooperative network” to date (“Visit to Mondragón,” Prout Research Center of Venezuela,http://priven.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=49 (accessed April 21, 2007)).

Cuba has also been heralded for its cooperative development, mainly in regards to the sustainable agriculture cooperatives that now feed a significant percentage of the population. France, Mexico, and Canada are also prime sites of recent cooperative endeavors.
movement shares a common rhetoric nestled around a slightly different ideological underpinning and ultimate goal. Though critical of capitalism, cooperative language does not herald “socialism” as the necessary solution to social exclusion and lack of worker power over labor. Instead, it often takes a less politicized stance, promoting cooperatives as a necessary step forward in the creation of a social economy, an alternative system of production and exchange that attempts to hold the economy to the service of the people (in contrast to seeing workers as the engine of the economy). Within the framework of the social economy, the goal of production is not to create a profit, but rather to support the health and needs of the community. In this manner, the cooperative movement is in fact a transnational social movement driven by the goal of reordering global systems of production and exchange.

Cooperatives in Venezuela

My focus on cooperatives in Venezuela before and after Chávez’s initial presidential election will explore 1) the history of cooperatives in this region and how cooperatives emerge from situations of social exclusion, 2) the aspects of the cooperative (more generally) that foster social inclusion, and 3) how cooperatives ultimately cultivate new community narratives that resist national narratives. Contrasting the motives, inclusive practices, and narratives within Chávez’s cooperatives and Cecosesola will illuminate the underlying reasons for the failure of his program.

The first cooperative in Venezuela was founded in 1903, but the formal Law of Cooperatives did not emerge until much later, in 1946. According to San José Obrero, however, it was not until 1960 with the Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Tacuato and the Cooperativa del Transporte del Estado Portuguesa that the new conception of cooperativismo as a form of social resistance was born in Venezuela. Primarily introduced by Jesuit priests from the Antigonish cooperative movement (associated with the Universidad de San Francisco Javier

---

116 This term has occasionally been critiqued for lack of clarity on the basis that any economy is social, and as a result, alternative names have been proposed, some of which include “supportive economy” and “economy of solidarity.” However, given that “social economy” is the name most often referenced in cooperative literature, I will use it throughout my paper with the understanding that it may not be the only name for this concept.

117 Bastidas-Delgado, 45.

118 In English, “Savings and Credit Cooperative of Tacuato.”

119 In English, “Transportation Cooperative of Portuguesa State.”

120 This word has no direct English translation, but can be read as “cooperativism,” or “sense of being a cooperative.”

121 San José Obrero, *Una cooperativa que nació para servir a sus asociados* (Coro: Encuadernaciones Mario, 2007), 19-20.
in Canada) and further supported by the US government’s Alliance for Progress, these initial cooperatives sprung up in poor, urban barrios as savings and loan associations to provide basic financial capital. Though the cooperative idea and basic structure were ideas imported from abroad, cooperatives soon witnessed significant growth and separated from their initial religious foundations to target “the problems of that time: poverty and exploitation.” The number of cooperatives grew so tremendously in these initial years that the need for national organization became necessary, leading to the creation of SUNACOOP in 1966. By the 1970s, cooperatives had begun forming strong federations and regional cooperativas centrales, or central cooperatives, resulting in a network of cooperative activity across the entire country. Cecosesola, officially founded in 1967, became one such center, and is unique for having survived in a similar (or enhanced) capacity to this day.

The success of this initial cooperative movement in Venezuela cannot be separated from the historical development of exclusionary national narratives. The first cooperatives emerged and gained force during the onset of the Doña Bárbara narrative, a time particularly marked by narrative rejection of “poor” barbarism, rural values, and a backward past. However, efforts to modernize and create democracy excluded large portions of society, particularly the influx of lower-class people that migrated to urban centers in a massive exodus that changed the rural-urban balance in Venezuela from 33 percent urban to 82 percent urban within a manner of years. Rather than contributing to a modernization process as national narratives promised, thousands of rural poor found themselves living in squalid, slum conditions in large cities. These social upheavals in the context of an exclusionary national narrative are important factors for understanding the birth of the cooperative movement. According to Orland Fals Borda:

> In Latin America, cooperative movements have generally been stimulated by political motives: they are a means to pacify an uprising pueblo. They look to soften the bad effects of a depression or at least promote a new life in backward, unstable areas… For this reason, the most important campaigns to

---

122 Fox.
123 Obrero, 20 [my translation].
124 The 1941 census indicated that about two-thirds of the population resided in rural areas. By 1950 a major shift had occurred, as the census showed that more than 53 percent of the population was urban. By 1975 the urban population was estimated at over 82 percent; the figure surpassed 85 percent in the late 1980s” (“Venezuela Migration,” http://www.photius.com/countries/venezuela/society/venezuela_society_migration.html, December 1990 (accessed 2 December 2007).
promote the cooperative movement in the continent have taken place principally during time periods of economic crisis and violence.\(^{125}\)

Though Bora focuses more on why priests or US government programs may have undertaken to *promote* cooperatives, the independent explosion of the movement away from its initial roots also speaks to the political and social motivations for cooperative development in the context of exclusion and the re-scripting of Venezuelan national identity during the years of the Doña Bárbara narrative and narrative of Venezuelan exceptionalism.

Within this context, cooperatives became particularly significant for the role they promised to play in countering social exclusion. According to Lucena et al., this purpose is the primary reason for their promotion\(^{126}\) and, in my analysis, it is the most important factor in understanding their historical and contemporary emergence and success or failure. Confronted by a national language of identity foreign to their lived experience, cooperatives have given excluded populations the power to change their own circumstances and define their own understanding of progress and modernization.

Several key aspects of the cooperative model can be highlighted for their generation of social inclusion. Cooperatives have been shown to provide solid economic stability, bond members into a politically powerful force, enhance the social integration of members, and give members a position of responsibility within a greater social construct.\(^{127}\) I argue that cooperatives, most importantly, rely on individual initiative directed towards a community-centric purpose and thereby stimulate agency. Through the agency that members assume as part of a cooperative, they gain the necessary power to define their own life position in direct opposition to national narratives that either exclude them discursively or ignore their social and material realities. The cooperative becomes a site of resistance as members collectively “write” new narratives that meld with their own lives and history. These new narratives separate members from the exclusion of the nation and, ultimately, through the added strength of the cooperative, allow them to re-engage with the state in a process that strengthens

---


\(^{126}\) Lucena, Fréitez, and Hernández, 75 [my translation].

civil society and may eventually write them back into the narrative of nation.

Structure and Agency

In targeting ‘agency’ as a key aspect of Cecosesola’s success and the basis for its unique narrative, yet another aspect of its success, my work contributes to the evolving literature about what constitutes agency. Generally speaking, such discussions focus on the contrast between structure, or the systems that define society, and the ways in which this structure shapes or is shaped by individuals. The heart of this debate is the degree to which individuals act as agents that re-imagine their social structure versus the degree to which they are shaped into pawns that further the structure of which they are a part.

The main challenge at the root of this debate is how to define structure and agency. For example, while most of us have a vague idea of what structure may constitute in our own society, when it comes to developing a precise definition, the meaning of the word becomes much fuzzier. Sharon Hays presents a succinct summary of the variety of ways in which scholars have attempted to decode structure:

Gusfield, for instance, refers to social structure as “institutions”; in Skocpol's view it consists of the relations between states, between classes, and between state and class; to Berger it means material circumstances; for Bellah et al., it is said to include such features as the economy and the state; Geertz equates it with “political instruments,” “institutions,” and the “power element”; and for Willis it is the system of “production.”

For the purposes of my research, I will define structure in Venezuela as the political and economical structures that influence the relationships between the state and social classes. As my discussion of national narratives has highlighted, many aspects of this structure can be pinpointed as fairly static over time, despite a continuous change in state discourse. These aspects, then, namely social

128 According to Ellner in “Obstacles,” social movements such as the Venezuela neighborhood associations (and in my analysis, cooperatives) are important because they mark “a sharp contrast with the traditional weakness of civil society [in Venezuela]—a near vacuum that had been occupied at an early date by political parties” (77). Arguably, however, this “earlier” civil society likely failed to represent the majority of Venezuelan citizens, given the elite nature of the political parties and administrations.

129 My case analysis of Cecosesola will provide evidence in favor of this argument.

exclusion and distribution of power, present themselves as several potential measures of structure.

Agency is equally challenging to define. However, in general, “agency always implies that an array of alternative forms of behavior [is] possible and that people make (conscious or unconscious) choices among those alternatives.” In essence, agency refers to individuals’ ability to choose their own life’s course. As Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische summarize in “What is Agency?”:

We define it as the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations…Such a categorization gives analytical expression to Mead’s conception of the positioning of human actors within temporal passage, involving the continual reconstruction of their orientations towards past and future in response to emergent events.¹³²

Critical in this definition is the aspect of re-imagining past, present, and future: agency permits human actors to conceive of their own temporal meaning. Equally important is that agency refers to the degree to which individuals are able to shape or influence the social structures that they inhabit. Here, however, lies the crux of the difficulty in distinguishing between agency and structure.

On one side of the divide lie structuralists, functionalists, and Marxists, all of whom generally minimize the role of human agency in their observations of social phenomena in order to highlight the degree to which the overall structure of society determines our social existence and behavior. Though the actions of individuals are not considered irrelevant, these theorists argue that society cannot be explained purely as the sum of the actions of all individuals present. Thus, some greater structure must exist to order human behavior and reproduce certain social norms. As Hays describes:

According to this logic, a “structural argument” is one attentive to the determinism of the “material” structure of social life—that is, a given set of social relations, natural resources, or identifiable economic and political institutions:

¹³¹ Hays, 62.
structural factors that are (allegedly) “scientifically” observable and “objective”.133

The primary criticism of this perspective, however, is that social change occurs. In other words, structures change—and according to many scholars, this is because individuals exert agency to challenge their social structure. Steven Lukes has termed this phenomena ‘structurally transformative agency.’134 Within this perspective, individual “agents” have the ability to construct and reconstruct their surroundings, systems of meaning, and interpretation of the world. Also known as ‘voluntarists,’ these scholars oppose “such ‘structuralists’ by emphasizing the agency of human beings who tacitly understand and creatively choose the cultural values guiding their action.”135

Though both extreme perspectives of structure and agency contribute to a greater understanding of these two forces in human society, a more recent trend in the literature has been to view structure and agency as complementary forces, with each becoming more or less important at different times and in different contexts. Under this perspective, structure shapes human behavior to some extent, but humans are also able to influence the social structure in which they exist. Peter L. Berger and Thoman Luckman are frequently cited for their analysis in Social construction of reality in which they described the relationship between structure and agency as dialectical. As Ruth A. Wallace explains, “According to Berger and Luckmann, everyday life is socially constructed by the continuous creation, through actions and interactions, of a shared reality that is experienced as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful.”136 In this sense, though individuals are no doubt shaped and influenced by the social reality around them, they can simultaneously exert agency to influence these surroundings. A good test of agency within this perspective is Paul Willis’ analysis of working-class ‘lads’ in London. In this example, he observed boys attempting to challenge the social stratification that made them poor by “refusing to accept the school’s achievement ideology.”137 However, their behavior in fact undermined their ability to succeed, ultimately guaranteeing their continued social powerlessness.138 Thus, a key aspect of pinpointing agency involves examining the real-world impacts. In Willis’ case, though the lads appeared to be

133 Hays, 60.
135 Hays, 60.
137 Hays, 63.
exercising agency, their actions resulted in the furthering of the current social system. Agency, therefore, can be tested for the role it plays in somehow challenging or combating the social structure, rather than reproducing it.

My analysis of agency within Cecosesola draws from and contributes to this historic discussion of structuralism versus agency. My data strongly support the work of modern theorists such as Berger and Luckman who recognize the dynamic relationship between structure and agency, and also deeply question the application of a structuralist perspective of society that minimizes the role of agency. Cecesesola exhibits the clear presence of agency as a form of resistance to the greater Venezuelan social structure. Not only does Cecosesola create a direct alternative to this structure, the presence of constant organizational flexibility, movement, and change, all upheld through agency, actually stalls the formation of a rigid group structure. Though Cecosesola is clearly a product of Venezuelan society—members frequently reference their inherent internalization of capitalism—as a whole its behavior and activities stand out as a sharp contrast and act of resistance to the greater societal structure.

My work does, however, suggest the need to broaden or reevaluate the current conception of agency and structure. Building from Sharon Hay’s work, I will show that rather than the activity of only individuals, agency can also be exercised on the level of a collective as a form of resistance to a greater structure, in this case the structure imposed by the Venezuelan state. Agency signifies the act of making a choice between two or more options, and such a choice can be shaped by a community or made as a collective decision. My research also suggests the need for a broader analysis of structure that includes the notion of culture. This can be seen in my own work through the efforts of Cecosesola cooperative members to resist what they define as typical Venezuelan cultural tendencies, a part of the greater structure that they seek to transform.

In this manner, I will argue that neither structure nor agency can be ignored in understanding the development of the Venezuelan cooperative movement. Though Cecosesola is a site of both individual and collective agency directed

---

139 As Hays writes, “Contributing to the problem is the fact that “social structure,” like many sociological concepts, is often defined by contrast: its meaning then becomes dependent on the concept which it is set against. One of the more prevalent forms of contrast is that between “structure and agency.” In this formulation the interconnections between structure and agency are lost. Further, this contrast is often mapped onto another set of dichotomies common in social theorizing and interpreted to mean, for instance, that structure is systematic and patterned, while agency is contingent and random; that structure is constraint, while agency is freedom; that structure is static, while agency is active; that structure is collective, while agency is individual” (57).

140 Hays, 64.
towards resisting the current Venezuela social structure, the cooperative is influenced by the greater national structure and also partly defined by its own structure and collective culture. However, as regards Cecosesola’s own structure, my research suggests the significance of Hays’ analysis that “structures should be understood as enabling as well as constraining; they are the very basis of human power and self-understanding.” As such, though structures within the cooperative may to some degree define acceptable behavior, ideologies, and speech, I will argue that as self-formulated structures that contrast with the national narratives these structures are in fact symbols of members’ agency (though they themselves may not have created the structure). In other words, by choosing to orient their lives within an alternative structure, members exercise agency. As Hays explains what she considers a false conception of agency: “people are agents in that they are the carriers or instruments of social structure.” Though Hays rejects this notion as the basis of agency, my research suggests that there are many levels of structure within society and that by opposing some and accepting, or constructing, others, individuals can exercise agency.

To recognize these dual forces of structure and agency, in presenting my data I distinguish between agency exercised on the level of the organization and agency exercised on the level of the individuals who compose the organization. This format acknowledges the validity of structure—that is, that Cecosesola is more than the sum of the agency of its individuals—but permits me to ultimately suggest that the importance of agency within the cooperative outweighs structure in the degree to which Cecosesola individuals constantly challenge existent realities in order to form their own social vision.

---

141 Ibid., 61.
142 Ibid., 62.
IV. Chávez’s Cooperatives and Cecosesola: Background for the Case Study

A mural on the Feria Central compound commemorating Cecosesola’s 37th anniversary. “Pescando Juntos,” the cooperative’s slogan, translates literally as “fishing together” refers to the Chinese fable in which a man comes across a poor beggar who asks him for food. Rather than give the beggar a fish, which he would soon eat up and then be forced to return to begging, the man decides to teach the beggar how to fish. Cecosesola critiques this story as it assumes that the man posses more knowledge than the beggar and must “instruct” him. Thus, the cooperative promotes the concept of “fishing together” to highlight the egalitarian structure of the cooperative as well as the cooperative’s function in the greater Barquisimeto community.
Chávez’s Cooperatives

Cooperatives became a part of the Bolivarian Revolution’s agenda within the first year of Chávez’s presidency as the administration chose to incorporate recognition and promotion of cooperatives into the new constitution (1999). Though organisms such as SUNACOOP had long existed to register and regulate cooperatives, Chávez deepened state linkages with the superintendence and its funding capabilities and also created MINEC (previously MINEP), the Ministry of Popular Power for the Communal Economy, to promote and provide training for cooperatives. Through these mediums, the government organized training programs and provided loans to encourage people to form cooperatives. Additionally, “by 2005, Chávez traveled through the country to authorize loans for cooperatives in televised “Regional Cabinet Meetings,” where beneficiaries discussed their plans and answered questions. The administration’s stated goals for fomenting cooperatives were to:

- develop mechanisms for the democratization of wealth, combating the neoliberal and privatizing visions that generate underdevelopment; to put into practice the concept of the economía popular as integrated in the Bolivarian Constitution; [and] to dignify productive labor and the quality of life of Venezuelan families.

In essence, cooperatives constituted part of Chávez’s stated goal to end poverty, foreign influence, and the rich elite’s domination of el pueblo. They were promoted as a way for normal citizens to further the Bolivarian revolutionary ideals and to assume popular control of the country. According to Article 70, cooperatives are an important piece of promoting the “participation and involvement of people in the exercise of their sovereignty in political affairs.”

Government promotion produced rapid results. As mentioned earlier, the number of cooperatives expanded from 762 in 1998 to 185,000 in 2006, the most of anywhere in the world (even surpassing the number of cooperatives in China during the 1970s). However, within the last year, the number of cooperatives has dropped dramatically. A newspaper article in Venezuela Real

footnotes:
143 Protections for cooperatives appear in Articles 70, 118, 184, and 308.
144 Steve Ellner, “The Trial (and Errors) of Hugo Chávez,” In These Times, 1 September 2007.
145 Ellner, “The Trial.”
146 Chávez’s new term for the social economy [my italicization].
Laura Adrienne Brady  Charisma and the Venezuelan Cooperative Movement

remarks that “the country also possesses the largest cemetery of cooperatives, because while China lost nearly half of its cooperatives in the last thirty years...the 117,448 that have disappeared in the SUNACOOP census represent nearly three-fourths of the official register.” According to a SUNACOOP report from this year (April 2007), 184,000 cooperatives are registered in the country but only 60,000 are in operation, which is barely 33 percent of the total. A more recent census suggests that only 48,000 may be active. Of those that are active, the credibility of their behavior as cooperatives and use of government funds is highly questionable. According to Ellner, “many cooperatives never got off the ground, and in other cases, cooperative members pocketed the money they received from loans or the down payments for contracts.” He measures the cost of these failures “in the loss of tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars.” As a result of these factors, Chávez has labeled the program a failure. In the words of a Chavista congressman, “Up until now, no one can say the cooperative program has been successful. In fact, there is little to show considering all the money that has been spent.”

Explanations for the failure so far have been scarce. One argument, proposed by Ellner, suggests that these cooperatives have relied too heavily on the state for funding and support. He writes, “The cooperatives are heavily dependent on the state. Government incentives include generous credit, lenient terms of payment and exemption from all taxes.” From a similar angle, Ellner also supports the argument that cooperatives grew rapidly due to the ready supply of government money, but because the use of funds was never effectively regulated, cooperatives without effective organization either failed or simply stole their loans. So far, no cooperatives have been penalized for illegal use of funds. Finally, the Chávez administration proposes the argument that the cooperative program failed to stimulate a true “socialist mentality” among the new cooperativistas. According to Ellner, “Chávez and his followers generally attribute the problems facing cooperatives to their members’ lack of social

151 Ellner, “The Trial.”
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 According to Ellner in “The Trial,” “Mechanisms have been created to monitor cooperatives, but to date there no cooperative member has been penalized for failing to comply with their legal obligations. Although Minister of the Popular Economy Pedro Morejón announced late last year that he had taken 300 cases of cooperatives to court, it is unclear whether Chávez, who claims to be the president of the underprivileged, will be willing to jail, or seize the property of, poor people who have misspent public money.”
As a result, in the new cooperative program that Chávez has recently designed, “they call for a cultural transformation along the lines of what Ché Guevara called the ‘New Socialist Man.’”

Through my case-study of Cecosesola, a successful cooperative that emerged prior to Chávez, I enrich current explanations for the failure of this program. In line with Bastidas-Delgado, who said that “the cooperative project was orientated to encapsulate the people based on political interests, to find out who is with me and to orient them in line with my interests,” I suggest that the political orientation of Chávez’s program imbued his cooperatives with a state narrative, in many respects no different from past Venezuelan national narratives, which prevented agency and the formation of new narratives. Though there are undoubtedly various factors that contributed to the failure of the program, the role of narrative in Cecosesola’s success, and in the resistance process in general, suggests the importance of this direction of analysis.

Cecosesola: “Pescando Juntos”

Cecosesola, or the Organismo de Integración Cooperativa, is a cooperative of cooperatives. Besides possessing its own activities, it is also the central organizing mechanism for a host of producers, families, and affiliated cooperatives with similar goals and values. Within Cecosesola’s informational handouts, usually included in workshop folders or provided to interested individuals, a section titled “Reason for Existence” reads:

We are an untraditional organization where we work with what we are, what we have, and what we continue being in the search for personal and collective transformation. The object of our organization is the formative process. This formative process develops through the different relations that are constructed by concrete work and the reflections that this work generates. Within this

---

156 Ellner, “The Trial.”
157 Ibid.
158 Sahmkow.
159 Literally, “fishing together.” This is the cooperative’s slogan and refers to the Chinese fable in which a man comes across a poor beggar who asks him for food. Rather than give the beggar a fish, which he would soon finish and then be forced to return to begging, the man decides to teach the beggar how to fish. Cecosesola critiques this story, however, as it assumes that the man posses more knowledge than the beggar and must “instruct” him. Instead, the cooperative promotes the concept of “fishing together” to highlight that everyone has something to learn and contribute in making the world a better place.
formative process the activities do not constitute an end in of themselves but rather a means through which we continue to realize our transformation.\textsuperscript{160}

Cecosesola functions with two levels of purpose. Its most basic intention is to “satisfy the needs that the community may possess.”\textsuperscript{161} With this in mind, it strives to promote community health and self-sufficiency through the supply of significantly discounted health services and goods. As one member expressed, “Our purpose is to give the most provisions to people as possible.”\textsuperscript{162} On a second level, the cooperative strives to build consciousness and change the framework of societies that are primarily profit and power-driven: in the words of the organization, patriarchal cultures. Within the patriarchal system, Cecosesola identifies hierarchy and inequality of wealth, knowledge, and power as negative outcomes. Thus, the organization also strives to “change the world without taking power”\textsuperscript{163} by initiating a process of self and communal transformative evolution that will improve the ways in which humans interact. In the words of one associate, “We are going to construct a different world. This is our politics.”\textsuperscript{164}

Though originating as a funerary service in 1967, Cecosesola has grown tremendously over time. Today, in addition to the original funerary service, it organizes three large \textit{ferias} throughout Barquisimeto, operates six community health clinics, offers financing as well as savings and loans services, and acts as a distribution facility for affiliated cooperatives and families to acquire items for smaller \textit{ferias} in the surrounding towns. The organization also encompasses groups of producers from the five main regions around Barquisimeto (within the states of Lara, Portuguesa, Barinas, and Trujillo), all of whom grow fruits and vegetables for sale at the \textit{ferias}, as well as local families and cooperatives who produce other items for market, such as coffee, cereals, and bread.\textsuperscript{165} Cecosesola possesses 350 or so associated workers and is comprised of roughly 75 cooperatives (savings, agricultural, production, civil associations, organizations), which brings the number of associated members to around 1,000.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{161}Interview 39, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, 4 September 2007.
\textsuperscript{162}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{163}Interview 49, cooperative associates, informal conversation at Regional Cooperative Meeting, Carora, Venezuela, 7 September 2007.
\textsuperscript{164}Interview 40, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, 4 September 2007.
\textsuperscript{165}See Appendix A for a more thorough description of Cecosesola’s organization and services.
\textsuperscript{166}Cecosesola, “Que es Cecosesola?” (August 2007).
The organization is a significant presence in Barquisimeto’s economy. Weekly, the cooperative moves about $800,000 in the ferias alone, totaling nearly $40 million in sales annually. In 2001, roughly 55,000 families relied weekly on Cecosesola ferias as their source of basic dietary products, and the markets serve about one-third of Barquisimeto’s 1.5 million residents. Though my interviews with customers revealed many reasons behind their preference for shopping at Cecosesola’s ferias, a large part of their popularity clearly stems partly from the fact that most products are sold at prices 30 percent cheaper than other markets in the region, a number that Cecosesola is able to maintain because it is not a profit-seeking organization. Rather, its goal is to provide the lowest-priced products possible to the community at any given moment, no matter the existence of national scarcities or price hikes.

As a result of its longevity and success in offering these services, Cecosesola is frequently labeled one of the most successful cooperatives in the world. However, scholarly attempts to explain its success have so far been limited to two principle arguments and have not accounted for the role of narrative in cooperative development and resistance. Though I will not disagree with past explanations, this thesis will propose two new elements—agency and narrative—as the most important factors for understanding Cecosesola’s prominence.

Oscar Bastidas-Delgado presents the innovations of self-management and decentralization as the main factors permitting the longevity and growth of Cecosesola. He narrows these reasons down to the lack of a power structure and the unique way in which the cooperative’s activity is organized. Luis Gómez Calcaño adds a similar perspective, arguing that Cecosesola has been successful because it combines two principles that have historically been considered separate: efficiency and equity. In other words, “one of the main economic lessons to draw from this experience is that “by the people” and “the markets” are not necessarily unrelated expressions: that the low-income and marginal sectors are able to enter the markets if they have the appropriate organizational and cultural tools…” These factors are undoubtedly important for the functioning

---

167 Fox.
170 Cecosesola has been selected by the Inter-American Development Bank as one of the most successful experiences of community development in Latin America.
171 Bastidas-Delgado, 143.
172 Calcaño.
of Cecosesola, but they do not greatly enrich an understanding of the role that cooperatives play in combating social exclusion. Thus, I will offer a new explanation by arguing that a cooperative’s success is tied to its effectiveness in generating a new group narrative.

Methodology

To explore agency as a measure of Cecosesola’s success, I will be analyzing the results of my ethnographic research with Cecosesola direct associates and various affiliated cooperative members. In August and September of 2007, I spent one month living on one of Cecosesola’s compounds (Feria del Centro) in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, during which time I conducted 53 semi-structured and informal interviews with direct associates, affiliated cooperative associates (members of Cooperativa Divina Pastora, Central Portuguesa, Cooperativa Mixta Santo Brasil, and several cooperative food stands at Feria del Centro), and community members. These informal interviews constitute conversations conducted casually on site and as well as statements from the many public cooperative meetings that I was able to attend and observe. These meetings included weekly and daily Reuniones de Gestión, Reuniones de Cooperativas Afiliadas, educational meetings, and Reuniones de los Chamos. The meetings I attended took place in the Escuela Cooperativa “Rosario Arjona” on the main feria compound, Feria del Centro, and were all optional and completely transparent (any cooperative member or visitor can attend). To my knowledge, Cecosesola holds no private or exclusive meetings. During my visit, I was also able to attend a Cecosesola Asamblea (General Assembly) meeting, which takes place three-times a year. These Assemblies are service-specific (corresponding to feria, funerary service, etc.) and also open to all members. Generally, around 100 members attend. In addition, I observed the year-end Cecosesola meeting, which all direct members are expected to attend, during which members discuss how to use the net earnings of the previous year and set bonuses and salaries for the coming year. Roughly 300 individuals attended, spending half of the day in small groups and then reuniting at the end in one large circle in a warehouse to make final decisions. In September, I also attended a regional gathering of cooperatives in

---

173 I have chosen Cecosesola as my case-study because of its early establishment. However, as a cooperativa central, it encompasses many cooperatives, several of which are new (though not government cooperatives). I will include the experiences of these new cooperative members in my study as a means of exploring the living foundation process (which happened 40-years ago in the case of Cecosesola and is therefore more difficult to analyze).

174 Cecosesola’s cooperative school.

175 Refer to Appendix A for a fuller description.
Corora, Venezuela, partly organized by Cecosesola. The meeting was one of many (others occurred in different regional locations), all of which served as forums for various cooperatives—principally pre-Chávez cooperatives—to formulate a cohesive opinion about the proposed Constitutional Amendments and modifications to the Special Law of Cooperatives (part of the December 2007 election).

The rest of my data is in the form of participant observations and primary source materials from the cooperative, which detail Cecosesola’s internal organization, productivity, and history. The Escuela has a library full of its historical documents, which provided an invaluable source of information. I also utilized Cecosesola’s self-published book, *Buscando una Convivencia Armónica*, as a source of group narrative and historical facts.

My analysis is purely qualitative in nature, due both to the constraints of my study and the nature of the subject matter. Perceptions of purpose, community, and self-management are by nature ephemeral concepts, as is social resistance. I recognize that such qualitative data analysis possesses inherent sources of concern. Foremost among these is what Catherine Kohler Riessman identifies as the difficulty of “transcribing experience,” or the question of how to re-convey spoken narratives. Though it is impossible to exactly represent experiences, I strive to portray the original conversations of my investigation with as much integrity as possible, while simultaneously recognizing that my own presence in the re-telling is an important piece of the story this thesis will tell. The same process is true in my act of “analyzing experience,” or deciding what my data may signify. I thus do not attempt to give voice to my subjects, but rather accept that “[w]e cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret.”

By relying heavily on associates’ direct statements, I hope to minimize the role that my own cultural framework may play in my selection of


177 This problem addresses both the dilemma of how to convert verbal stories into written text and also the role of the research in delineating the importance of certain material over others and its most effective form of presentation. Riessman explains, “There is no one, true representation of spoken language…The form of representation reflects the artist’s views and conceptions—values about what’s important.” In essence, Riessman is revealing the importance of understanding that the researcher’s re-telling of a conversation can never exactly represent the initial exchange.

178 Riessman writes that this perspective recognizes that “the challenge is to identify similarities across the moments into an aggregate, a summation. An investigator sits with the pages of tape-recorded stories, snips away at the flow of talk to make it fit between the covers of a book, and tries to create sense and dramatic tension” (226).

179 Riessman, 220.
key concepts. To highlight associates’ narratives, I present much of my data in the form of interview panels, followed by analysis.

To explore the correlation between agency and Cecosesola’s success, I separate the concept of agency into purpose and the presence of group autonomy and individual initiative. Of interest in these elements is how associates narrate their values and experiences as well as how these statements are executed in practice. Thus, my analysis attempts to compare the discourse of associates to their observed behavior. In the first section, I separate agency into two levels: the level of the organization and the level of the individual, performing several tests to measure the presence of the elements of autonomy and initiative. As my discussion of agency and structure proposes, the act of exercising agency need not only occur through the behavior of one individual. Rather, as my observations of Cecosesola suggest, the cooperative has assumed an identity of its own, and though the cooperative is composed of individuals, associates actually connect their own decisions and initiative to the greater idea of the cooperative. Thus, it is important to explore both the collective agency of Cecosesola as a group and the agency of individual associates.

The next section analyzes members’ narratives in order to construct the key elements of the Cecosesola group narrative. I then use these two causal factors for Cecosesola’s success—agency and narrative—in the final analysis section as measures for characterizing the causes of the failure of Chávez’s cooperatives. As no conclusive quantitative data yet exists, to my knowledge, about the exact nature of the failure of his program, my analysis draws upon my interviews, during which members frequently shared observations about the newer cooperatives. Though they cannot substitute for direct studies of member behavior within the new cooperatives, they are useful for drawing broad conclusions about the nature of the governmental program. The consistency of member responses defines them as a strong preliminary source for understanding the causes of failure.
V. The Case Study

A selection of products made by several of Cecosesola's affiliated cooperatives or civil associations, grouped together for sale at Feria Central. Products pictured include coffee, oatmeal, cream of rice, bullion powder, and honey. Local cooperatives also supply bread, noodles, vanilla extract, organic herbs, and all of the fruits and vegetables sold at feria. Cecosesola sources its household goods, basic kitchen staples, and packaged foods from suppliers, but generally sells these items at reduced prices (on average, 30 percent lower than national supermarkets).
Modeling Cecosesola’s Success

Given its persistence through several important stages in Venezuelan history, both before and after Chávez, Cecosesola is an intriguing site for a case study aimed at understanding the role of narrative in cooperative resistance and, more importantly, in the context of the at-times contradictory Bolivarian Revolution. In this section, I offer an explanation for Cecosesola’s success in mobilizing citizen cooperative engagement. This model of cooperative success will provide an important lens for scrutinizing the contradiction of high popular support but low citizen mobilization for community change both within Chávez’s cooperative movement and the Revolution in general.180

In the first chapter, I construct a model for understanding Cecosesola’s success by pinpointing the roles of agency and narrative in the development of a cooperative and a communal identity. Then, in the second chapter, Chapter Four, I use this framework to dissect Chávez’s cooperative program and to understand his condemnation, as well as the empirical measure, of its failure. Lastly, in Chapter Five, I provide my final analysis of the contradictions within the Bolivarian Revolution against the backdrop of exclusionary national narratives in Venezuela, ending with several important implications of this study.

Agency

Cecosesola’s success draws foremost from the fact that the cooperative was created by, and continues to be maintained through, a process of group and individual self-initiation, which I term agency. Such agency stems from the lived purpose of the organization and individuals’ purpose for participation as well as the responsibility that the cooperative and its individuals assume over the success of the services. Ultimately, I will show that this agency is what permits the creation of a unique Cecosesola narrative that provides a direct alternative to the exclusionary narrative of the state.

To conduct this analysis, I examine Cecosesola on two levels: first, on the level of the organization as a whole and, second, on the level of the individuals who compose it. Such a distinction is important because Cecosesola is more than a name to its members and the community—it is a living, tangible creature. To the members whom I interviewed, the use of the pronoun “we” signified

180 Community mobilization is hard to measure, and Chávez’s programs have no doubt encouraged some increased citizen participation. However, they have also created intense polarization and many of his social programs have been accused of internal corruption and lack of effectiveness.
Cecosesola as an organization, whereas the use of “I” singled out the individual. By recognizing this distinction in my analysis, I highlight Cecosesola’s transformation from a name referring to a group of people to a name referring to its very own idea—a community concept whose purpose is carried out by its members.

Agency as an Organization

On the organizational level, Cecosesola exercises agency both through its purpose and its autonomy. These two elements maintain and expand the organization’s power and also account for the high quality of its services. The role of purpose is best understood in the context of the definition of a cooperative. The general understanding of cooperatives is that they differ from conventional businesses because their workers own and control the means of production and the resulting wealth. In this sense, the cooperative exists to maximize the good life of all of its members, rather than to maximize profit. Cecosesola’s experience suggests that this definition is not sufficient to understand a cooperative’s success. Rather, as Bastidas-Delgado has proposed, a new element must be considered: the degree to which the cooperative’s goals include the maximization of the good of the community. Cecosesola’s success draws not simply from its worker-ownership, but also primarily from the fact that workers conduct day-to-day activities with a perspective that reaches beyond their own welfare or the welfare of their immediate family and friends. The presence of a greater sense of purpose has transformed the cooperative’s services into connecting bonds that strengthen and expand the community. These bonds cement Cecosesola’s role, imbuing it with responsibility and, in a positive feedback loop, additionally expanding the cooperative’s ability to offer services. Community purpose, consequently, increases Cecosesola’s success and also its sustainability.

As a result of this purpose, Cecosesola has also been able to assume great autonomy. Driven to continue being able to fulfill its purpose, the cooperative has struggled and overcome great hardships without external aid. When it does require additional help, such aid is accepted explicitly for the purpose of continuing to serve the community. By preserving autonomy, Cecosesola has avoided the corruption that has characterized many of Chávez’s cooperatives and also maintained dignity as an organization. Autonomy generates power within the organization, effectively reversing patterns of donor-recipient relations that have characterized poverty in Venezuela.
Purpose

Cecosesola’s success must first be examined through the lens of the organization’s purpose. Throughout the course of the Reuniones de Gestión and my interviews, associates consistently reiterated Cecosesola’s mission to *satisfacer* (fulfill) the community’s needs. Repetition of similar phrases regarding the cooperative’s role in the community appeared to be an important part of grounding the normal, day-to-day activity. Various members made statements that mirror the following:

Our purpose is to give the most food to people as possible, to the community…to *satisfacer* the need that the community has.182

The cooperative is the solution of the community.183

Members consistently used the words *comunidad*, or ‘community,’ and *satisfacer* when describing the purpose of Cecosesola’s services. These responses suggest that members are able to distinguish between the role of their activities in increasing their own welfare and the role that their activities play in aiding the community. In other words, members see their own work as important for fulfilling gaps in services among a population more comprehensive than purely their own family members or coworkers. Most importantly, members do not envision the cooperative as something external to the community that serves the community—not as one member described it, the cooperative is the community’s own ‘solution.’184

Members’ statements suggest that purpose as a driving factor of the organization functions on various levels. It was important initially in that it provided the stimulus for the creation of Cecosesola and the various affiliated cooperatives: the cooperative itself was born from a need of the community and exists to serve that need. Purpose continues to be important in the present because it provides the necessary energy to ensure the sustainability and expansion of the cooperative. As an associate of Cooperativa Divina Pastora, a cooperative that originated under similar circumstances to Cecosesola and now works closely with Cecosesola, remarked, “The difference is that now, the cooperative has more resources. Always, the purpose has been the same: to provide services, to

---

181 In English, to satisfy or to fulfill. I retain this word in the original Spanish because members’ consistent use signals it as an important part of the Cecosesola narrative.
182 Interview 39.
183 Interview 41, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, 4 September 2007.
184 Ibid.
satisfacer the needs of the people.”\textsuperscript{185} Though its basic resources have increased, purpose, rather than purely economic concerns, is still the main factor that spurs participation in the cooperative. According to one associate, who is currently in the process of registering her food stand as a cooperative, her purpose is “to give a service to the community…You need to have well-being, but you are not trying to get rich…You’re not here to make a lot of money.”\textsuperscript{186} Clearly, members are well educated about the purpose of the organization and able to express it to others.

The other aspect of purpose that members highlighted was the aspiration to imburse all associates with the same goal of serving the community. One associate described this as the main change in his consciousness since beginning to work at Cecosesola. Since joining, he said that he has begun considering “how to help people. One thinks about the ways to help people.”\textsuperscript{187} Other members frequently expressed their goal of continually expanding consciousness among new members. One associated explained:

Today we do not have this crisis: we are very sovereign economically. We have always felt that we could develop more clarity in those that continue arriving—not in all, but in many…the sense of this: the importance of what we are doing…this development, this social and humanistic vision… For many compañeros\textsuperscript{188}…[Cecosesola is] a space where we work really terrific…and we earn well our part. What we receive is about three times greater than the people who work in companies, in other jobs…Thus, one of our preoccupations is this: how to expand in the rest of the compañeros the vision of what we are doing…and the importance of what we are doing.…\textsuperscript{189}

In this way, the main preoccupation of the members I interviewed was either how to better serve the community or how to increase the consciousness of all Cecosesola members with regards to the purpose of serving the community. Such verbal acknowledgement of purpose is significant and suggests a high level of development towards valuing the welfare of the greater population. However, actual practice is the ultimate test of the degree to which purpose is imbedded in

\end{document}
the cooperative. To examine the implementation of this stated purpose, I will turn to an analysis of the role of purpose by performing the following tests:

1. Did Cecosesola emerge for the purpose of providing a service to the community?
2. Do the services that the cooperative provides correlate to needs within the community?
3. During times of economic crisis, does the cooperative make sacrifices in order to continue providing the valued services?
4. Do shoppers perceive of Cecosesola as part of their own community?
5. Is Cecosesola an integrated part of the community?
6. Does Cecosesola value the preservation of community services over increasing the salaries of individual members?

As the following examples show, my research suggests a highly sophisticated belief in, and practice of, purpose within Cecosesola as an organization.

Did Cecosesola emerge for the purpose of providing a service to the community?

Historical records, Cecosesola’s own book, and my interviews with various founding members support the statement that Cecosesola emerged to fill a need in the community. Cecosesola has by no means traversed a stable path, but the driving desire to provide services for those in need distinguishes Cecosesola from its conception through today.

Cecosesola is the outcome of a partnership between several smaller cooperatives, many of which performed savings and loans functions in poor, urban barrios. These cooperatives emerged in large part due to promotion and assistance from Centro Gumilla, a Jesuit organization located in Canada, and US President John F. Kennedy’s program Alliance for Progress. These early cooperatives fulfilled the need among poorer Venezuelans for access to credit. In the words of one associate, even though they received initial support from these organizations, “Cooperatives have surged on a base of particular motivations, concrete motivations of a community.”

Despite the success of the early cooperatives, a time came in which members of the community began to realize that other important services were lacking in

---

190 Interview 33.
their barrios. As one Cecosesola member, who has been involved in the cooperative movement since the beginning, explained:

…[W]e in Cecosesola are made from the integration of various cooperatives that were in different communities, in different barrios, and cooperatives of different types, and were born in function of several needs felt in that moment, which was the need to decently bury the people that died.\textsuperscript{191}

During this period, large, profit-driven businesses monopolized control over all funerary services and charged high prices that were largely unaffordable to barrio residents.\textsuperscript{192} However, government laws at the time prohibited cooperatives from providing this service. Thus, in order to bypass these laws, the cooperatives united to form a Central Cooperative with a directorship, which could legally fulfill the community’s need. The cooperatives began their discussion in 1966, and by June of 1977, “already the creation and functioning of Cecosesola was official.”\textsuperscript{193} Thus, rather than a cooperative formed to fulfill an economic need among its associates, Cecosesola was born from the hard labor of many cooperatives and individuals who sought to return control over death and burial rituals to their own communities.

As Cecosesola expanded over the years, it continued to do so for the betterment of its community. In the late 1970s, bus fare spiked dramatically (in fact doubling in price).\textsuperscript{194} Recognizing the need for an economically accessible public transport system that could be managed by the community—not for profit, but rather for the sake of providing the service—Cecosesola negotiated a loan with the government to purchase the buses. In 1976, it began operating a communal transport service that soon serviced the entire city. As one member explained, “That generated for us a force worth speaking of, a communal force. A very impressive relationship with the community…”\textsuperscript{195} The development of this service reinforced Cecosesola’s commitment to the community and also its greater goals of restructuring hierarchical relationships. Though Cecosesola initially began the service in collaboration with Cooperativa el Triunfo, differing opinions about how to structure the system ultimately became a formative moment:

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{192} Interview 37, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 30, 2007.
\textsuperscript{193} Interview 33.
\textsuperscript{194} Cecosesola, \textit{Buscando una convivencia harmónica}, (Barquisimeto, Venezuela: Escuela Cooperativa, 2003), 24.
\textsuperscript{195} Interview 33.
When we went out with the buses, they (Cooperativa el Triunfo) were not in agreement because we proposed that it was an organization of collective vision and participation. But they proposed that every driver be owner of his own bus. We were not in agreement with this because it was simply creating more businessmen...And our lucha\(^\text{196}\) was not to create more businessmen, but rather a distinct relationship...\(^\text{197}\)

As a result of this disagreement, “In terms of the cooperative movement a broader aspect was opened: it was no longer the funerary service and the cooperatives, it was a more expansive dimension in regards to the relationship with the community in general...”\(^\text{198}\) This moment added a new component of purpose to Cecosesola’s activities.

Once Cecosesola put the service into place with this vision, however, ensuring continued governmental support of the cooperative transport system became difficult. According to a Cecosesola associate, “This meant that we were always engaged in popular mobilizations. And thus, this brought distrust...envy...among the politicians because we moved the people that they didn’t move...”\(^\text{199}\) Cecosesola maintained much lower prices than the private bus companies. As a result, the politicians, persuaded by the private companies, “campaigned and came to agreement and usurped the administration of buses”\(^\text{200}\) from Cecosesola, in fact physically seizing the buses. Cecosesola’s reaction to this situation is a clear example of the role that purpose has played in the cooperative’s formation. As an associate narrated:

When we recovered the 129 buses, there were no more than 40 that were somewhat broken, that somewhat worked...The debts had increased terribly. We could not recover, in economic terms. And the service that we were providing was really poor, because with 40 units, it was as little as one bus passing each hour by a site. Thus, people had to wait a long time at the stops. This was causing discomfort among the community and so we decided it was for the best to cripple this service. This was in 1983. We decided to cripple this service and then began helping to develop the Ferias de Consumo Popular through Cooperativa el Triunfo.\(^\text{201}\)

\(^{196}\) I have chosen to preserve the Spanish lucha because the English word “struggle” does not adequately translate this concept or its importance to Cecosesola members. Lucha is conceived of as the processo of struggle, the journey of traveling through hardship.

\(^{197}\) Interview 33.

\(^{198}\) Ibid.

\(^{199}\) Ibid.

\(^{200}\) Ibid.

\(^{201}\) Interview 33.
In this case, acting for the betterment of the community actually involved removing a service and placing the cooperative’s energy elsewhere: in the development of the *ferias*. This new service emerged entirely due to positive reinforcement and need among local residents for access to affordable food. The *ferias* began with nothing more but a few of the recovered buses and one agricultural producer:

> We had certain sectors where we would go and park... And people would gather there to buy at different prices than they had in other places. This was the beginning. The participation of the people there continued increasing. So, we opened a local space... and we started to send people inside and sold from there. Thus, we were already organized. That was Friday afternoons, we had already organized spaces for the sales, and we added Saturdays, and there were a lot of people so we had to go to Sundays, and then we were opening already on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays... Since the people kept increasing, and there were more people from other places, our capacity also continued expanding. Thus, we opened another space, which is there in Ruiz Pineda. 202

In this way, the *ferias* developed as a function of need and demand among the community. Clearly, rather than a profit-driven organization, or a cooperative made to serve purely the interests of its associates, Cecosesola has historically maintained a close link with the greater community, responding to its needs either by downsizing or expanding services.

Do the services that the cooperative provides correlate to needs within the community?

My research shows a strong correlation between the services Cecosesola offers and the needs of the community. As already established, the funerary service, transport system, and *ferias* all emerged due to community support. Today, the funerary service and *ferias*, as well as the newer areas of health and education, continue to conform to the same degree of purpose.

The *feria* system is the strongest example. On average, Cecosesola offers goods priced 30 percent less than other stores and markets. Unlike typical supermarkets, which select products to sell based on their likelihood of turning a profit, Cecosesola sells what the community needs, even when it may mean losing money in order to provide that item. As one founding member of Cecosesola explained, “It’s easier to get stuff at *Mercal*, but after that, here,

---

202 Ibid.
because we make whatever sacrifice is necessary to provide the product.” For instance, a specific section of feria, called mini-feria, offers a lower price per pound than the main Verdura section and is designed to provide produce to families with very low incomes. Cecosesola’s various fondos help to cover the losses that Cecosesola incurs from offering items lower than the government-set price or the price for which it obtained the items. Shortages are common, however, and occasionally Cecosesola can no longer provide a product, or must offer it in reduced quantity, because it is either unavailable or simply too expensive to offer. During my visit, black beans had just reappeared after a long absence, and the feria was currently experiencing a shortage in powdered milk and eggs. However, to insure that all families received at least some portion of the scarce goods, Cecosesola was rationing both items by limiting a certain quantity to each family. Through these techniques, the organization strives to act as a reliable source of food for the community in the face of what are often unpredictable national shortages, regardless of the cost.

The addition of the health care service provides another strong example of Cecosesola’s dedication to serving its community. As one associate explained during the August 2007 Assembly:

At the level of service, providing health is something entirely new. It is especially important here in Venezuela because health care is not yet resolved. Private health care is very expensive, and public healthcare is precarious. Involving ourselves in healthcare is thus moving beyond just providing food.

Clearly, Cecosesola sees the health situation among its community as precarious: the cooperative’s decision to expand its services beyond the provision of food reflects its ability to respond to deficiencies in the community. As with the ferias, Cecosesola strives to maintain low prices for its health services. Cecosesola associates receive preventative healthcare for free, and community members pay substantially discounted rates as compared to private healthcare. Two young associates working in the reception area of the clinic I visited asserted that the prices at Cecosesola clinics are significantly lower than anywhere else, except perhaps in the government-sponsored Barrio Adentro health centers. An associate working in the Acupuncture clinic, who has participated in Cecosesola

---

203 Interview 11.
204 The vegetables and produce section of feria.
205 In English, ‘funds.’ See Appendix A for a fuller description of this funding element.
206 See Appendix A for a fuller description of the community health networks.
207 Interview 21, Cecosesola Associate speaking at Assembly, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 26, 2007.
208 Interview 9, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 23, 2007.
for over 23 years, added, “There is capacity for everyone.” Cecosesola has never had to turn patients away or make them wait a long time for an appointment. This is significant given that in 2006, the entire health network served 155,000 patients. Additionally, in 1999, Cecosesola decided to expand the network further because certain services cannot be offered in the local clinics. Thus, it began plans for the Centro Integral Cooperativa de Salud, a hospital-sized health center that will open in 2008. The community has played a significant role in supporting this project, with shoppers and other recipients of Cecosesola’s services providing 8,525,330 bols ($3,972.00) of the 5 billion bolívares (2.3 billion dollars) projected cost of the project—through collection jars at feria alone.

Many of Cecosesola’s other activities reflect this same desire to fulfill the needs of the community. Cecosesola’s youth members, for example, are currently in the process of forming their own cooperative, which will allow them to continue participating in Cecosesola’s activities now that governmental child labor laws indiscriminately bar youth from working. Even at their young age, these members already saw their cooperative as a response to greater needs. According to one member, “Most young people resolve their problems in the street, but we want to do it differently.” Another added, “It’s to help the young people with their personal growth, the delinquency.” Others made statements such as, “We’re trying to get rid of individualism,” or, “We want to make the country better.”

Cecosesola also strives to fulfill the community’s need for access to education. I spoke with one woman in the process of creating her own cooperative who had learned the necessary skills from taking a course that Cecosesola offered about healthy cooking. She said that she learned about the class through information advertised at feria, and that the course was free and open to the community. Cecosesola’s involvement in political affairs reflects the same purpose. The cooperative’s current part in proposing a new law, the Ley de Economía Social, or

---

209 Ibid.
210 The six health clinics provide services in general medicine, pediatrics, and acupuncture, and also contain three dental centers, three internal medicine centers, and four clinical laboratories.
211 These youth previously worked part-time at Cecosesola while also attending school. New labor laws now prohibit them from working at Cecosesola until they are 18 years old. By forming their own cooperative, the youth will be able to continue participating in the Cecosesola experience.
212 Interview 43, Youth members of Cecosesola, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, September 5, 2007.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
216 Interview 25.
the Law of the Social Economy, is part of its overall goal to promote cooperative
growth that is for the betterment of the people. According to one member,
Cecosesola is supporting the passage of this law to insure “that cooperatives have
a more social vision to help other communities.” The member offered the
example of ferias with lower cost items constituting a “social aid.” Evidently,
Cecosesola passes the second test: its services appear to exist for the purpose of
bettering the community.

During times of economic crisis, does the cooperative make sacrifices in order to continuing
providing the valued services?

Cecosesola’s behavior during various moments of financial crisis suggests the
cooperative’s willingness to sacrifice financial gain or ease of operations in order
to continue providing the services that the community values and upon which it
relies. During the economic crisis following the usurpation of Cecosesola’s
buses, the cooperative found itself in a difficult position with regards to how to
continue providing services. Many affiliated cooperatives, as well as the Jesuit
priests, were convinced that the cooperative was going to fold and thus “went
from cooperative to cooperative telling them that if they didn’t get out [of the
central cooperative], they were going to lose the savings of the associates, which
was a lie.” Though bankruptcy was imminent, Cecosesola recognized the
important role that its services played in the community. As once associate
described, “The people in the barrios, we give a lot of weight to the funerary
service because it is having the security that when someone dies, you will have
somewhere to go for the deal of the funerary service. They give a lot of value to
this part.” As evidenced from this associate’s use of both the 3rd person and 1st
person tense (”the people” and “we”), the cooperative saw these services as an
integral piece of the community, of which Cecosesola itself was a part. Thus,
overcoming significant financial odds, the cooperative decided to continue its
activities. As the associate explained, “We never sacrificed a single admission, a
single bolivar, of the funerary service, in function to what we were
experiencing.”

\[217\] Interview 30, Cecosesola associate, Sanares, Venezuela, August 28, 2007.
\[218\] Ibid.
\[219\] Interview 33.
\[220\] Ibid.
\[221\] Ibid.
In more recent times, Cecosesola has taken a similar perspective with regards to funding the construction of the Centro Integral Cooperativa de Salud. The initial price estimate for the construction fell short of the actual cost of completing the center, which stimulated a period of intense self-analysis within the cooperative with regards to how to finish the project. Ultimately, it decided to take out a loan and encourage more donations from associates, affiliated cooperatives, and community members, rather than use more revenues from the other services it provides or change the prices of the services. As one member explained, “What we have proposed is that we are going to continue performing these activities in such a way that we don’t sacrifice the cost of the services that we are going to offer here in this health center.”

This may ultimately reduce Cecosesola’s annual profits, from which associates receive salary bonuses. In this manner, it appears that Cecosesola sacrifices its own revenues first during time of crisis that could jeopardize the services it provides for the community.

Do shoppers perceive of Cecosesola as part of their own community?

My interviews with several shoppers during a typical day of feria suggest that community members consider the cooperative an important part of their community. One shopper, who said that he has shopped at Cecosesola all along, said that he chooses to come despite his osteoporosis because “in other places it’s so expensive.” He added, “I love to shop here.” A different shopper, who has shopped at Cecosesola for a long time, coming every Friday, said that some items are cheaper at the feria and that it is easier to find products at ‘prices más populares.’

According to a Cecosesola associate, the majority of his neighbors shop at Cecosesola. He explained that community members prefer to shop at Cecosesola because of “how we treat people.” He added, “You can find more economic prices, we try to share the products that are scarce. And the treatment also isn’t the same. In the supermarket it is distinct, distinct.” Cecosesola’s popularity with the community is also reflected through its high sales—the cooperative serves 55,000 families weekly, or roughly one-third of the Barquisimeto population.

222 Ibid.
223 Interview 12, Shopper at Feria del Centro, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 24, 2007.
224 Interview 13, Shopper at Feria del Centro, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 24, 2007.
225 No direct English translation exists for this phrase. The use of the word populares refers to el pueblo, the people. Thus, the shopper is saying that the prices are right for the people of the community—that they are better priced for what people can afford.
226 Interview 18.
227 Ibid.
228 Cecosesola, “Que es Cecosesola?” (August 2007).
The rate of crime at the feria is even more indicative of Cecosesola’s important role in the community. As evidenced from weekly totals of sales and revenue, Cecosesola experiences a one percent rate of theft, as compared to a five percent rate in the average Venezuelan market. A member explained, “People who have been here for a long time help keep watch.” He added that people do not want to steal from Cecosesola’s ferias because they realize “that we all pay for what is stolen. We all have the responsibility to make it back up.” In other words, they actively support the ferias with the understanding that stealing would drive up the prices. Evidently, shoppers at Cecosesola’s ferias perceive of the ferias as part of their own community; they understand that harming the ferias would be damaging to their own welfare.

Is Cecosesola part of the community?

My research suggests that Cecosesola is in fact a central, integrated part of the Barquisimeto community. The cooperative’s assimilation on multiple levels permits the organization to fulfill its purpose of responding to the community’s needs and also allows the cooperative to act as an element of community cohesion. This integration can be seen through many aspects of Cecosesola’s interactions with its own actors as well as the community members who benefit from its services.

The relationship between Cecosesola and the community with regards to the planning and construction of the Centro Integral Cooperativa de Salud is perhaps most indicative. I asked one member how Cecosesola communicated the idea to the community and how it was able to gauge the community’s response. She responded that big propaganda is not required to inform the community. She said, “We are the same community, we tell people at the ferias.” At each feria, Cecosesola members had set up a table with a model or picture of the planned health center in an effort to more fully involve shoppers in the planning process. Clearly, integration had been achieved on this project: as discussed earlier, community members contributed significantly to the construction of the hospital simply through donation containers placed in feria. The general perception of the hospital was that it belonged to the community—as everyone’s labor had made it possible, it was owned by everyone.

---

229 Interview 11.
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
232 Interview 9.
233 Interview 33.
Integration is also apparent through the role that shoppers play during feria. Rather than mere customers, community members frequently assume greater roles in taking ownership over feria and their role within it. One associate explained:

[Cecosesola] is a method of sharing, to share and satisfacer the needs of the community. Because there are many people—I don’t say all but there are many—that get happy to come to Cecosesola to do their shopping. There are many that stay hours and hours, not shopping the whole time, but they stay here at Cecosesola. They shop and they stay, stay and help in whatever way. It’s not ‘I do my shopping and I have to go’.

Evidently, rather than a business-client relationship, Cecosesola is integrated into the community as an organization made up of, and supported by, community members and their participation. As the associate added, “It is not a supermarket...The community goes to the feria, the majority, we go to Cecosesola and we get up early, and they go and stay a while.” In this example, the associate switches back and forth between speaking about the community and speaking about himself as an associate; clearly, he sees himself as both, and these two roles as equal in terms of what they require for participation at feria. The same tendency can be seen in one of his later statements, when he speaks about the street children that Cecosesola has sheltered and absorbed into the organization. He said:

We move forward trying to help, to help the people with us. Because some have come that are not from our families. They are from the street. They’re with us here so that they are not there, on the street screwing up, making problems and such. Thus, here with us, they have entered another world. So we’re going to see what we can do. Right now we’re doing this; right now we’re forming a cooperative. We’re doing various things with their own selves.

In this statement, the associate demonstrates Cecosesola’s role in absorbing disenfranchised individuals into the community. Through its activities, Cecosesola is in fact enriching the reach and power of the local community’s bonds.

---

234 Interview 18.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
The role that the many actors in Cecosesola play in the organization is also indicative of Cecosesola’s part in linking and strengthening bonds between different sectors of the population. To begin with, Cecosesola encourages individuals to form their own cooperatives, thereby forging new connections and giving individuals new access to resources. Secondly, Cecosesola links these cooperatives with each other and strengthens their connections with the community in providing services. Thirdly, Cecosesola also forges its own relationship with the affiliated cooperatives, and through this relationship, both groups benefit. As one associated explained:

Cecosesola as such is large, large. And as to the affiliated cooperatives, most are smaller than Cecosesola. But for what it serves, we help them…we work together with them. It’s not that we’re going to teach them everything, but rather, what can we do? Because in reality, we don’t know everything. Cecosesola doesn’t know everything. Rather, we also learn from other things.237

This statement affirms that Cecosesola does not possess a one-way relationship with the community; rather, it interacts dynamically with its many actors. Through these interactions, strong relationships of trust are generated. As one associated articulated, “It is not an affiliation of paper. It is an affiliation of sharing, of meeting.”238 A member of an affiliated cooperative added, “There are not very large obstacles. We are like a big family [with Cecosesola]—we share the good things and the bad things.”239

The same benefits can be seen through Cecosesola’s relationships with the various producers. According to one associate:

The ferias have also allowed us to have a relationship with the producers, the small producers that are in different sites of the country. We came to have more than 800 producers organized in cooperatives [and] civil associations that produce and work in function with feria.240

Cecosesola’s interactions with these producers are entirely based on trust: no contracts, papers, or promises for money are ever signed regarding payments before or after the growing season. Additionally, Cecosesola workers and producers do not distinguish between each other as separate types of members.

237 Ibid.
238 Interview 1, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 21, 2007.
239 Interview 25.
240 Interview 33, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 29, 2007.
As one associate stated, “I don’t know who is producer and who is Cecosesola.”\(^{241}\) As an organization composed of 1,000 people, serving a huge portion of the Barquisimeto population, Cecosesola’s integration within the community and success in incorporating new groups and individuals into the community network is significant and suggests true practice of the cooperative’s stated purpose.

Does Cecosesola value the preservation of community services over increasing the salaries of individual members?

Lastly, Cecosesola clearly values preserving its services for the community above increasing overall profits that could augment individuals’ salaries. In past times of economic crisis, or in times of service expansion, Cecosesola has funded projects using its fondos or year-end profits. As access to fondos and year-end profits are determined through group consensus at reuniones, the repeated decision (for example, during the transport crisis and planning of the hospital project) to use these resources rather than affect the cost of services is striking. Though increasing the cost of services could directly translate to increased individual income, as the use of the year-end surplus is a group decision and typically used for individual bonuses, Cecosesola has always chosen to think about the good of the community and the group before increasing profit.

Cecosesola’s fulfillment of these six criteria points to a strong correlation between what members identify as the cooperative’s purpose and the actual behavior of the cooperative, both historically and currently. Cecosesola emerged for the direct purpose of providing a service to the community and this purpose has remained the driving force behind the cooperative’s expansion of services and its engagement with the community. As a deeply integrated and clearly important piece of its community, the cooperative is able to respond directly to social needs. It also acts as a resource for community networking and, as a result, its fortification. Cecosesola appears to exist primarily to satisfacer the needs of the community.

Autonomy

The second piece of understanding the role of agency in Cecosesola’s success is the presence of autonomy as a defining element of the cooperative’s activities. Due to the cooperative’s strict adherence to its greater purpose—community

\(^{241}\) Interview 49.
maximization—it has seen preserving its autonomy as a necessary first step in fulfilling this role. In seeking to preserve true self-management, the cooperative attempts to maintain independence over its economic affairs, either by self-financing from the capitalization of its own profits or by assuming responsibility in obtaining loans. For cooperative members, such self-sufficiency is a source of pride and also of stability. Through preservation of this autonomy, Cecosesola separates itself from dependent alliances with the state and asserts itself as an independent organization.

Autonomy has been a pillar of Cecosesola’s success from the onset. Because the organization emerged to satisfy a specific purpose, founding members assumed complete initiative in finding a way to create Cecosesola. It was their idea, driven by their own community’s need, and thus through the process of implementing it, they simultaneously began the process of asserting autonomy. Though Centro Gumilla and the Alliance for Progress played an initial role Cecosesola’s formation, it was one of support, rather than actual organizing.242 Centro Gumilla offered courses that detailed how a cooperative should function, but it was up to communities to organize themselves and take advantage of this resource, which did not include monetary support. A founding member of Cooperativa Divina Pastora, one of the early cooperatives involved in Cecosesola, explained that his cooperative emerged from “support of the people, not like today from the state.” 243 Neighbors in his barrio came together to attend the courses that Centro Gumilla were offering to the community. After one week, seventy neighbors became associates and organized the first money collection for their new cooperative, a savings and loans operation. They named a directorate, and the next week, educated themselves about accounting.244 From the onset, community autonomy became part of the cooperative’s foundation.

This beginning has contributed to the development of the mentality among members that “one has to live the process of liberation.”245 As one described, for Cecosesola, this has been “a forty-year process.”246 According to a member of Cooperativa La Montaña, one of the affiliated agricultural cooperatives, Cecosesola began directly from individual initiative and, as a result, the members themselves were fully responsible for every failure along the way. This is what has permitted the cooperatives to grow, learn, and progress.247

---

242 Interview 33.
243 Interview 52.
244 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
Cecosesola associate stated, “Any type of self-management process has to originate with the people.” Members take great pride in their autonomy, and from this autonomy, have developed a unique sense of ownership over the cooperative: “We are a cooperative very distinct from those of [Chávez]...we began ourselves.” Or, in the words of another, “Cecosesola has been our very own. We do it because we want to.”

The development of a sense of ownership has permitted Cecosesola to see lucha, or struggle, as a critical part of the formative process. Without lucha, it believes that its autonomy would be compromised, as the continual practice of initiative is necessary to permit growth and organizational flexibility. As one associate explained, everything about the organization signifies continual struggle. The title of Cecosesola’s first book, *Construyendo una Convivencia Harmonica,* or *Constructing a Harmonious Lived-Experience,* epitomizes the presence of struggle in every step of the process because each word speaks to the concept of resistance. He added, “Much of the time, the lucha is destructive—you win or I win...Here, everyone comes out better.”

Cecosesola’s experience with lucha over the course of the last forty years speaks to its struggle for autonomy and illuminates the development of its perspective on external aid. Several specific historic moments provide insight into this process of formation and the meaning of autonomy for the cooperative. The first such test came in the form of Cecosesola’s relationship with other Central Cooperatives in Venezuela in supplying the feria service. Cecosesola had begun to integrate its feria system with other emerging cooperative centers across the country, but at a certain point, problems began to emerge due to the long chain of exchange. Centers would bring products from Cecosesola to their own ferias, which were run by various affiliated cooperatives. Associates of these cooperatives would pay the cooperatives, which would pay the centers. Then, a member explained, “At the very end it ended with us receiving payment, and this caused for us huge economic problems, such that arrived a moment in which we were at the point of closing.” Rather than continue its dependence on the other centers, or turn to the state for economic help, Cecosesola took responsibility for the situation: “So we decided to assume our part, and with our

---

248 Interview 11.
250 Interview 30.
251 In English, roughly: *Constructing a Harmonic Lived-Experience.*
252 Interview 3.
253 Interview 33.
own strength, continue serving. Thus we overcame this entire crisis.”\textsuperscript{254} Similar autonomy was exercised in the expansion of the *ferias* and, as discussed previously, the development of the health networks. Cecosesola develops its own solutions for economic difficulties and creates its own resources in order to persevere.

Cecosesola’s insistence on autonomy is partly due to a past experience with loss of such autonomy and the negative repercussions that resulted. This experience was the transport service crisis, during which the cooperative obtained credit from the state to purchase buses.\textsuperscript{255} When the buses were usurped and destroyed, the cooperative lost 19 million bolívares, but had only one million bolívares saved.\textsuperscript{256} According to one member, “When we had the problem of transport, we were broken… the debts had increased terribly. We could not recover, in economic terms.”\textsuperscript{257} Use of the word “broken” is important here—for Cecosesola members, losing control over finances and being in nearly insurmountable debt ran counter to everything the cooperative had symbolized. Not only was the cooperative’s ability to fulfill its obligation to the community questioned, members’ sense of autonomy and power over their own well-being was shattered.

Cecosesola’s response to this situation became a formative moment. Members assumed control of the situation and began working to solve the debt: “We started with the *feria* until we covered all of the debts that we had with workers, with providers, with cooperatives, with the same Corpo Industria who gave us the credit for the buses. They were paid with what the *ferias* produced…”\textsuperscript{258} Eventually, the cooperative was able to come even and, today, this disaster has become a frequently reiterated reminder of the importance of maintaining autonomy. As one member explained, “This money from the government was a big disaster, with lots of corruption…it results in dependency.”\textsuperscript{259} The experience with government credit ultimately gave members the desire to develop their own economic capacity, leading to the creation of the *fondos*.\textsuperscript{260} They also provided a foundation for the concept of *lucha*:

\textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{260} Interview 11.
What has happened with us is that the experience with transport—everything it did to us, and we passed through to here with this experience—it gave us a lived experience, a learning. So, we learned a way to analyze our situations, and with that as a base, how to go forth...assuming responsibility. And the decisions about what happens with politics, what happens with those that want to take advantage.  

As a result, today, Cecosesola pursues external aid only “in certain moments” for “precise things.”  

In other words, support is never taken lightly. The decision to do so is a subject of great discussion, and Cecosesola always preserves initiative and responsibility in the process of securing support. It pursues, rather than accepts, aid. One member pointedly expressed: “We have to give the first word. The government can help us, but the community has to see its own problem and start the process. Then the government can help.” Since the transport crisis, Cecosesola has held itself strictly to this philosophy. Its first action in requesting aid was in the form of a petition to a later administration. A member related:

Thus, there came a moment when we proposed to that president that they recognize some of the damage that they had done to us. So they gave us a certain contribution, and with that, we increased the spaces of feria, fixed up here el Centro, fixed up over there at Ruiz Pineda. We enlarged, and that permitted somewhat what we are today in terms of infrastructure.

Here, Cecosesola assumed responsibility for being reimbursed for the damages it had accrued, and through the subsequent success, its power and autonomy were recognized. In more recent years, Cecosesola has occasionally requested loans from public or private services. However, it does so only under very clear circumstances, for specific community goals that its own financing capability cannot cover, and with clear plans for returning the money established from the outset. It never accepts loans that will affect the quality or cost of its services. As one member explained, in regards to the Centro Integral Cooperativa de Salud:

We are requesting credit from a private bank in the order of 1.5 million bolívares and they have already approved us. We only lack several papers to begin the hand-off. We have established that the payment of this loan cannot be drawn from the services that we offer in the health center...And what we have proposed is that we are going to continue performing these activities in such a

---

261 Interview 33.
262 Ibid.
264 Interview 33.
way that we don’t sacrifice the cost of the services that we are going to offer here in this health center.\textsuperscript{265}

This statement reveals the new degree of sophistication that Cecosesola has developed with regards to maintaining autonomy. By regarding loans as services that it can choose to negotiate on its own terms, the cooperative assumes new power as an independent organization.

As such, Cecosesola also encourages the same responsibility in giving its own support. By developing the fondos, Cecosesola has created a self-financing mechanism that provides security in times of crisis, allows expansion of services, and supports member endeavors. In its administration of the fondos, Cecosesola continues to further its process of self-management by encouraging similar responsibility in the recipients of the financial support. The fondos provide loans to Cecosesola members and community members for uses as varied as medical operations and new cooperative endeavors. Cecosesola traverses a thin line in supporting, but also demanding responsibility, among members. For example, in case of a big operation with a huge cost, Cecosesola may ask the person to pay back a third of the amount, “but it is not obligatory.”\textsuperscript{266} In the case of new cooperatives seeking loans, however, a much more rigorous degree of initiative is expected and Cecosesola encourages groups to raise their own start-up money. For example, a woman who recently began a new cooperative explained that she did receive some monetary support from Cecosesola, but that in general she and her comrades had to work very hard to generate the necessary resources. She explained, ‘It is an effort at the beginning—you don’t have money.’\textsuperscript{267} Through generally providing education, rather than money, Cecosesola insures that individuals possess the necessary initiative to undertake the project and that they are not merely doing it to gain access to Cecosesola’s financial resources.

Cecosesola’s hands-off approach is also evident in its influential role in the development of a community radio station in Cooperativa Mixta Santo Brasil. The cooperatives work together closely and share similar perspectives on the importance of fostering initiative among members. In this case, rather than funding the radio station, the cooperative left it up to members to design, finance, and implement the project. One founder of the project explained the process:

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{266} Interview 11.
\textsuperscript{267} Interview 25.
It occurred to us to have a broad discussion…from here came emerging proposals for how the radio should be. When you hear commercial radios, they have an aspect that does not align with the communal. They play things that sometimes you don’t like. It occurred to us to look for the money not to buy, but rather to construct, a transmitter. It was five months before we constructed the transmitter and secured air space…The first day, the signal only reached 5 meters because it was something we had constructed ourselves…So we went back to build it again with more materials, more knowledge.

To obtain the necessary resources for the project, everyone contributed. They also offered to publicize a government program, MINCEP, and thus received some funds from that as well. In general, however, the member found it important to point out that “The state has not given us money.” The cooperative saw any funds it received as the result of its own initiative, rather than charity or a gift.

These factors clearly illustrate the important role of autonomy within Cecosesola. As an organization founded upon, and sustained through, initiative, the cooperative is able to generate ownership, power, and community while simultaneously providing a direct contrast to historic dependence on government and other forms of aid. Cecosesola is “the solution of the community,” a product of its own independent creation. As an organization, it holds an important place in the community, in fact symbolizing the community’s ability to help itself. Autonomy functions powerfully on this macro level, but equally so on the level of the individuals who participate in Cecosesola. In the next section, I explore the role of agency among Cecosesola members as it correlates to the cooperative’s success.

Agency as Individuals

Purpose. Though Cecosesola as a unit appears to be driven by a strong ethic of community purpose, defined by group decisions that further the goals of satisfying the community’s needs, in this section I explore the role of purpose among actual individuals. My research suggests that though members do not always join Cecosesola for the explicit goal of serving the community, participation in the organization connects them to this common purpose and imbeds them into a new concept of belonging, both to Cecosesola and the

---

269 Interview 50.
270 Interview 41.
community at large. To analyze members’ agency in regards to purpose, I examine why individuals become associates, why individuals have continued to be associates, and how individuals perceive of their place in Cecosesola. These three areas provide a strong lens for demonstrating how being a part of Cecosesola is more than just ‘going to work.’

Nearly everyone whom I interviewed at Cecosesola had joined because of a need for work.footnote{footnote{271}} As becoming an associate requires recommendation from a current associate, most members had joined because one or more of their family members was already involved. For example, entering the kitchen one day at Feria Ruiz Pineda, I learned in a conversation with the two women cooking that one had come to Cecosesola through her two daughters, and the other had been recommended by her mother, a producer for feria, and had in turn recommended her sister.footnote{footnote{272}} On a different occasion, an associate explained:

> In reality, all of my family is in sales, except my step mom. But all of my uncles, my grandparents, and my uncle’s wife, all of my cousins, practically my entire family is in feria. Thus, since I was little I have always come to Cecosesola with my grandfather. I went to the Reuniones de Chamitos …In this way, since I was little, I was becoming familiar with the experience. So, I entered Cecosesola.footnote{footnote{273}}

Members either joined because their former work was unsatisfactory (as one explained, “[my previous job] wasn’t worth mentioning”footnote{footnote{274}}) or, most commonly, because of need. Some statements included:

> I entered because I needed work.footnote{footnote{275}}

> I entered because of a need. I became accustomed to it. I stayed. I like to be here.footnote{footnote{276}}

> We all enter for a necessity.footnote{footnote{277}}

footnote{footnote{271}} Founding members, conversely, often helped to initiate the cooperative because of a need they perceived among their community or because of an inherent interest in cooperatives (Interviews 33, 37, 44).

footnote{footnote{272}} Interview 8, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 23, 2007.

footnote{footnote{273}} Interview 18.

footnote{footnote{274}} Interview 11.


footnote{footnote{276}} Interview 19.

footnote{footnote{277}} Interview 34, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 30, 2007.
Clearly, individuals generally enter Cecosesola because they lack work and are in a difficult place in life. They represent the need within the community that Cecosesola attempts to satisfy. Within a short time, however, members expressed that their purpose in being a part of Cecosesola changed. One member explained that he joined out of economic need, but that the experience soon became something more.\textsuperscript{278} Through becoming more economically stable themselves, associates effectively become more empowered to help others that are in their previous position.

Therefore, their reasons for continuing to work at Cecosesola demonstrate the process through which associates exercise agency. Cecosesola becomes more than a job that is necessary for supporting one’s family and instead becomes an enjoyable and stimulating community experience. Members stay not because they need to, but rather because they want to. During my visit to the Purchasing division of \textit{feria}, I spoke with the two current members of the \textit{equipo}. In explaining reasons for continuing to work at Cecosesola, one provided the rationale that “we continue learning…we complement each other.”\textsuperscript{279} The associate explained that unlike purchasing jobs in other workplaces, here they do not sit inside the office all day, “exclusively receiving calls.”\textsuperscript{280} Their responsibilities include visiting where the food is grown and meeting with producers. In other words, work at Cecosesola introduces members to a purpose broader than their own needs and involves them in the community. Another member explained, “In reality, because…he who doesn’t like it, knows it. Someone who likes it, good. I like to be in Cecosesola right now and so I stay because I like it…In reality, I have never thought about this idea of quitting \textit{feria}. For the moment, I have continued, I will continue in \textit{feria}.”\textsuperscript{281} A different member, in discussing Cecosesola’s history, said that the organization knows how to “treat people well” and concluded, “I fell in love with the \textit{feria}.”\textsuperscript{282} Another simply stated, “Since I got here, I have done well.”\textsuperscript{283} When I asked one associate if people retire at a certain age, he responded adamantly, “No, no, no…rather until they no longer want to continue with us.”\textsuperscript{284} In asking one woman how she had changed during her time with Cecosesola, she was very expressive in responding: “My person, my character…the personal fulfillment is

\textsuperscript{278} Interview 27, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 28, 2007.
\textsuperscript{279} Interview 6, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 6, 2007.
\textsuperscript{280} Interview 7, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 7, 2007.
\textsuperscript{281} Interview 18.
\textsuperscript{282} Interview 15, Viajeros del Centro associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 24, 2007.
\textsuperscript{283} Interview 19.
\textsuperscript{284} Interview 18.
very important. For associates, Cecosesola is a far broader experience than previous jobs, and their purpose for staying marks this significance. As such, members’ decisions to continue at Cecosesola for reasons greater than economic need suggest the degree to which work at Cecosesola imbeds associates into a notion of community larger than their nuclear families. One associate explained, “It’s a movement from the moment you enter. You are going to experience new things…there is the comradeship…you continue learning, sharing with the community.” Associates become involved in the constant generation of community, teamwork, and responsibility within Cecosesola and, as a result, begin to see their participation as more than a typical job. Members commit most of their waking hours to Cecosesola, voluntarily sacrificing weekends in order to help out at feria. They often cease to discriminate between personal and organizational goals. When I asked a woman what she hoped for her own future, she replied, “That it’s good…that we have good productivity.” Then, when I asked what she hoped for Cecosesola, she answered, “That we continue, that we have good productivity.” Rather than one small aspect of her life, her hopes for the cooperative had become part of her vision of her own personal fulfillment. One member stated this clearly, saying, “Most of us come here from a necessity, but then we become a part of the movement and it is no longer a job.” Evidently, though the generation of purpose plays out differently on the level of actual individuals than through the organization as a whole, the end result is similar: the continual preservation of a sense of purpose or reason for involvement that extends beyond any one individual’s own economic needs.

**Autonomy:** The other element of agency among individual Cecosesola associates is their constant exercise of initiative. Rather than passive employees, associates actively assume roles of power and responsibility in the organization. Member autonomy can be seen through the various organizational aspects of Cecosesola, member relationships, and member participation. The presence of such autonomy transforms associates into individuals that create, rather than simply receive, and is therefore a key element in Cecosesola’s success as a cooperative.

To begin with, each aspect of Cecosesola’s internal organization is entirely flexible, and thus relies upon constant member autonomy to function. Its two

---

285 Interview 20.
286 Ibid.
287 Interview 11.
288 Interview 19.
289 Ibid.
main aspects include organization of work, or the *equipos*, and decision-making. Without set policies, rules, or decision-makers, these aspects are maintained purely by member interest. This organization is possible because members see the cooperative not as a pre-existing structure of which they play a part, but rather as a dynamic product that they themselves shape and influence. As one member expressed, “Cecosesola has been our very own. We do it because we want to.”

The *equipos* are the most critical piece of Cecosesola’s organization as they provide the framework for organizing human labor to provide the services. They are most notable for the fact that no external person is responsible for placing members into various *equipos* or coordinating their rotation. Members self-select where they would like to work, based on their personal interests and self-evaluation of the cooperative’s need, and also organize their own rotations. A member explained, “People see what *equipo* they want to do next and talk to the group and start learning.” Though some jobs may appear less-desirable to the outside eye, every *equipo* always has enough members. Most notably, in all of my interviews, not a single member could identify his or her ‘favorite’ job. They all expressed that each job is important in its own way, and thus enjoyable.

The flexibility of this system requires that members take responsibility for their own labor and take the initiative to identify *equipos* that need assistance. Several members identified this as the most difficult aspect of beginning to work at Cecosesola. One explained that “it was hard getting used to not being told what to do” and learning to see what needs to be done and how to fill in to complete tasks. This statement provides a strong example of the role that Cecosesola plays in reversing dependency. Upon entering, individuals are used to receiving orders and thus find it challenging to take initiative. Within the *equipo* system, however, they soon learn how to exercise agency and take personal responsibility for the outcome of the services.

To facilitate this transition, new members typically begin in the *Verdura equipo* where they can easily witness the *feria* system and learn teamwork. One young associate explained, “So, when I started, I began in *Verdura*. Afterwards, I coordinated *Viveres*. I coordinated *Viveres* to insure that we were watching the

---

291 Interview 30.
292 Interview 34.
293 Interview 35, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 30, 2007.
294 The household goods section of *feria*.
merchandise…”295 Most importantly, he added, “We don’t have anything limited here.”296 By this he meant that associates can chose where to work, and often travel to do rotations with producers or affiliated cooperatives if they are thus inclined. He worked for a short time in a surrounding region, but returned because he missed his family.297 Some affiliated cooperatives, such as Cooperativa Las Tinajas, a bread cooperative in the rural Sanares region, rely on a constant stream of Cecosesola associates from the main compounds who come up to work on one or two week rotations.

As a result, with no set policies, the direction of the cooperative is constantly being re-determined by the current interest of the associates. One associate in the Quincalla section of feria explained, “We make purchases, we implement price controls. Here, we pick what to buy: we’re always changing products.”298 This associate was 17 years old and had spent merely two years at Cecosesola. Evidently, member autonomy is the most critical aspect of maintaining the equipo system, which in turn supports the services. As two members explained on separate occasions, “We all do everything”299 and “You have the opportunity to try everything.”300

Cecosesola’s second main organizational element is the process of decision-making,301 and this system, just as flexible as the equipos, is thus another clear indicator of member autonomy. As Cecosesola possesses no hierarchical structure, chain of decision-making, or elected officials, all decisions are made by consensus. One associate said, “There is no majority decision-making. We have to go until everyone is in agreement…Everyone can participate who wants to.”302 This system relies on consistent member participation in the reuniones and at the Assemblies and, thus, according to one associate, “If you don’t participate in the reuniones, you’re lost.”303 Associates were able to converse fluently about the system and the importance of their involvement. Some statements included:

In other places, there is a boss. Here, it is participative.304

295 Interview 18.
296 Ibid.
297 Ibid.
298 Interview 34.
299 Interview 11.
300 Interview 39.
301 See Appendix A for a fuller description of the decision-making process.
302 Interview 3.
303 Interview 9.
304 Interview 19.
Participation is the most important—it’s where you learn...integration and communication.\textsuperscript{305}

In the decision-making, responsibility is very important.\textsuperscript{306}

\textit{Reuniones} occur nearly every day of the week, often simultaneously in different locations and in various times throughout the day. Though certain members (primarily the older associates who helped found Cecosesola or who have been involved in Cecosesola over twenty years) attended more \textit{reuniones}, most \textit{reuniones} were composed of different members each day. The system is designed so that associates can attend \textit{reuniones} once or twice a week, depending on their own schedules. No single person facilitated \textit{reuniones}; rather, nearly every person in attendance spoke at some point, and the discussion topics varied depending on member choice. Topics ranged from governmental laws, profits, and member health to policies for missing days of work and problems of individualism both at Cecosesola and other cooperatives. Members described the \textit{reuniones} as a key element of the cooperative’s development, as well as their own. As one associate described:

\ldots These analysis \textit{reuniones} that we do permitted [Cecosesola] to pass on to the second level. In the time that you have been here, I can’t say how many meetings you have seen. We are permanently doing this. Analyzing and specifying and demanding. I feel that this is a contribution, a value that we have been constructing... The minute we cease to meet, the minute that we stop analyzing our situation, we convert into chaos.\textsuperscript{307}

Evidently, individual autonomy in decision-making is a critical component of Cecosesola’s ability to provide services and thus, also, of its success.

The third major aspect of individual autonomy is the degree to which members assume responsibility over the organization. As already discussed, members take initiative simply by participating in the \textit{equipos}, self-delegating, and attending \textit{reuniones}. Through working at Cecosesola they also gain a sense of strong responsibility towards the organization as a whole and their fellow associates. I asked one member if he felt that he had changed since entering Cecosesola, and he responded:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{305} Interview 25.
  \item \textsuperscript{306} Interview 39.
  \item \textsuperscript{307} Interview 33.
\end{itemize}
If I have changed? I think so. In reality, yes, I have changed. Because [before] I didn’t have obligations, or I had a commitment, but with my mother…When I entered Cecosesola there was a sense of commitment, responsibility… I was a kid, now I have more responsibility. I think different. Distinctly. As much here as elsewhere…One thinks about the ways to help people.\(^{308}\)

Associates feel committed to Cecosesola and take action to support the organization. One member said that she feels responsible for the future of Cecosesola.\(^{309}\) As such, members frequently make efforts to improve the organization and hold each other accountable. For example, at nearly every reunión, associates discussed how to help new members gain a more community-focused attitude, and in some cases, members expressed concern about their comrades not taking responsibility for their absences.\(^{310}\) As a result of such responsibility, members take initiative over their work in a new way. A member explained, “You’re not a worker: you’re a part of it. This is just life—you are not going to work and then going home…This is just living, day to day.”\(^{311}\) Cecosesola ceases to be a mere job, rather becoming a product of each associate’s own, autonomous labor.

Associates also feel a strong sense of responsibility towards each other, which can be clearly demonstrated through associates’ attitudes towards their salaries and working overtime or during vacation.\(^{312}\) All associates frequently used the work “support.” One stated, “Support is very important…we all support each other a lot.”\(^{313}\) For this reason, Cecosesola does not award salaries based upon merit, seniority, experience, or hours worked; rather, every associate receives the pay that he or she needs. At a basic level, this would mean that every associate would receive the same salary. But because pay also depends on necessity, someone with children, or children going to university, in practice generally receives a correspondingly higher salary.\(^{314}\) Though this system could arguably hold many possibilities for dissent, I never witnessed a single discussion between associates about salaries, and it was never a topic at reuniones. Instead, associates were always eager to describe this aspect of Cecosesola to me, and saw it as a basic right that different workers should receive the pay that they need based upon

\(^{308}\) Interview 18.
\(^{309}\) Interview 39.
\(^{310}\) Interview 36, Cecosesola associate, Feria Preparation Meeting, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 30, 2007.
\(^{311}\) Interview 46, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, September 5, 2007.
\(^{312}\) See Appendix A for more information.
\(^{313}\) Interview 25.
\(^{314}\) Interview 3.
their diverse life situations. Clearly, associates maintain a high level of responsibility towards each other—so much so that it overcomes any one individual’s desire for higher pay.

Similar initiative can be seen through associates’ attitudes towards the rigorous hours of work at Cecosesola and their willingness to work more hours than required. Most members said that the hardest thing about beginning to work at Cecosesola was the long hours and hard work. One associate, for example, said that he commutes three hours a day just to work at Cecosesola.\textsuperscript{315} The ferias demand a specifically high level of dedication, given their long hours of operation and all of the labor that goes into receiving goods from the producers (often throughout the night) and stocking the shelves. One member described the hardest thing at the beginning:

\begin{quote}
Fridays. Because, goodness, you’re not accustomed to be here at four in the morning until eight at night. It’s hard, hard. This was what hit me most and still, [despite everything]...hits me. It’s difficult to begin at four and its, goodness, ten hours or more, 12, 16 hours. It’s a lot. However, it hits me, it hits me. Fridays I get home to go to sleep. I bathe, eat, and go to bed. And still it gets to me. What was hardest for me about feria was this.\textsuperscript{316}
\end{quote}

Though members highlighted the difficulty of their workload, they never questioned its validity. As their own bosses, they recognized that the work was necessary, and took whatever initiative necessary to complete it. In some cases, this means that associates even return to help out during their vacation. Our guide of feria one day told us that he was officially on vacation, but that like many other people who do not leave the city on their breaks, he likes to continue to provide extra assistance at feria. Though he said that there is no obligation to stay, he did point out that “there is an agreement to collaborate.”\textsuperscript{317} Though peer pressure could be an element in forcing high commitment, I observed varying levels of investment among members and no apparent judgment or exclusion based upon perceived differences in hours of work.

The third main aspect of individual member initiative is the role that associates assume in Cecosesola’s economic affairs. Matters of budget, saving, and spending are all managed through a process of group decision-making that involves all associates. Members also contribute to the fondos and can take the initiative to

\textsuperscript{315} Interview 27.
\textsuperscript{316} Interview 18.
\textsuperscript{317} Interview 11.
save or ask for a loan. As one associate explained, “...We have the opportunity to save here. If you take a loan we give you a loan. We have the funds, we form ourselves. It’s a distinct manner to help ourselves.”

For associates, taking control over Cecosesola’s finances is synonymous for exercising agency in their own lives. As the associate so poignantly described, associates take initiative to “help themselves.” All associates have access to Cecosesola’s budget, which is distributed openly at meetings with all spendings and earnings presented (down to the cost of office supplies). Associates also control the usage of Cecosesola’s profits. Regarding the new health center, one associate explained, “We capitalized for the construction of this health center... [I]t belongs to no one in particular, but rather to the entire collective.”

Through their independent agency, members are able to contribute to the autonomous empowerment of their community as well—in this case, the entire community taking the steps to help itself.

Member initiative can also be seen through associates’ knowledge of Cecosesola’s history and current issues. All associates with whom I spoke were able to coherently express aspects of the organization’s history or its contemporary relations with the Venezuelan government. This knowledge is by no means critical for the work that most associates conduct on a day-to-day basis, and is therefore indicative of the interest and investment that associates gain through their work at Cecosesola. For example, on one occasion I spoke with an associate who had worked in the unskilled-labor sector her entire life and therefore spoke a rough, grammatically incorrect Spanish. However, she still geared the conversation towards explaining what distinguishes Cecosesola as a cooperative and went out of her way to express the values that it hopes to foster among its associates.

Associates routinely shaped our conversations to center on key Cecosesola historical events, such as the transportation riots or the battles to find property, or to tell me their definition of a cooperative and the way that Cecosesola reorders human relationships. Associates were also able to clearly articulate the meaning and importance of the cooperative model:

[A cooperative] is where we help each other, one to the other. The strength of the cooperative is the manner in which we participate.

---

318 Interview 18.
319 Interview 33.
320 Interview 19.
321 Interview 39.
322 Interview 26, Cecosesola associate, Meeting of Affiliated Cooperatives, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 28, 2007.
In a cooperative, the means of production should belong to the associates in a collective manner. Each should not have his or her own car, etc. Cars should belong to the cooperative.  

The other indicator of member initiative to self-educate can be seen through associates’ ability to converse fluently about new laws under Chávez that have affected the cooperative, as well as his newly proposed laws and Cecosesola’s reaction to them. Nearly all members brought up these topics during interviews and no member whom I questioned about them was unable to comment in some way. Regarding laws that Chávez has already enacted, members made statements such as:

[The Special Law of Cooperatives] is very flexible.  

For Cecosesola, the problem has been that the government’s new labor laws, such as the Law of Labor, do not apply well to the cooperatives. They were written with the boss/worker relationship in mind, but the Ministry of Labor still wants to impose them on the cooperatives. Loxima, The Organic Law of Protection in the Work Environment, etc. were all designed from the point of view of a dependent work arrangement.  

Yes [Chávez’s laws]…have affected us…Now the laws have to be obeyed. They are more rigid (than under past administrations).  

[Cecosesola] pays [new mothers] for three months, something like that. But with the new governmental laws, I think that it’s going to be extended to a year.  

Associates also spoke frequently about new laws that Chávez had recently proposed at the time, such as the Law of Technology and Education. One associate explained, “Right now in our country, they are developing and implementing a series of laws that are…charging a tax for every economic activity that you do.” Another told me during a casual stroll through feria that these laws will require that a set percentage of revenue is deducted and given to a new governmental department for investment in projects to further education and the development of technology throughout the country. The associate

---

123 Interview 26.
125 Ibid.
126 Interview 18.
127 Ibid.
128 Interview 33.
expressed concern because in Cecosesola, extra revenue is used for the fondos. He said that, ironically, “We form ourselves through our work. The reuniones and the analysis give us the possibility to change.” Thus, losing money for the fondos would mean sacrificing the education and innovation that occur naturally through Cecosesola’s work. Associates’ concern for, and interest in, these problems demonstrate member initiative to self-educate about the cooperative. Furthermore, their continual interest in approaching me to question my presence, my experience so far, and to share their current activities regarding these laws, point to a new degree of agency being fostered among Cecosesola members.

The final aspect of initiative can be seen through members’ empowerment to form their own cooperatives. I spoke with founding members of three of Cecosesola’s affiliated cooperatives. The first, Cooperativa Caminando Juntos, is the product of youth Cecosesola members. The adolescents designed the cooperative themselves, coming up with a name, mission, and submitting the application to formerly become a cooperative. They described the experience as “feeling responsible for something that belongs” to them and one said, “This is something that we continue creating ourselves.” Forming the cooperative is their way to take control over their own lives and the lives of their peers. As one stated, “Most young people resolve their problems in the street” but we want to do it differently.” By approaching problems in a new way, these youth are exercising agency in the development of their community.

I observed similar processes of initiative during my conversation with a woman who recently formed a ‘healthy food’ stand cooperative in Feria del Centro. She began the cooperative to offer healthier versions of popular Venezuelan foods. To learn the skills, she found out about one of Cecosesola’s free cooking classes, enrolled herself, and then began saving money to start the cooperative. One Christmas, she borrowed an oven and worked hard making bread to save up the necessary resources to purchase her own capital. As quoted earlier, she said, “It is an effort at the beginning—you don’t have money.” Through her own initiative and hard work, she created a cooperative that has now been producing

129 Interview 11.
131 Literal translation: Cooperative ‘Walking Together’
132 Interview 43.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Interview 25.
for five years. Rather than relying on external money, she found innovative ways to find the necessary start-up funds, thereby invoking her own agency. The same was true for the women’s bread cooperative Las Tinajas. The original eight women saved their own money and with a little extra borrowed from the government (500,000 bs, or about $1,000 in the late 1990s) they bought some land. Most of the founders had originally worked in the fields, cultivating potatoes and coffee, which “was very hard work.” Starting the cooperative was a way to improve their quality of life. As one founding member explained, “We earn almost the same here but the work is not as tough.” At the beginning, they did everything by hand, but were eventually able to take a loan from Cecosesola to purchase capital. As such, the cooperative has always been a product of their own vision and labor and designed explicitly to improve their lives, even when they have sought outside resources. As the associate stated, “Everything is for your own experience—that is the tradition here.”

Agency Correlates to Cecosesola’s Success

The preceding sections demonstrate the strong presence of both purpose and autonomy on the level of Cecosesola as an organization and on the level of individual participants. My data suggests that these two elements are key in explaining Cecosesola’s success in offering its services, fostering worker involvement, and maintaining economic stability. The presence of purpose on an organizational level has insured that Cecosesola subsists and expands solely for the good of the community, thereby minimizing corruption. The cooperative’s ability to foster this purpose among individual participants has created a workforce of committed and responsible associates. Purpose has also been the motivating factor behind the cooperative’s insistence on economic and political autonomy. Such autonomy has imbedded the cooperative into the community as a symbol of the community learning to help itself. Individual autonomy, as expressed through member initiative, has created community among Cecosesola members and also strengthened the ties of individuals to their external communities through their initiation of new cooperatives and active role in providing Cecosesola’s services. Most importantly, as the next section will explore further, agency has stimulated the creation of a unique Cecosesola narrative, the second critical aspect of Cecosesola’s success as a cooperative.

---

337 Ibid.
338 Ibid.
Among Cecosesola associates I observed the presence of a distinct narrative of group identity. The narrative emphasizes principles of solidarity, equality, and community, in essence serving as a language of inclusion for members. It is also the medium for a common expression of Cecosesola’s alternative vision of life and the world. Most importantly, the narrative is a form of resistance against highly politicized state narratives. The Cecosesola narrative, which emphasizes political neutrality, contrasts directly with historically manipulated state discourses and offers a powerful, self-defined route for associates. Ultimately, such self-determination through this narrative of resistance empowers the cooperative members to engage with the state narrative and write themselves back into a story from which they have been excluded.

Three aspects define the Cecosesola narrative: its language of inclusion, its cosmic vision of the world and Cecosesola’s role in offering alternatives, and its language of political neutrality. Taken together, these aspects blend to form a common discourse and perspective shared by most, if not all, of Cecosesola’s associates. As the following analysis of actual member statements will show, this narrative is impressive both for its scope and pervasiveness.

Narrative Element One: Inclusion

The Cecosesola narrative is foremost defined by its emphasis on inclusion. Associates’ language is pervaded by references to the inclusive nature of their organization and their behavior corresponds in many ways to the idealism of the actual discourse. Members routinely use the words “solidarity” and “trust” in speaking about their work in the cooperative and always refer to each other as compañero, or companion. The following statements characterize the concept of solidarity as expressed through the narrative:

It is important to us that the organization think collectively. So what has happened with us as Cecosesola? By means of our analysis, we have realized that we have this [Venezuelan tendency for laziness] but we are also supportive. We lean very strongly towards companionship. So on the base of this solidarity, this comradeship, we go forth creating our activities. And

---

113
equally, regarding necessity, transparency. We foment that and are that, the majority.\footnote{Interview 33.}

Associates speak of themselves as merely one piece in a much greater network of relationships, yet see their own contributions as critical. They describe the collective as necessary not only for the services it provides, but also for the role that it plays in providing support. As one associate described, “My problems are not just my own…We depend upon interpersonal relationships.”\footnote{Interview 3.}

Associates also speak of “trust” as the key factor permitting the success of Cecosesola and the cohesion of the group:

[Trust] is something that you construct over time, not something that you construct in the moment.\footnote{Interview 18.}

There is a process of developing trust, of getting to know each other…We need less control if there is trust.\footnote{Interview 3.}

It’s distinct because here there is trust. If I leave something here, I can get it later—because we have struggled for this. Conversely, on the street it is wilder; you have to be sharper…Here, it is different. I’m going to stay here. If I lose something, I’ll get it back. It’s different, completely different.\footnote{Interview 18.}

Members consistently use these words in daily conversation and they form the main topics of the Reuniones de Gestión. However, they are not purely discursive elements, but also actively practiced pieces of the narrative. In other words, members attempt to live out the discursive reality that they speak about.

The narrative of inclusion is foremost practiced through group unity and the strength of personal relationships. Cecosesola members grew to associate their own identity as individuals with the identity of the group as a whole. In responding to questions that I asked about their personal lives, they often responded with answers about Cecosesola, suggesting that the Cecosesola narrative minimizes the importance of the individual in favor of the betterment of the group. At one reunión, for example, an associate related hearing a fellow associate call the ferias “a waste.” Someone else at the reunión responded that the
associate should have responded, “Then you are too because you’re a part of feria.”

This simple joke reflects the transformation through which associates begin to conceive of themselves as part of the greater Cecosesola identity. Such common identity is further cemented by the tendency of the associates to speak of their common ownership of Cecosesola, its services, and its capital. As one associate explained, “We capitalized for the construction of this health center that belongs to no one in particular. As we all have it, it belongs to no one in particular, but rather to the entire collective.”

Through the inclusive narrative and the nature of work at Cecosesola, most of associates’ social and community networks are based in the organization as well. I asked one associate if he had any friends who do not work at Cecosesola, and he responded:

Yes I do, but it’s not the same relationship. It’s not the same trust. We don’t talk the same. Let me tell you something. You go to a party…or to the mall, and you go with a compañero from here, and in reality you talk about Cecosesola’s feria. Because you’re walking and say, ‘oh this happened to me what can we do…?’ And you spend [the whole time] only talking about Cecosesola. Conversely, with your [other] friend…you talk, but about what happened on the street, [and if you talk about feria] they’re not going to understand you…You talk with them but differently, about other things. It’s not the same relationship.

This quote highlights that a certain element of group identity is coalesced through the act of differentiating Cecosesola members from outsiders. However, this aspect of the narrative is particularly significant primarily for its degree of power. Unlike state narratives, which use ‘otherness’ to create inclusion, the Cecosesola seems less a product of such differentiation. Associates naturally feel greater affinity with other members, but as the quote reveals, they still preserve outside friendships. Inclusiveness, therefore, seems a far more important generative force within the Cecoseosa narrative that exclusiveness. This is mirrored through the inclusiveness of inner-group dynamics. I observed no clear friendship groups or cliques among associates. Members ate lunch at slightly different times each day, depending on their current work, and thus also sat with different associates from day to day. Given the rotational nature of equipos, members did not distinguish between each other based upon skill, education, or work

---

345 Interview 36.
346 Interview 33.
347 Interview 18.
position. The same was true between general Cecosesola associates and the producers, as evidenced by the statement: “I don’t know who is producer and who is Cecosesola.”\textsuperscript{348} The notion of group identity and solidarity extended to all Cecosesola members, no matter their role.

Practice of the narrative of inclusion is also observable through the distribution of power at Cecosesola, as measured by equal access to information, knowledge, and participation. Associates not only speak of absence of hierarchy and the presence of solidarity—these elements are actually practiced. To begin with, associates speak about, and practice, a policy of open access to information. Even as an outsider, I was given access to any information that I asked for, such as budget figures, salary information, and yearly spending. This information was in fact distributed to every person who attended the \textit{Asamblea}. Given that associates belong to flexible \textit{equipos}, such open access was also practiced in situations in which members helped out in \textit{equipos} other than their current \textit{equipo}. An associate in the \textit{Compras}\textsuperscript{349} \textit{equipo} described that the job “is not exclusive to the \textit{compañeros} that are here. Any \textit{compañero} can bring information.”\textsuperscript{350}

I also identified active protection of the non-hierarchical power structure through the Cecosesola value of equal access to knowledge and decision-making.\textsuperscript{351} To insure that all associates have an equal right to education, Cecosesola built the \textit{Escuela Cooperativa “Rosario Arjona,”} or the Cooperative School, a building where the majority of \textit{reuniones} take place, as well as related educational events. I observed the process of group decision-making and education on a daily basis. Special \textit{reuniones}, \textit{los Reuniones de los Chamos}, occur weekly to involve and educate new members. The role that these \textit{reuniones} play in distributing power and creating inclusion was clear—when asking an associate to leave, for example, something that does sometimes occur at Cecosesola, the whole group participates in the discussion and makes the decision. During a \textit{reunión} that involved a discussion of this process, one associate said, “When we ask people to leave, we must look beyond just what’s happening—the concrete—and see the moment that we are living in—why is a \textit{compañero} behaving this way?”\textsuperscript{352} This statement sheds light on the inclusive nature of Cecosesola’s decision-making, as well as the absence of harsh power imbalances.

\textsuperscript{348} Interview 49.
\textsuperscript{349} Cecosesola’s ‘Purchasing’ \textit{equipo}.
\textsuperscript{350} Interview 7.
\textsuperscript{351} Interview 49.
\textsuperscript{352} Interview 23, Cecosesola associate, Net Revenue Meeting, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 27, 2007.
Member participation further contributed to the practice of a non-hierarchical structure. Though some Cecosesola members may by choice participate less than others, all in all I witnessed high member participation in reunions. Numerous members made statements about the difficulty of learning how to self-manage when they first began their work at Cecosesola or about the importance of participation. For example, several reuniones that I attended explicitly focused on the issue of involving associates who have lower rates of participation. At one such reunión, members discussed an affiliated cooperative, Cooperativa el Triunfo, which they said was having troubles with individualists and also lack of trust and communication. One associate stated, “This could happen here and be our problem too, so we need to help, be involved.” Another added, “So, how do you build trust and encourage people to participate?”

On a different occasion, members discussed the importance of inclusion and equal power between Cecosesola and other cooperatives, emphasizing that Cecosesola still has much to learn from the experiences of other cooperatives. A member explained, “Cecosesola is not the owner of the cooperative movement. The cooperatives are self-managed.” As these examples suggest, the narrative of inclusion as regards equal power and solidarity pervaded nearly all communication at Cecosesola—and through the mere act of discussing inclusion, members in fact increased their own practice of inclusion.

Narrative Element Two: Alternative World Vision

The Cecosesola narrative also furthers an alternative vision of the world, allowing members to re-envision their history and future as Venezuelans and global citizens. In contrast to past state narratives, which imposed external explanations for poverty and unequal power arrangements, the Cecosesola narrative allows members to create their own group explanation for poor resource management and their historic exclusion. This narrative exists both discursively, on the level of speech between associates and as main themes during reuniones and educational events, and also in the form of Cecosesola’s established narration about itself as a group. Cecosesola has self-published one book, Construyendo una Convivencia Harmónica, and is in the process of finishing a second

---

353 “It was hard getting used to not being told what to do” (Interview 35). “There is no boss to say where to go next, You go where there is need, where you can help” (Interview 39). “If the majority [of associates] understand and participate, it is very hard for it to fail” (Interview 41).
354 Interview 32.
355 “It’s not that we’re going to teach everything, but rather, what can we do? Because in reality, we don’t know everything. Cecosesola doesn’t know everything. Rather that we also learn from other things” (Interview 18).
356 Interview 41.
(as of September 2007). These books, outlined in reuniones and written by many different associates, present the formalized Cecosesola narrative. The book is not considered complete until every associate has reviewed and approved it. The first book discusses Cecosesola’s account of global patriarchy and individualism, the tendencies of the Venezuelan people, and the group’s historical process of attempting to create a new way for human beings to live and interact. The organization also possesses a Cooperative Video Team, or ECT Television, which members developed to allow Cecosesola to document its own activities. The goal of the team’s production is to aid the organization in evaluating itself “in retrospect” and to also document “the culture of the pueblo.” ¹⁵⁷ With these two mediums, Cecosesola’s narrative can be solidified and also propagated.

The first aspect of this narrative, which the book and associates relate similarly, explains why Venezuela has problems of sustainable change and development. According to the written and oral Cecosesola narrative, Venezuelan culture “is a culture of facilismo.” ³⁵⁸ A Venezuelan saying…is ‘if work produced richness, the donkey would have a chick and a cow.’ More than Colombians and other cultures, Venezuelans would rather sit and not work.”¹⁵⁹ Within this narrative, associates describe Venezuelans as culturally disinclined to hard work. Members explain these tendencies based upon the lifestyles of their early ancestors. The following narration by one associate captures the Cecosesola narrative’s explanation for the current state of the Venezuelan people:

In our daily reflections, we have been describing who we are culturally, as a pueblo…Our ancestors were Caribbean, very folkloric. So…when there is this easy money—[we spend it on] the beach, these sorts of things, because we don’t have this sense of foresight, we don’t accumulate—we enjoy it…Our Caribbean ancestry, it’s a thing of joy, of permanent celebration… So, when there is this easy money, we squander it…We don’t have the sense to save for tomorrow. Rather we live day by day. And for this reason, when there is a lot of cash, instead of dedicating myself to work, I enjoy myself… This is a characteristic that we have as a pueblo.³⁶⁰

But equally, like happy and easy-going people, we also have this aspect of being gatherers. It is a way of being. Our ancestors, the indigenous people, did not have the problem of work…They simply lived life…We call it the Viveza

¹⁵⁷ Interview 3.
¹⁵⁸ In English, ‘wanting to get things done with the least effort or work possible.’
¹⁵⁹ Interview 11.
³⁶⁰ Interview 33.
and we also look for easy money, to obtain benefits without working very much.\footnote{In English, the “Creole Vivacity” or “Creole tendencies.”}

This narrative captures the degree to which Cecosesola associates have crafted a common mythical history of Venezuela’s past. Members were quick to narrate the results of this ancestral heritage on the modern Venezuela. According to one member, in Venezuela someone is called a \textit{pendejo}, or jerk, if he or she does not take any money when it is available to give to his or her family. The associate told the story of a distraught woman who approached him during \textit{feria} because she had dropped 150,000.00 bs (about US $70.00), her money to buy food for the entire week. A little while later, a different shopper approached the associate and said that he had found the money. However, he insisted upon remaining anonymous because he did not want to be called a \textit{pendejo} for not having stolen the cash.\footnote{Interview 33.} Other associates made similar statements about Venezuelan tendencies:

The Venezuelan will take money to spend in a second. The cultural tendency is to spend the money right away.\footnote{Interview 11.}

…Here [in Venezuela], capitalism functions a bit differently. It’s more wild, fierce…immediate, more of today.\footnote{Ibid.}

And that was the culture of us Venezuelans, to become more cunning.\footnote{Ibid.}

Given that associates see these tendencies as the main barriers to overcoming poverty, exclusion, and hierarchies of power in Venezuela, they narrate frequently that the role of the cooperative is to attempt to learn about and suppress these barriers to cooperation. According to one associate:

Paying attention to who we are culturally is an element permanently present in our analysis…Thus when there is a \textit{compañero} in which this part comes out, we try to make it evident, so that it can be weaker every time. We don’t cure it. Neither are we are curing those who participate here. Rather, upon revealing it, we try to lessen the impact that it has among us. For this reason, we have \textit{[been able to] maintain ourselves. And for this reason, we have developed.} \footnote{Interview 18.}
Through this narrative, Cecosesola associates create their own explanation for the economic deficiencies of their families and neighbors and also design their own solutions. Instead of accepting the explanations of state narratives for Venezuelan poverty, or state promises for looming change, the Cecosesola narrative empower associates to change their own lives and communities.

As part of their process to overcome ‘the Venezuelan tendencies,’ the second aspect of the Cecosesola narrative asserts that the cooperative is ‘transforming the world’ through its development of a unique cooperative model of human relations. As one associate explained, “In Latin America there is a problem of mistrust. If all of us construct together, we resolve the problems of many people.”

Cecosesola associates believe that the activities of their organization represent an evolution of humanity towards a less hierarchical, less consumption-oriented society. The group narrative describes Cecosesola as a symbol of change and innovation: through its flexible organization and power distribution, they see themselves as contributing to the transformation of the world. The following narrative epitomizes the Cecosesola perspective of its own resistance through flexibility:

Another thing that we have in Venezuela is this hierarchy. And that is something we have assumed from the civilization, the occidental culture, that of hierarchy, the horizontal. Thus, we have been trying to break this scheme. We are not pyramidal, horizontal, or vertical, or the contrary of all this, because then we would still be static. What we have proposed is that we are an organization in movement…. And that gives us knowledge, it gives us a wider perspective, it gives us participation. Because if we are static, well here you are and here you stay…An organization like ours has to be flexible, open, non-hierarchical—information is a fundamental element. So we try to produce it, spread it, look for it, [and] demand it. The presence of all of these elements allows us to function. Have you been here on Thursdays when they are stocking feria? Until everything appears…everything looks like chaos. And then you get up Fridays and everything is ordered, and you see everyone in their places, developing, serving, attending.

This narrative expresses the Cecosesola vision of its own innovation and the importance of its non-rigid organizational structure. Through embracing chaos, associates find their own order. With this narrative, associates are in fact defining independent group values for what development, organization, and progress signify, rather than being limited to the meanings of state narratives. As one

---

368 Interview 3.
369 Interview 33.
associate described, “We are an organization in movement. Who knows where we will end up?”

The language of world transformation confirms the agency of the group—thereby writing it back into the narrative of nation. In this manner, the narrative is a form of resistance for historically marginalized associates:

One of our preoccupations is this: how to amplify in the rest of the compañeros a vision of what we are doing…and the importance of what we are doing. I feel that we are giving a service to the transformation of the world, which is the rapid wealth, the extraction of the greatest benefit possible from everything around us. Here we propose a relationship of respect, of love for others and for oneself. And I feel that the change of relations has been one of the keys that has permitted us to maintain ourselves and develop as a community organization.

Not only do Cecosesola associates gain ownership over their own livelihoods, they come to assume a vision that extends to the transformation of others within their society and the world. One associate described the importance of this perspective in relation to the Law of Technology and Education that the cooperative is currently attempting to bypass. According to the associate, several members are writing a report “to clarify what we are doing in the contribution of this science and technology. [Cecosesola] is not just making money. No—it is creating knowledge, a distinct vision of the country and of the world.”

The following statements highlight the role of transformation in the Cecosesola narrative:

We are not just a labor center…We try to learn, to create a better society.

[It is more than my transformation. In the moment that I as a person start to act and think differently, then I am transforming myself and…the world.]

Through the narrative of world transformation, associates gain power and hope regarding their own lives and their place in the world. It allows them to reposition themselves within their communities and the Venezuelan state and

---

370 Interview 53, cooperative associates (new cooperative), Carora, Venezuela, September 8, 2007.
371 Interview 33.
372 Ibid.
373 Interview 43.
374 Interview 33.
also ties them together as a community with a common lived history. As one associate narrated:

> What has happened with us is that the experience with transport—everything it did to us, and we passed through to here with this experience—it gave us a lived experience… So, we learned a way to analyze our situations, and with that as a base, how to go forth…assuming responsibility. And the decisions about what happens with politics, what happens with those that want to take advantage.\(^{375}\)

Associates narrate about the group experience as though it were their own, thus identifying their own contributions as important: “We’ve come from a social system constructing a road to the social, the collective.”\(^{376}\) As the narrative suggests, they also gain a sense of pride about the accomplishments of the organization, in essence assuming a language of the organization’s, and their own, uniqueness. As one associate explained, “From a global perspective, I don’t think there is anyone else who has achieved what we have.”\(^{377}\) The Cecosesola narrative thus also possesses a language of pride and accomplishment for what it has contributed to the world. The narrative embraces the uniqueness of the organization’s transformation—“It is not easy to systematize what we have done…the system has to be here, in the moment of the people”\(^{378}\)—as well as its uniqueness from non-cooperative organizations—“We must remember that they do not all speak the same language. [The cooperative] is a distinct way of seeing the world.”\(^{379}\) The narrative also, in some cases, distinguishes Cecosesola from other cooperatives, namely state-sponsored cooperatives: “Other cooperatives are not like this, even though they are legalized…we have to be critical.”\(^{380}\)

Ultimately, this narrative gives associates the power to redefine themselves as Venezuelans and to engage with a historically distant and controlling state. As one associate narrated, through being in a cooperative, “You learn so much…you develop your own personality, your own identity as Venezuelan.”\(^{381}\) Through the purpose and initiative that associates assume through their work at Cecosesola, and their inclusion in the powerful Cecosesola narrative of world transformation, associates begin in turn to create new definitions for themselves within

\(^{375}\) Ibid.
\(^{376}\) Interview 48, cooperative associates, Regional Meeting of Cooperatives, Carora, Venezuela, September 7, 2007.
\(^{377}\) Interview 40.
\(^{378}\) Interview 41.
\(^{379}\) Interview 48.
\(^{380}\) Interview 26.
\(^{381}\) Interview 39.
Venezuelan society. Rather than subject to dominant discourses that have historically narrated about the barbarity of the pueblo, the Cecosesola narrative gives associates a route for creating new definitions and value systems for themselves as cooperative members and integral pieces of Cecosesola. This, in turn, gives members the power to engage with the Venezuelan state and the national narrative.

Narrative Element Three: Political Neutrality

By virtue of the two elements discussed previously, Cecosesola also possesses a distinctly apolitical group narrative. By refusing to depend upon, or affiliate itself with, the state or any political facet, the cooperative asserts itself autonomously and resists previous state narratives. Associates defend Cecosesola’s political neutrality, and my personal observations support these claims. The cooperative was devoid of political paraphernalia, and reuniones never presented a particular political slant. According to associates:

We don’t take into account anything religious or political. 382

We have maintained the principle of political neutrality. Inside of the cooperative we do not discuss these things. Outside of the cooperative anyone can say what they want. 383

My conversations with members reflected this tolerance. Members seemed open to expressing either personal favor or dislike of Chávez, 384 but, for the most part, expressed political indifference, as I will discuss in more depth later. Although associates defended Cecosesola’s political neutrality, they did not dissociate themselves entirely from political ideologies. While refusing to align the cooperative explicitly with any one party or leader, they did not disregard the values or ideas behind certain ideologies, for example, the Bolivarian Revolution and socialism. Members remarked:

We don’t adopt the form of the red shirt, the slogans…but that is what we are inside. 385

We don’t call what we are socialism. We are cooperative. But when you try to see what socialism signifies, the equality…we’ve had all of that for a long time.

382 Interview 3.
381 Interview 52.
384 For example, “I am anti-Chavista” (Interview 20).
385 Interview 11.
time...The problem with socialism is all of the parties. The parties are very capitalistic.\textsuperscript{386}

By resisting categorization or affiliation, however, the cooperative maintains autonomy from political influences and, therefore, its ability to continue asserting its own narrative.

With political neutrality as a basis for the group narrative, the organization is able to function independently from politics and state intervention. During times of political upheaval, Cecosesola has continued to offer its services without interruption:

We’re not pro or anti Chávez. We have simply established that they leave us space, that they let us work, that they allow us to be...All of these things that we have experienced, lootings, before Chávez, after the strike when the anti-Chávez groups stopped economic activity in the country, we continued functioning. We opened as usual on Friday, Saturday, [and] Sunday. Similarly, when Chávez had not yet assumed power, when there was violence, looting, we still opened the same, every day. When there was the Caracazo we opened every day. The country was even taken militarily, and we went out to conduct our economic activity.\textsuperscript{387}

Additionally, even though new administrations no doubt usher in new complications for the cooperative, members assert that their actual lives have continued virtually unaffected. I asked an associate if the Bolivarian Revolution had impacted his personal life and he responded, “I wouldn’t say so. It has continued normally. It has not affected me right now. But I would say that it would affect someone who was in politics... But us as an organization, I don’t think so.”\textsuperscript{388} In this way, Cecosesola’s narrative of political neutrality serves as a language of preservation and stability in the context of a volatile state. The narrative is a vehicle for the cooperative’s services, protecting it from the outside political turmoil and insulating the community in a space where it can be foremost concerned with its own needs. As one associate stated, “We see life in a different way because we are here at Cecosesola. But we do not have time to keep up on the news.”\textsuperscript{389} Rather than being defined primarily by their identity as Venezuelan, an identity highly tied to state narratives and a politicized state

\textsuperscript{386} Interview 22, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, August 27, 2007.
\textsuperscript{387} Interview 33.
\textsuperscript{388} Interview 18.
\textsuperscript{389} Interview 20.
agenda, members draw meaning from their identity as part of their community and the cooperative.\textsuperscript{390}

As a result, members overwhelming demonstrated an ability to ‘see both sides’ of political issues. Despite the intense polarization of popular opinion over Chávez (so much so that before reaching Cecosesola, I had never before spoken with a Venezuelan who did not identity as “Chavista” or ‘Con la oposición’) most Cecosesola members spoke of both the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ aspects of Chávez’s administration and Revolution. Members stated:

What don’t I like [about Chávez]? In reality, I don’t like the president’s manner of being, but at least he wants to do things well. I don’t know. In reality, I don’t have any affinity with the president or with the opposition. It’s good that they have affected Venezuela as they have. But there are things that they do well, other things that are not…\textsuperscript{391}

The government has both good and bad aspects…some things that they impose, I don’t like.\textsuperscript{392}

As these statements reveal, Cecosesola members possess the ability to make reflective judgments about politics and, generally, refrain from taking sides. The narrative rather expresses a preference for transforming the world and themselves, however that may be possible. Members recognize their own participation in the structure of the state as inevitable, but see their own agency as a tool for creating alternatives to that structure:

Thus we are not anticapitalist, we are not anti-Chávez, we’re not against the other because it is not our position to give preference to someone, but rather for the construction of something distinct, new… [W]e say that the issue with capitalism is not a problem of storage, of creating, of taking from others, but rather that it a manner of how people relate…The idea is how to continue transforming ourselves…We don’t position ourselves as ‘anti’ because we also ‘are.’ In the background, we are them. So you are going to permanently have a confrontation with the other, and we’re not interested in confrontation, but rather in finding ourselves.\textsuperscript{393}

\textsuperscript{390} For example, upon being asked what it means to be born in Venezuela, an associate responded, “To have been born in Venezuela? I’ve never thought about it. In reality I don’t know. The family. More than anything the family, to be familiar with Venezuela” (Interview 18). Rather than tying his identity to the notion of state and country, he referred first to his family.

\textsuperscript{391} Interview 18.

\textsuperscript{392} Interview 19.

\textsuperscript{393} Interview 33.
In essence, the Cecosesola narrative positions the cooperative external to the state narrative and the state-constructed universe of nationalism. Through its distinct narrative, members assert their own vision of transformation as an alternative to the external Venezuelan structure and state narrative. Though the cooperative recognizes changes at the state level, it attempts to maintain its neutral perspective while making the necessary modifications to be able to continue furthering its goals. During the Reuniones de Gestión, which often became mediums for discussions about how the cooperative should approach Chávez’s new laws and programs, members frequently made statements such as: “We should not say that the change is good or bad, but use our flexibility to adapt”\(^\text{394}\) and “It is not that things are changing to be worse afterwards, but that things are changing and we need to adapt.”\(^\text{395}\) In this way, through political neutrality, the Cecosesola narrative encourages a new form of resistance against state narratives.

Cecosesola Narrative: Generator of Civil Society

The de-politicized Cecosesola narrative of world transformation allows members to reposition themselves as autonomous beings to state definitions and, as a result, they gain the necessary power to be able to engage with the state as an external force. In essence, the narrative contributes to the construction of a new civil society as the cooperative becomes able to critique, collaborate with, and make demands of, a Venezuelan state that was previously inaccessible. Through these new interactions, Cecosesola defines its own meaning of politics, thereby rejecting the language of the state. As one associate asserted, “We are going to construct another world. That is our politics.”\(^\text{396}\)

The first aspect of Cecosesola’s generation of civil society is its critique or questioning of state behavior and laws. By monitoring state actions and educating itself about new laws, the cooperative is engaging with the state and thereby asserting itself as a separate presence. Associates meet weekly for the explicit purpose of discussing how such laws “will affect us, Cecosesola. If they affect us. What we can, what we can’t do, all of that.”\(^\text{397}\) During these reuniones, they evaluate the effectiveness of the state (“Little by little we can make a change; but not tomorrow like the government wants”\(^\text{398}\)) and often criticize state proposals,

\(^{394}\) Interview 23.  
\(^{395}\) Interview 26.  
\(^{396}\) Interview 40.  
\(^{397}\) Interview 18.  
\(^{398}\) Interview 40.
such as Chávez’s plan for Communal Councils, which would govern cooperatives and community activities:

The Communal Councils cannot be a manner to transfer resources, but a medium to change our conception of community. 399

This is an idea someone came up with in a classroom… We’re trying to make contact with people in that classroom to share our experience. 400

Second, as the last statement shows, Cecosesola members then take the next steps, which are to collaborate with the state to share their knowledge and, if necessary, make demands to reach the desired outcomes. Members extend their obligation to participate within the cooperative to an obligation to participate on the level of nation. As one member stated, “If we don’t participate within the law, capitalistic elements remain.” 401

I witnessed processes of both collaboration and demand between Cecosesola and the state. In August 2007, Cecosesola began organizing a response to state proposals which would create new cooperative laws (among others) and amend the constitution. Observing that these changes could have huge ramifications on Cecosesola’s ability to provide certain services, self-govern, and own communal property, Cecosesola began engaging with other, similarly-concerned cooperatives in a series of meetings all over the country. According to attendees, “The goal of these meetings is so that we can say ‘a good part of the cooperative movement thinks this way about the new laws.’ … Reflecting about our cooperative life, we can elaborate criteria to have an opinion.”402 During the meetings in Corora, Venezuela, cooperative members critiqued government proposals…

The law takes a little from France, a little from Argentina… we want it to take into account the cooperative activity [that is] taking place across the country. 403

… asserted their right to influence and determine the content of the laws…

No law should be outside the realm of public participation. 404

399 Interview 51, cooperative associates, Regional Meeting of Cooperatives, Carora, Venezuela, 8 September 2007.
400 Interview 11.
401 Interview 4, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, 23 August 2007.
402 Interview 48.
403 Ibid.
I think that it is very important that the cooperative movement is recognized so that the norms there correspond with the norms of the cooperatives law.\textsuperscript{405} Thus, Cecosesola supports the creation of an Organic Law that would protect coops from these other laws, instead holding them to a separate set of criteria specific to the coop experience.\textsuperscript{406}

\ldots and reinforced their political autonomy and ability to have their movement’s opinions headed:

Our cooperative movement has not been manipulated by anyone.\textsuperscript{407}

One thing that we have is experiences. We have sweated, each one of us in our own region\ldots we have also had political experience.\textsuperscript{408}

If we have opinions\ldots they will continue penetrating and appear in law\textsuperscript{409}

Laws, deputies change. They are temporary. [We are not].\textsuperscript{410}

Through this process of organizing meetings, building a coalition of forces, and crafting a proposal, Cecosesola asserted its ability to collaborate with the state,\textsuperscript{411} thereby generating a stronger civil society.

Third, on other occasions, Cecosesola acts directly to make demands of the state. As discussed previously, Cecosesola is in the process (as of February 2008) of attempting to receive an exemption from the Law of Technology and Education tax. To receive the exemption, they are writing a report to argue the validity of their current activities as processes of education and formation.\textsuperscript{412} In the report, they argue that “just how a cooperative organizes itself, arranges its seats, could

\textsuperscript{404} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{406} Interview 5.
\textsuperscript{407} Interview 48.
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{409} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{410} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{411} “Now, right at this time, with the constitutional reform and with the intention to create a new cooperative law, here there has not been so much participation, though we are looking for it and it has not been denied. It’s possible that we are going to be able to make several contributions” (Interview 37).
\textsuperscript{412} Interview 33.
come from a book.” Thus, Cecosesola itself could arguably be creating innovation through the essential elements of its daily functioning. Though this demand has not been resolved as of this writing, Cecosesola has previously received the desired outcome from its interactions with the state. When Chávez first came to power, Cecosesola worked closely with policy makers to insure that its experience with cooperative development was reflected in the Special Law of Cooperatives that Chávez was modifying. Members described:

We as a cooperative movement had a very active participation in that. On the basis of our experience, we could make various contributions in certain articles. And they were taken into account. We did well…I would say that we have worked well with the government because we are not opposed, no? Rather that we are constructing a space where we all have life and we have established this also in terms of the transformation of society.  

A national consensus regarding the proposals [was brought to the Assembly]. All of the articles that had been proposed [by the cooperatives] were included in the Constitution.  

The opinion of the movement was taken into account… The majority of the articles in the cooperative law were what we had proposed.  

The articles in the Constitution about cooperatives were written up by our very own cooperative movement in 1998. And in the current cooperative law, in good measure they were also compiled by the cooperative movement.  

As this example highlights, collaboration with the state allows Cecosesola to influence national decisions and shape Venezuelan laws. To a certain degree, the state headed Cecosesola’s recommendations for the Special Law of Cooperatives and included them in the final legal text. Essentially, Cecosesola succeeded in infusing its own narrative into the state narrative.  }

In conclusion, this section has demonstrated that through relationships of trust and solidarity, Cecosesola has become the source of a new community-based narrative of resistance. By being both independently formed and de-politicized, this narrative provides a direct alternative to passive acceptance of dominant state narratives, acting as a medium through which associates can separate themselves.

413 Interview 23.  
414 Interview 18.  
415 Interview 48.  
416 Ibid.  
417 Interview 37.
from a nation-centric world cosmology. Rather than waiting for the state to fulfill promises or construct an inclusive society, the narrative imbues members with the power to take agency over their own lives and the circumstances surrounding their historic exclusion, thereby opposing an oppressive Venezuelan structure. Such agency allows Cecosesola members to re-engage with the state on their own terms, for the fulfillment of their own social visions. Engagement empowers the organization, and its community, as separate and independent forces from the state, thereby generating a stronger civil society. As a result, the narrative not only forms the basis of Cecosesola’s success—fomenting group identity—it also empowers historically disenfranchised members to write themselves into the idea of nation. As my contrast between Cecosesola and Chávez’s cooperatives will show, without an independent narrative founded on a group’s own agency, it is very difficult for a cooperative to ever spur true citizen mobilization.
VI. The Failure of Chavez’s Cooperatives

Cecosesola’s fiscal year-end meeting (2007), which all 300 members are expected to attend. At this meeting, members reach a consensus on how to distribute the net profits of the previous year and make other significant decisions for the coming term. Open, consensus-based meetings such as these reinforce Cecosesola’s participatory, non-hierarchical organizational structure.
A

s my discussion of national narratives suggest, trying to understand the failure of social programs during past Venezuelan administrations would not yield very interesting explanations. Each successive government brought a new discursive story to the notion of statehood, but very little changed regarding Venezuelan patterns of exclusion and the historical consolidation of power among the elite. Under these circumstances, state social programs, in retrospect, stand out as symbolic, rather than revolutionary, gestures to provoke social restructuring, and their failures are not resoundingly surprising.

Chávez’s ascendancy and implementation of the Bolivarian Revolution, conversely, has been almost unilaterally popularized as an astounding ‘break from the past’ and as a symbol of Latin America’s ‘leftward’ turn (though whether this is a positive or negative change is hotly disputed). What few scholars debate is that Chávez, more than any other Venezuelan (or even regional) president, speaks directly to excluded populations in an effort to reshape Venezuela’s history of power domination. In this context, the failure of his cooperatives to even begin this process—according to him, they still reproduced a capitalistic mentality—418—is far more puzzling.

Though it is still early to deeply assess Chávez’s long-term effects on the country, Cecosesola’s uniquely successful cooperative experience is a powerful lens to begin understanding the perceived failure419 of the cooperative program. The importance of agency and narrative in Cecosesola’s development suggests that these are important measures to begin with in analyzing the program. Though other factors, yet unknown, may also contribute to the failure, what I will show to be a strong absence of both agency and narrative among Chávez’s cooperatives cannot be ignored. Cecosesola’s experience with failed cooperatives in the past, which also lacked these elements, suggests the further applicability of the

418 As one Cecosesola member explained, “Now, Chávez is saying that all cooperatives are capitalistic, how he will make communal councils in the new constitution, which the new government will regulate…” (Interview 11). All Cecosesola associates in the study agreed, expressing the similar perspective that: “The [new] cooperatives are not organizations that lead to socialism. We agree with him. The cooperatives that he has promoted are very capitalistic” (Interview 22).

419 I say ‘perceived’ because no studies, to my knowledge, have yet analyzed the nature of the program’s failure. Beyond basic statistics that show a large rate of inactivity among the new cooperatives, no greater analytic framework yet exists. My own analysis of the program’s failure must thus rest upon Chávez’s own indictment, the impression of Cecosesola cooperative members (who are deeply imbedded in the national cooperative movement), and my own observations (or lack of contact with newer cooperatives, which were difficult to find). The limits of this study prevented me from conducting a comparative research study among some of the newer cooperatives. However, given Chávez’s own impression of the failure, it seems natural to assume that Cecosesola’s experience, and the comments of Cecosesola members, can provide one means of beginning to understand both the meaning and causes of Chávez’s indictment of the program.
measures of agency and narrative in understanding the success, or failure, of cooperatives.

State Money, State Idea: The Absence of Agency

Despite Chávez’s high popular support, my research suggests that his cooperative program relied upon, and provoked, little agency among the founders of the new cooperatives. The program’s design lacked a method for evaluating individuals’ purpose for forming cooperatives and also nullified the need for individuals to exert initiative in the formation or execution of their cooperatives. As such, the cooperatives could neither become integral pieces of their surrounding communities nor imbue community members and associates with new social autonomy.

Lack of Initiative. To begin with, the state awarded money to newly formed cooperatives based on very limited criteria—namely, the presence of a minimum of five associates and communal ownership of the organization. Though the program mandated that associates make decisions democratically, there was no mechanism for monitoring cooperatives once they were founded. In essence, though the state endeavored to create cooperatives, it had no way to insure that new members were in fact forming such organizations. Instead, the easy access to start-up money generated the mentality that “if there’s money, let’s legalize ourselves” because the government is providing the money.420 Though previous Venezuelan administrations supported cooperatives, they did so very distinctly. According to one Cecosesola associate:

It wasn’t so very difficult [to get government money in the past]. The only thing is that it wasn’t that much money, and more importantly it was a product of cooperatives that surged from their own effort rather than from the financial help of the state.421

Thus, the ease of funding in Chávez’s program limited the need for associates to exercise effort in the formation of their cooperatives:

Well, there is a compañero from Cooperativa la Alianza who says that money does not do work. So, neither does a project. People are the ones who work. Thus, when there is a lot of money, and if the money is easy, this does not ensure that there is going to be a successful cooperative. And the example has

420 Interview 5.
421 Interview 37.
been that many cooperatives with very good projects from a technical standpoint, and with a lot of money, have not begun to work or have lost the money.\textsuperscript{422}

As the last quote highlights, it is the presence of \textit{lucha} that permits associates to gain ownership over their organization and the experience self-formation. Without the need to work hard to garner their own funding, the cooperatives were founded on the spirit of dependency that they were designed to combat. As such, the importance of the relationship with the government undermined, from the very beginning, the autonomy of the cooperatives.

Many of the new cooperatives may applaud [the new proposed reforms], because we know who it comes from (Chávez). The problem is that [these] cooperatives are not autonomous.\textsuperscript{423}

The people beginning the cooperatives also have little experience and, essentially, do not know what they are doing. Because they begin with government money, the individuals are not as invested in their project or as responsible.\textsuperscript{424}

Once the initial capital money was exhausted, many of the cooperatives disintegrated. An associate explained, “Chávez is not going to go back to the cooperatives that he has made. They’re over there lost, asking that he give them more money. And I don’t think that this is going to happen.”\textsuperscript{425} In essence, a new relationship of dependency on the government had been forged.

Not only did the program minimize agency, it also made it impossible to distinguish between differing motives for creating the cooperatives. Cecosesola members pointed out that this system made desire for money associates’ real purpose in forming cooperatives:

\begin{quote}
New cooperatives disappear fast because there is no integration and they just want the money.\textsuperscript{426}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
The government’s error is making people organize for money—then that’s the reason they organize.\textsuperscript{427}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{422} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{423} Interview 48.
\textsuperscript{424} Interview 10.
\textsuperscript{425} Interview 18.
\textsuperscript{426} Interview 25.
\textsuperscript{427} Interview 51.
Cecosesola associates also criticized the program for its failure to consider typical Venezuelan cultural tendencies regarding access to money:

This program that the government made to throw money to the streets doesn’t work. A very small percentage of these cooperatives work. Most of them fail. The Venezuelan will take money to spend in a second. The cultural tendency is to spend the money right away.\textsuperscript{428}

It’s a problem with how they conceived of the program…Here, capitalism functions a bit differently. It’s more wild, fierce…immediate, more of today…Thus, giving start up money to these new cooperatives is largely unsuccessful because the tendency is to snatch up the money and spend it, without a thought to the true purpose of the venture.\textsuperscript{429}

In other cases, the absence of need for associates to demonstrate true initiative permitted the growth of corruption and the establishment of cooperatives as a way to bypass new worker protection laws:

Five people can legalize themselves as a cooperative. After three months, a worker becomes an associate. Thus, those in power can get new workers every three months so that these individuals do not become associates (and therefore receive all the health protections they would then deserve).\textsuperscript{430}

Without the need for individuals to express true initiative towards creating a cooperative, the program could never actually succeed in creating true cooperatives. Rather than developing ideas based upon their own needs, struggling to actualize them, and turning to outside aid only in moments of true need or to enhance a service already developed through lucha—a process that I have identified as key in Cecosesola’s success—Chávez’s program reversed this process, providing easy aid and support to individuals with underdeveloped needs and projects. The program offered cooperatives as solutions to poorly defined problems—and to the very problems that could be best solved by community-initiated solutions.

Chávez’s program is not the first attempt by a Venezuelan government to create community programs to solve issues of poverty and social exclusion. The failure of the other cooperativas centrales and their feria systems can also be linked to the lack of initiative and autonomy required by the state programs. Though

\textsuperscript{428} Interview 11.
\textsuperscript{429} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{430} Interview 5.
Cecosesola was one of the first central cooperatives, in the 1980s the success of the feria system began to draw government attention. Thus, it began contributing money to centrales all over the country to encourage them to create ferias. Cecosesola aided in the creation of a national cooperative center, CECONAVE (Central Cooperativa Nacional de Venezuela), which coordinated these efforts and what eventually came to number 300 ferias. Cecosesola acted as a central distributor for produce that was sent to other centrales for their own ferias. However, at a certain point, the centrales and the ferias began to experience internal problems:

There came a time in which we became very libertine. That we had very fixed norms. We didn’t change… So as a result of this libertine characteristic, the rules were not followed, and there came a time in which we sent the merchandise there, but the money never arrived here…

Cecosesola members associate the presence of government funding with the failure of the other ferias. Rather than expressions of community initiatives, the state both created and implemented ferias in other communities. In essence, like Chávez’s cooperative program, it was initiated by money, not individuals. As a result, “The other ferias became purely…a commercial relationship, and this is what led them to deteriorate and, of course, to come to an end.” Thus, the direct absence of initiative contributed to the failure of the other 300 ferias and, in most cases, the other centrales as well. Central Portuguesa, for example, accepted government loans but then began to miss payments because “the community did not contribute.” The central eventually collapsed, though some of its cooperatives still exist. The comparison of this project to the current program therefore lends a historical understanding to the cause of the current failure:

What has happened right now with this government program, with the cooperatives, is that people are organizing to receive certain royalties. It is not an activity that they have achieved [through lucha], that gives them formation… [or] is demanding; rather, they have organized in lucha for certain royalties and that’s it. For this reason, there are not those values there, being

---

431 “[The government] contributed money to other central [cooperatives] so that they would make ferias. And [with] these contributions…we succeeded in making a national center, which grouped all of the centers in different states, and it was called Ceconave…There were…300 ferias in the whole country…” (Interview 33).

432 Interview 33.

433 Ibid.

434 Interview 41.
sowed…developed… Today they are receiving these royalties, without any effort, [just like] the centrales received the royalties without much effort.\textsuperscript{435}

This additional example suggests that autonomy and initiative not only contribute to the success of cooperative development, as in Cecosesola’s case, but can also explain its failure when they are absent. In this way, autonomy seems to be a clear factor in understanding the failure of Chávez’s cooperative program, despite its stated goal to stimulate the power and involvement of the community. Without requiring that individuals struggle or create their own solutions, the program removed the need for individuals to exercise their own power or develop the resources of their own community. As Cecosesola’s experience demonstrates, the community’s effort to fulfill a goal autonomously is key to crafting strong community bonds and stimulating individual and group agency.

*Lack of Community Purpose.* The absence of a need for individual or group initiative, which made money and personal gain the core motivating factors for the creation of the cooperatives, meant that the cooperatives could never emerge as direct responses to needs experienced by their respective communities. In contrast to Cecosesola and its affiliated cooperatives, which emerged because of unsatisfied needs in their communities, the presence of easy funding and the promotion of Chávez’s program in many cases blocked the cooperatives from surging as direct community expressions. As such, most were founded without a sense of purpose any greater than the well being of the associates themselves. Cecosesola members identified this as a key point of failure among the government cooperatives:

The new government cooperatives are not developing for the well-being of communities, but rather because people have easy access to money to create personal gain, and for this reason they fail to become anything more but capitalistic ventures.\textsuperscript{436}

Well, these cooperatives, the government financed them, right. And there are many people who in reality do not understand what a cooperative is… Many people take advantage. They are not there to process something, but rather to see what they can get for themselves. The government finances them, [so] they don’t have to worry. There’s no concern.\textsuperscript{437} [The government is] giving loans to people who wouldn’t really choose a loan. A cooperative that is organized exclusively to take out a loan does not have very

\textsuperscript{435} Interview 33.  
\textsuperscript{436} Interview 10.  
\textsuperscript{437} Interview 18.
much cooperative tradition. And to that they have given money. There has not been formation.\footnote{Interview 37.}

These quotes all highlight the fact that the individuals who benefited from Chávez’s program did not have the ‘solution’ of their own community’s needs as a foremost concern in beginning their cooperatives. As Cecosesola’s experience has demonstrated, without such purpose, a cooperative will have little sustainability and also fail to act as a source of community networking. Cecosesola members already observed these problems among the new cooperatives. According to one associate, “The cooperatives that are forming with a basis in this government…sometimes they don’t go anywhere…the cooperatives are going to end without this government.”\footnote{Interview 20.} If the government cooperatives possessed a deep community purpose, governmental support would not be a necessary element for their continuation. As Cecosesola’s experience with the health center demonstrates, a community engaged around a cooperative for the fulfillment of its own needs is a powerful force, even when economically depleted. Donations alone contributed enough funds for the initial cost of constructing Cecosesola’s hospital.

Thus, my data suggest that the success of Chávez’s program was crippled from the onset because it did not require the element of community purpose in the creation of cooperatives. Cecosesola’s experience shows that cooperatives should emerge because of a need in a community, not because of governmental promotion and incentives.

Chávez’s Charisma and State Revolution: The Absence of Independent Narrative

Without agency as a grounding point in the new cooperatives, they could not generate the necessary independent narrative for associates to re-envision their place in the nation. Though Chávez may have intended the cooperatives to generate inclusion, his own state narrative precluded and hindered this possibility by making him—the powerful, charismatic leader—and the revolution itself—a deeply politicized vision of change—the underlying narrative of the program. As such, new cooperatives could never generate independent visions of the meaning or significance of their cooperatives in the context of the state. From the onset, they were saturated with a state-centric revolutionary framework and therefore crippled in becoming anything but
politically symbolic artifacts of Chávez’s national narrative. As a result, though Chávez’s national narrative overtly preaches social inclusion and community empowerment, his charismatic presence as leader and his unitary focus on constructing a socialist state discreetly undermine the role that excluded Venezuelans and communities can actually play in the revolution. In this section, I will explore the role of narrative in the failure of Chávez’s cooperative program.

The primarily block to independent narrative formation among the new cooperatives is the role of what I call Chávez’s charisma. Chávez is the face of the revolution and its programs, and thus, as the primary leader, he is also the sole voice of the national narrative. Additionally, his national narrative, in this case the narrative of the Bolivarian Revolution and *Socialismo del Siglo XXI*, is primarily a state-created narrative. This is manifest clearly in the cooperative program itself. Chavez did not adequately consider the experience of Venezuelans in crafting the program’s orientation, structure, and goals. According to one Cecosesola associate, Chávez’s laws have not taken “into account at all the experience of Cecosesola or other cooperatives.” Thus, the arrival of his administration, which was far more concerned with cooperative activity than previous administrations, “was very tough, especially for Cecosesola.”

Though there has been dialogue and communication between the state and Cecosesola, members reported that, overall, “[government sectors] are not seeing [Cecosesola] as an important experience in the construction of socialism.” The government used the experience of cooperatives in other countries as a rubric, “not internal experiences.”

In this way, the state-crafted narrative of Bolivarian socialism has defined the program far more so than the cooperative experiences of actual Venezuelan cooperatives. According to Cecosesola members, the state cooperatives have become sites of compulsory Bolivarian nationalism, regardless of whether or not this narrative is actually meaningful for the participants. As once member explained, Venezuelans “adapt to what the government says, but stay the same inside. They go out with red banners in the street for Chávez, but the mentality is not changing…This change is not easy; it takes time.”

---

440 Interview 10.
441 Interview 11.
443 “People say socialist slogans and vote for Chávez but do not change inside” (Interview 40).
444 Interview 11.
nationalism the underlying narrative of purpose and identity for the new cooperatives. As one Cecosesola member explained, “New cooperatives have to go to state demonstrations and put on a red shirt, or they will not receive more money.” Though this may represent the extreme situation for new cooperatives, it illuminates the degree to which the Bolivarian Revolution and the idea of Chávez as a leader defined the cooperative program. This narrative furthers values more important to the state than the actual community. As a state narrative, it is designed to convey the promise of rapid social transformation and a break from the past. Like past Venezuelan state narratives, it makes many promises for changes that will happen ‘tomorrow.’ It is not the narrative of communities for change in their own communities and may in fact be threatened by the formation of strong community identities. These aspects of the narrative prevented it from becoming a meaningful source of identity or connection for Venezuelan communities. Cecosesola members described, “The word revolution signifies a transformation, but fast…and when it is slow, we call it evolution.” In contrast to community narratives, constructed slowly through the community’s own lucha and autonomy, the narrative of revolution imposed an external idea of change: “When you want to do it fast, sometimes it is passing over the people.” The narrative behind the cooperative program thus existed externally to members’ own local realities.

Furthermore, the state narrative is singularly tied to Chávez and associated strongly with the voice of one leader. Cooperatives, conversely, function inherently as group narratives and are influential at strengthening communities because they empower many voices. As shown through Cecosesola’s experience, collective, community-generated narratives are critical for cooperative success:

Well, we have always asked ourselves about how to achieve education. And we have always tried to examine this. Thus, it has been process of discovering, little by little, the methodology of education. Over a long time, many compañeros have contributed different elements. There has not been one founder or initiator, but rather many compañeros contributing ideas.

This quote highlights the role of group identity and group-constructed Cecosesola narrative. The narrative is successful because it is flexible, generated constantly through the group’s activities and struggles. Chávez’s narrative of

---

445 Interview 52.
446 Interview 51.
447 Ibid.
448 Interview 37.
nation, conversely, is a state creation and allows no space for the community to generate its own purpose. The cooperative program was deeply saturated with this narrative and, thus, an externally imposed idea of resistance. According one Cecosesola associate:

It seems to me that another experience like Cecosesola’s is not going to be achieved because someone external to the community promotes it…much less the government. Rather, the self-development, the self-managed development, can be the path to other community experiences.\textsuperscript{449}

Though the cooperative program was advertised for this purpose—the generation of community power—as a product of the state narrative it could never be separated from the greater state pursuit of its own vision of change and the maintenance of power. In this way, the presence of the state narrative in fact co-opted community participation in the cooperative program. The program was designed to foment community self-management while the state itself has continued to seek to consolidate power and control. According to Cecosesola associates:

When Chávez talks about socialism, sometimes he’s talking about community participation, but other times he’s talking about state-ism.\textsuperscript{530}

They talk about participation, but they tie down the process… [Chávez’s] priority is to maintain power.\textsuperscript{451}

Thus, though designed to foment inclusion, the program was foremost a piece of greater state goals to consolidate control. Cooperatives represented solely one aspect of the state’s program to create a socialist economy and stimulate growth.\textsuperscript{452} As one member explained, “Where the state has a large presence, above all in the economy, we have only one employer. The state is the only employer, the only one that produces, the only one that distributes.”\textsuperscript{453} Cooperatives in fact conflict internally with this system because, as Cecosesola’s experience shows, self-management and autonomy are key aspects of their success. The role of Chávez’s interest in control,\textsuperscript{454} therefore, was a huge barrier to new cooperatives forming their own identities and narratives:

\textsuperscript{449} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{530} Interview 22.
\textsuperscript{451} Interview 11.
\textsuperscript{452} Chávez and the government put emphasis on growth” (Interview 3).
\textsuperscript{453} Interview 22.
\textsuperscript{454} “The current government is against capitalism, but it is capitalist. It wants everything that moves through the country to be from the government” (Interview 41).
Today, the government helps more with financing, promotion, and above everything, with the intent to control them politically…Before, there wasn’t promotion. 455

In that time, fortunately, the government did not exercise much control over the cooperatives, and for this reason, we could develop the cooperatives without worrying ourselves too much about the government. [Now we do] because the government seeks to control a lot more. 456

I think that for the government, the most fundamental thing is to have control. It’s fundamental. So we are talking about a state-centric political process, centered in the hegemony of the government. I don’t know if it is good or nor but it is the reality. And when it is state-centric, where is the community? 457

This last quote highlights that the state cooperative program ultimately left no space for the community itself in the development of cooperatives. The program was inherently politicized and therefore could not offer members the power to create alternatives to past, politically defined explanations for their own externality. As members stated:

It’s the same cooperativism, but they put in politics, it is politicized. 458

These new cooperatives are politicized. Cooperatives that don’t fall on the same line are seen as something else…They are very inexpert and do not function well. 459

The state also imposed many conditions on both new and old cooperatives, deeply challenging Cecosesola’s ability to function independently. 460 As an associate explained, “If you receive something from an institution and they impose conditions, how can you organize?” 461 As another exclaimed, “The government is requiring collective organizing, which is what we already do!” 462

In this way, the program was primarily about government control and the furthering of the state’s vision of the Bolivarian Revolution. The cooperatives were conceived as a mere first step: “the cooperatives are not the goal—they are

455 Interview 22.
456 Interview 37.
457 Ibid.
458 Interview 52.
459 Ibid.
460 Interview 26.
461 Interview 11.
462 Interview 26.
part of the process to achieving socialism…Only the Communal Councils are socialist." 

All of these factors ultimately prevented the new cooperatives from generating narratives of resistance, the most important aspect of Cecosesola’s ability to forge true community power, autonomy, and inclusion. As products of a government narrative, the cooperatives could never gain the necessary autonomy or narrative identities to define their own visions of change and bring this back to the nation. Rather than strengthening civil society or combating exclusion, they acted as shallow symbols of Chávez’s state narrative. Unlike Cecosesola, which has maintained distance from political influences and therefore persisted through many huge social upheavals in Venezuela, “the cooperatives that are forming with a basis in this government…sometimes they don’t go anywhere…the cooperatives are going to end without this government.”

464 Interview 20.
VII. Cooperatives and the Bolivarian Revolution

Customers shop at Feria del Este, one of Cecosesola’s three main markets throughout the city of Barquisimeto.
What relationship would you like to see between the government and the community?

“The first thing is respect for the autonomy of communities, and this respect is manifested in many ways. Respect for them to organize how they want to. And that they can organize. But, I don’t know of any government, in Venezuela or anywhere else, including the United States, where the government [doesn’t] seek to impose its own form of organization. It’s the problem of power. An organization that the government doesn’t control—the government doesn’t know what to do with that.”465

-Cecosesola associate

I came to Venezuela expecting to witness a flourishing, state-promoted cooperative program engaged in the revolutionary task of fostering new linkages with a historically excluded, poor Venezuelan population. This program, I was convinced, was beginning the noble task of implementing the Bolivarian Revolution’s Socialismo del Siglo XXI. What I found instead was a small number of corrupt or mismanaged state cooperatives and, most surprisingly, a resilient cooperative movement functioning separate from, and at times in collaboration with or in opposition to, the state. Sustained by Cecosesola, one of the sole remaining cooperativas centrales from a previous era of Venezuelan cooperative activity, this cooperative network is successfully providing for the needs of its community through self-management and self-financing, all without the presence of a hierarchical line of command or an established organizational structure. Most significantly, Cecosesola’s strict adherence to satisfacer las necesidades que tenga la comunidad (satisfacer the needs that the community possesses) permits the development of group and individual agency—represented through the Cecosesola narrative—that acts as a form of resistance against the structure of the Venezuelan state. I witnessed cooperative members exercising agency not only through rejecting the politicized state narrative (and structure) in favor of Cecosesola’s structure, but also through their constant reformulation and creation of Cecosesola’s ‘flexible’ structure.

I have shown in the previous chapter how Cecosesola’s unique cooperative success sheds light on the failure of Chávez’s cooperative program. However, as the state program was designed explicitly to further the goals of the Agenda Alternativa Bolivariana, its failures can speak to greater contradictions and failures within the comprehensive Agenda itself. Namely, while the current Chávez administration uses the language of revolution in a narrative of re-making the nation, Chávez’s charisma and state-centric vision perpetuate the Venezuelan

465 Interview 37.
processes of exclusion. Though the discourse centers on a populist rhetoric of inclusion, it still relies upon and creates exclusion—not only of the wealthy elites, but also of citizen mobilizations that do not carry the state socialist banner. As such, the failure of Chávez’s cooperative program reveals the contradiction at the very heart of the Bolivarian Revolution between Chávez’s language of citizen mobilization and his presence as a singular, charismatic leader.

Chávez is distinct from past Venezuelan presidents in many regards, and most notably for the form of his rhetoric. Though previous administrations incorporated distinctly populist discourse designed to garner support from poor Venezuelans, Chávez’s is so forcefully pro-pueblo as to alienate the rich elite. Interestingly, Chávez even goes so far in his own narrative of change as to envision his Revolution as the key to finally transforming ‘the people’ from objects to subjects. In other words, Chávez believes that his Agenda Bolivariana will imbue marginalized Venezuelans with agency. In his own words:

> What we do is believe in the strength of the people...that solidarity that brings the people to unity... And I believe that there is a change in the people-as-object, in the people as subject of its own history, transforming itself as it discovers its potential strength. And when that ‘poverty-people,’ which is the consciousness of strength, becomes a protagonist, not even the army would dare oppose it.  

My case-study of his cooperative program, however, reveals the contradiction at the heart of this desire, regardless of its intention: Chávez’s elevation to the position of charismatic leader—no matter how much this may represent the desire of the pueblo for a leader who will finally end exclusion—in fact undermines citizen initiative. Chávez’s super-human personality has become conflated and directly associated with state behavior and activities. His singular presence, rather than the Venezuelan people themselves, has become the symbolic representation of the country. According to Hawkins, “[T]he rule-based structure is much less important that the voice of Chávez.”  

Even in Bolivarian projects designed to elevate the voice of the citizenry, Chávez is forefront. The original website for the Círculos Bolivarianos, for example, stated, “The highest leader of the Círculos Bolivarianos shall be the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.” The significance of this phenomenon becomes all the more salient when contrasted with Cecosesola, where it is the very absence of a

---

466 Muñoz, 32.
467 Hawkins, 1151.
468 Ibid., 1153.
dominant individual or personality that permits the growth of group responsibility and agency. Thus, Cecosesola’s experience suggests that Chávez’s charisma, which permits his voice to become the ‘only voice’ of Venezuela, actually propagates yet another state narrative that does not provide true space for citizen contributions.

As such, Chávez’s narrative continues to be characterized by relationships of exclusion, “otherness,” and state control. Though Chávez defines his administration as a ‘break from the past,’ his narrative relies on the same exclusion as past state narratives. Many scholars have described the Bolivarian discourse as innately populist, and thus founded upon pitting “the people” against a presumed ‘elite,’ although the exact content of this ‘other’ can vary.\(^{469}\) Though the transfer of attention towards a historically marginalized population could be seen as positive, my research supports Hawkins’ analysis that a government founded upon such populist elements is not only a barrier to stimulating the agency of the pueblo (my contribution), but also potentially damaging to the construction of democratic governance. Hawkins, as I am, is hesitant to overtly criticize Chávez, for his administration has resulted in many improvements for poor Venezuelans (due primarily to the range of new social programs). However, Hawkins writes:

\[
\text{I will naturally emphasize some of the more negative attributes of Charismo. I consider this an important exercise in its own right, insofar as these populist attributes are inherently anti-democratic… I emphasis that it is difficult and perhaps impossible to build democracy on a foundation of populism like that we see in Venezuela… Venezuelans… need to recognize these inherent contradictions in order to defuse the extreme polarization that has taken place over the past five years.}^{470}\]

My research bolsters this suggestion that Chávez’s populism— which I define more specifically as his charisma and the new Bolivarian narrative— acts as a fundamental block to democracy. Even though Chávez’s stated goal is to increase the agency of the pueblo, his very interest in this development has resulted in the suppression of citizen initiative and government infiltration into community mobilization projects. Though my study cannot adequately address whether or not the current Venezuelan government functions democratically, it does suggest that by attempting to control community activities, the state is by no means acting as a stimulant to agency or, as a natural consequence, the independent civil

\(^{469}\) Ibid., 1140.
\(^{470}\) Ibid., 1145.
society so critical to the strength of a democracy. As my analysis has shown, the Bolivarian narrative was likely a significant cause of the failure of Chávez’s cooperatives simply because it was used as the foundational piece of the program. Though this narrative is powerful for its ability to mobilize the masses, it conflicts directly with the processes of independent community initiative through its inherent politicization.

The effects of this narrative on civil society have not been confined to the cooperative program, and are therefore reflect significantly upon the Agenda as a whole. The Círculos Bolivarianos, for example, were invaded by the state narrative from the onset. According to Hawkins, “Chávez and his associates originally conceived of the Círculos as a kind of branch of the Bolivarian movement in civil society, part of a ‘National Bolivarian Front.’” Rather than designed purely for citizen mobilization, Chávez envisioned them as a tool of state nation-building that would further state power. As Hawkins adds, “Each Círculo is also encouraged to engage in the study of the Bolivarian ideology, a kind of leftist-nationalist ideology based on the writings of three Venezuelan patriots from the 19th century: Simon Rodríguez, Ezequiel Zamora and, of course, Simon Bolivar.” At the same time, “the idea is to encourage self-help and community development ‘from below.’” My research shows that these two goals are innately incompatible—though Chávez may have the cultivation of community agency in mind, his manipulation of these programs to consolidate state support undermines the programs’ capacities to truly stimulate a strong civil society. By demanding national allegiance first, Chávez subverts the power of communities to foster independent identities and group agency.

These conclusions present several important contributions to contemporary scholarly debates about agency, narrative, charisma, and community development. Foremost, Cecosesola’s experience provides a strong argument for the capacity of human agents to reject social structures and, most importantly, construct alternative structures. It also suggests the need to consider agency not only on the level of individuals, but also on the level of groups. In addition, my research points to the need for additional theorizing about the nature of group identity. Though the tendency has been to consider group narratives as necessarily both inclusionary and exclusionary by nature—that is, that they create community partly by defining who is ‘not’ included—Cecosesola stands as an example of a strong community group that is less differentiated through its

---

472 Ibid., 1153.
narratives of ‘otherness.’ Membership in Cecosesola undoubtedly sets associates somewhat apart, but it does so to a far different degree than state narratives. My research suggests that the cooperative model of purpose and initiative is what allows Cecosesola to flourish and, quite possibly, to possess a narrative that strengthens without excluding.

This inference becomes somewhat problematic when considering the state’s role in community governance. My projection of Chávez’s cooperative program onto the Revolution as a whole suggests that the presence of a charismatic, ‘popular’ leader, though appealing to historically excluded masses, may actually prove counterproductive to reversing such exclusion. Additionally, fomenting true community power may, as an unavoidable consequence, minimize interest in and allegiance to idea of ‘nation.’ Given most states’ interest in maintaining power at all costs, this is a somewhat unfortunate conclusion. Thus, though potentially unfeasible presently, Cecosesola’s experiences point to the fact that communities may benefit the most from a state that permits them to ‘help themselves.’ This is not to say that states should play no role in the social betterment of their citizens, but rather that communities should be given the autonomy to fulfill their own needs. This conclusion may also be important for development organizations who often attempt similar top-down structured community development programs. My research suggests that the presence of resources and an institutionalized program is by no means a direct prescription for the success of a social movement. Communities with the sufficient incentives to organize for their self-betterment may not need outside financial resources. These resources may, in fact, impede community incentives. As such, rather than imposing solutions onto communities, these communities should be subtly encouraged to find solutions from within. Cecosesola stands as a strong example of the power of historically excluded groups and individuals to create communities, satisfacer their own needs and, together, construct the world that they envision.

---

473 Interview 18.
What is the difference with the political parties? Political parties tell you: I am your leader. Stay quiet and I’m going to make you socialism tomorrow. But meanwhile, there is no socialism…I just promise it for tomorrow. This is what the political leaders do. [We] say that we are going to create solidarity now. And for this reason we do not pick leaders that show us paths—rather, we do it ourselves. And that is what we are worried about right now, about if this government is going to understand that. Because governments move in function with power. That is what motivates them fundamentally. And we don’t give power to anyone…we are not looking for anyone’s favor, but rather we are constructing the society that we want as best we can. We are not looking for a leader who can do it for us. Rather, we create this path ourselves. 474

-Cecosesola

---

474 Interview 45.
Appendix I: Glossary of Terms

*Agenda Alternativa Bolivariana:* The Alternative Bolivarian Agenda. Refers to the reforms undertaken as part of the ‘Bolivarian Revolution.’

*ahorro y crédito:* Savings and credit. Refers to the earliest form of cooperatives in Venezuela.

*anti-Chavista:* A person who opposes Chávez and likely affiliates con la oposición.

*arepa:* Traditional Venezuelan corn flour patty stuffed with cheese, meat, vegetables, or beans.

*Asamblea:* Assembly. Refers to Cecosesola’s quarterly Assembly meetings.

*barrio:* Neighborhood. Often used in reference to especially poor or dangerous neighborhoods or slums.

*Barrio Adentro:* Chávez’s social program to provide free healthcare to low-income barrio residents.

*cafetería:* Cafeteria.

*Caracazo:* Popular name for the 1989 riots that occurred all over Venezuela and prompted violent state retaliation. The days of mass protest resulted in 277 ‘official’ deaths, though thousands are estimated to have died. Historians and state discourse have historically explained the Caracazo as a popular response to rising transport fares. Recently, however, they have been seen as a more complex reaction to President Perez’s imposition of a rigid IMF structural adjustment plan, which directly violated promises he made during his presidential campaign.

*caudillismo:* Political system in which caudillo strong-men hold power.

*caudillo:* Leader or military strong-man. Refers specifically to the rural men who mobilized the masses in wars and various military campaigns during the era of Independence struggles in Spanish colonial America.

*central/centrales:* See cooperativa central.

*Centro Integral Cooperativa de Salud:* Cecosesola’s Integrated Health Center, or hospital, planned to open for service in 2008.

*Chavismo:* The political philosophy of Chávez.

*Chavista:* A person who supports Chávez.
Círculos Bolivarianos: The Bolivarian Circles. Community groups organized by Chávez to provide community governance and foment Bolivarian ideals.

compañero: Companion. The word that Cecosesola members use to address each other.

Compras: Cecosesola’s Purchasing equipo.

comunidad: Community.

con la Oposición: With the Opposition. A person who opposes Chávez.


cooparativa central: Central cooperative. In Venezuela, centrales are umbrella organizations for various affiliated cooperatives. During their height in the 1970s and 1980s, they formed a regional and national cooperative network. Cecosesola is one of the last central cooperatives still in existence.

cooperativismo: Roughly, the cooperative ‘mentality’ or 'spirit.' No direct English translation exists.

cooperativista: Cooperative member.

depósito: Cecosesola’s storage warehouse, the produce/supplies pick-up site for affiliated cooperatives who run small ferias in their own communities.


economía popular: The popular economy. Chávez’s new term for a market organization alternative to capitalism.

Escuela Cooperativa “Rosario Arjona”: Cecosesola’s cooperative school.

Equipo: Team. Cecosesola’s term for the organizational unit of workers. Equipos are flexible and worker-managed, meaning that associates move between jobs based upon their personal interests and their own perceptions of where there is need for additional labor.

facilismo: According to the Cecosesola narrative, the Venezuelan culture is one of facilismo, or wanting to get things done with the least effort or work possible.

Feria de Consumo Popular / feria: Fair or market of popular consumption. Refers to Cecosesola’s feria system, which emerged to provide discounted food to the Barquisimeto community and also to give rural agricultural producers stability and community in selling their goods. The primary ferias are: Feria del Centro, Feria del Este, and Feria Ruiz Pineda.

financimiento: Financing.
fondo: Cecosesola’s funds, which provide financing and security to members. See Appendix A for a fuller description.

Fruta: Fruit section of feria.

Ley de Economía Social: Law of the Social Economy. Cecosesola’s proposed law of cooperative organization.

llanos: Plains.

lucha: Lucha is conceived of as the process of struggle, the journey of traveling through hardship.

Mercal: Chávez’s state-run discount supermarket chain, intended to provide affordable and reliable food to poor Venezuelans.

mestizo: A person of mixed racial heritage. In Venezuela, specifically, “persons of some combination of European, indigenous and African heritage.”

Mini-Feria: This section of feria offers a lower price per pound than the main Verdura section and is designed to provide produce to families with very low incomes. Anyone can shop in this area, but the expectation is that families who can afford to do so will shop in the main Verdura section, thereby helping to maintain the existence of Mini-Feria.

Misión Vuelvan Caras: Literally, Mission ‘About Face.’

Misiones: Missions. A broad term that refers to the variety of social “missions” programs instituted as part of the Agenda Alternativa Bolivariana. These include Misiones offering free education, health care, housing, and job training. The Misión Robinson and Misión Sucre programs have succeeded in nearly eliminating illiteracy in Venezuela.

pendejo: Jerk or ‘stupid person’ (slang).

pobreza: Poverty.

‘por ahora’: Refers to Chávez’s statement in 1992 that his coup attempt against President Pérez had failed only ‘for now.’

pueblo: Village or town. In common speech, also used in reference to the everyday “people” that make up the nation. The usage of this word is somewhat charged. According to Coronil and Skurski, “The term pueblo has a dual set of meanings. On the one hand, it encompasses the entire citizenry of Venezuela and is invoked in relation to the nation’s defense and the memory of its independence. On the other hand, the term refers to people who have lower-class (popular) origins and is widely used as a substitute for social class categories when referring to the poor, who are the majority of

475 Yarrington, 68.
the population. Its connotations, charged with ambiguity, vary with context, speaker, and audience.476

Puntofijismo: This term references a 1958 pact between Venezuela’s political parties that essentially limited future elections to a competition between two parties. Initially seen as a positive reform, the term emerged in a derogatory sense to encompass the negative consolidation of power in what was seen as a corrupt, two-party system.

Quincalla: The “trinkets” section of feria.

Reunión: Meeting. Refers to Cecosesola’s self-management structure in which associates meet up to multiple times a day to make group decisions, discuss problems, and share knowledge. The term encompasses Reuniones de Gestión (general “management” meetings), Feria preparation meetings, Reuniones de Cooperativas Afiliadas (affiliated cooperative meetings), educational meetings, and Reuniones de los Chamos (meetings for new Cecosesola members).

Satisfacer: To satisfy, fulfill, meet. Cecosesola members routinely use this word when referencing the cooperative’s goals within the greater community and for this reason I have chosen to preserve it in the original Spanish.

Socialismo del Siglo XXI: Socialism of the 21st Century, Chávez’s end-goal for the Bolivarian Revolution.

Verdura: The vegetables and produce section of feria.

Viveres: The household goods section of feria.

Viveza Criolla: The “Creole Vivacity” or the “Creole tendencies.” Refers to the explanation offered by the Cecosesola narrative for the laziness of the Venezuelan people.

476 Coronil and Skursky, “Dismembering.”
Appendix II: Organizational Map of Cecosesola

Important Actors

Associated Workers

Associated workers are the most visible of Cecosesola’s many important actors. These roughly 350 individuals conduct the day-to-day activities that keep the cooperative’s programs functioning smoothly. Generally residing in Barquisimeto, they engage in work on Cecosesola’s various compounds—the feria grounds, health clinics, and funerary service center—and participate in the nearly daily Reuniones de Gestión. These workers are also responsible for running the main financing and support services of Cecosesola, such as the Servicio de Protección Solidaria de los Ahorros, Apoyo Mutuo, and the Fondos Integrados. Few of the associated workers possess specialized jobs, in contrast to the producers, and instead rotate flexibly through the series of different tasks necessary for maintaining the services.

Agricultural Producers

Agricultural producers, who reside within five major regions outside of Barquisimeto, provide the fresh fruit and vegetables that stock the Cecosesola ferias. Most farmers belong to cooperatives within their specific region (12 cooperatives in total), and though each individual owns his or her own land—choosing what to grow and how to grow it largely autonomously—he or she collaborates with other cooperative members to transport the goods to Cecosesola. Though the farmers receive individual reimbursement based on the type of products and quantity of products they grow, each contributes a set amount to a fondo within the agricultural cooperative that provides financing, disaster relief, and permits the purchasing of communal buildings and equipment. These cooperatives generally meet bi-monthly to discuss what individual farmers should plant, share growing advice, establish fair prices on produce, and decide how to use the communal fondo resources. Each cooperative within a given region also contributes to a regional fondo—including all

477 In English, “Service for Supportive Protection of Savings and Loans.”
478 In English, “Mutual Aid.”
479 In English, “Integrated Funds.”
cooperatives within that area—as well as a comprehensive fondo—covering all affiliated agricultural producers.

Though separated spatially from the center of Cecosesola activities, producers and the associated members still maintain a strong bond and do not distinguish themselves as distinct Cecosesola actors. According to one member, the relationship “is not an affiliation of paper. It is an affiliation of sharing, of meeting.”480 Another said, “I don’t know who is producer and who is Cecosesola.”481 I witnessed this connection through the involvement of producers in feria. Though not a required element of their labor, many producers drive the 2-5 hours each weekend to stay in Cecosesola dormitories and assist at feria. This enhances their level of connection with the outcome of their labor in the community as well as their identity as Cecosesola workers.

In essence, though participating in more specialized activities, producers and direct associates receive equal treatment and value each other highly. This is reflected in the degree of support that Cecosesola provides to its producers. These individuals receive health care, have full access to all of Cecosesola’s fondos and, most importantly, always receive support from Cecosesola in case of crop failure, drought, etc. through the Crop Fondo. To provide additional security, producers establish the price of their crops with Cecosesola before planting. These prices are based on the exact cost for each individual farmer to produce the given product and therefore protect the growers from unpredictable changes in market value. This system also allows the farmers to receive financing in advance of the actual growing season.

**Affiliated Cooperatives**

The diversity of affiliated cooperatives extends beyond the collection of agricultural producers. Twenty-two cooperatives provide services such as savings and credit or the wholesale of domestic appliances. Other cooperatives (totaling about 38), located both within the city and in more rural areas, produce a variety of products that are incorporated into the feria system. These cooperatives fall into three major categories: producers of food products, food service cooperatives, and feria cooperatives. Within the first category are different cooperatives producing coffee, spices, noodles, and cereals that are sold within the feria (in total, these cooperatives produce 50 different artisan items). The

---

480 Interview 1.
481 Interview 49.
second group encompasses cooperatives that set up booths within the ferias to sell fresh-made cakes and meals, meat, cheese, herbal medicines, and beverages. The third group encompasses 25 cooperatives that wish to set up smaller ferias in neighborhoods or cities not served by the main Cecoseola ferias. These groups purchase products at the Cecosesola storage warehouse and drive them elsewhere to run their own discount ferias.482

Cecosesola values the participation of its many affiliated cooperatives and therefore expects them to function cooperatively and participate within its self-governance framework. Weekly meetings engage affiliated cooperatives in the Cecosesola decision-making process and impart education about cooperatives. Cecosesola also provides financing and support to help in the formation of new cooperatives and to help already-affiliated cooperatives expand.

As with the producers, affiliated cooperative members consider themselves part of Cecosesola. I spoke with a woman from a cooperative that operates a healthy food booth in the Feria Central. She explained how she and the other founding members took advantage of free Cecosesola nutrition classes to learn the basics of healthy cooking and described Cecosesola as “the teacher of all of us.”483 She said, “...we are like a very large family: we share the good and the bad.” Though not officially registered as a cooperative, her cooperative is currently undergoing the application process. I was able to learn about or conduct interviews with the following cooperatives: Cooperativa Divina Pastora, Central Portuguesa, Cooperativa Las Lajitas, Cooperativa Mixta Santo Brasil (affiliated in the past through ferias) and the cooperative Carnecería stand in Feria del Centro.

Affiliated Civil Associations

Some groups affiliated with Cecosesola have decided to register as civil associations rather than cooperatives. Las Tinajas, for example, a bread ‘cooperative’ (founded by a group of eight women) that now supplies all of the bread to the ferias, has chosen to maintain its status as a civil association instead of becoming a legal cooperative. According to one of the founding members, two of the associates are not interested in participating in the meetings and the communal decision-making process, and therefore do not desire to change the legal status. Beyond requiring more taxes, becoming a cooperative would also involve “more responsibility with respect to human (labor) and the

482 Cecosesola, “Que es Cecosesola?” (August 2007).
483 Interview 25.
government. In the meantime, however, the group continues to function cooperatively, with members holding weekly meetings to make decisions democratically and sharing equally in profits.

**Suppliers**

To provide a wide range of products, Cecosesola purchases many items from suppliers, such as flour, canned goods, snacks, and cleaning supplies. Given that the actual delivery people vary from week to week and many of the suppliers are large national companies, “it is only a relationship of selling and buying.”

**Products and Services**

**Ferias**

Ferias were the second service Cecosesola began to provide (after the funerary service). Originally conducted out of converted buses that could be driven to various parts of the city and parked to sell produce, they have grown in size and number and now serve 55,000 Barquisimeto families a week, about one-third of Barquisimeto’s 1.5 million residents. Though many affiliated cooperatives now operate their own smaller ferias, Cecosesola is responsible for three large ferias, operated out of warehouses on cooperative-owned land, which sell a total of 400,000 units of product weekly, or about 450 tons. The following information applies only to the ferias that Cecosesola operates directly.

Feria takes place three days a week on Friday (5:45am-5:30pm), Saturday (5:45am-1:00pm), and Sunday (7:15am-12:00pm) in three locations throughout the city: in the West (Feria Ruiz Pineda), the East (Feria del Este) and in the Southern center (Feria del Centro). Feria del Centro operates 36 registers alone, with a total of 200 running in all ferias.

Set-up for feria occurs all day Thursday (workers re-stock shelves) and continues throughout the entire night (producers from all over the region arrive into the early hours of the morning). Upon arrival, they drive their trucks onto a scale, weigh and record the quantity of their produce, and team up with the night workers to unload and arrange the produce in feria. Because they will be working

---

484 Interview 29.
485 Interview 4.
486 Interview 11.
all weekend to operate the feria, Cecosesola members shop together Thursday evening (several members take turns running the registers).

**The Shopping Process**

People begin arriving early, even before feria begins, in car and by foot. The parking lots are set up with a security system to prevent car theft. Shoppers enter the warehouse, purchasing produce in a separate area from household and packaged goods. Central, community areas encourage shoppers to hang out, listen to music, and eat food with their family members.

**Market Security**

Crime is a significant problem in Venezuela, so Cecosesola has set up security systems to discourage theft. Upon entering the parking lot, vehicle drivers receive a slip of paper that they must then present upon departure. After shopping, customers must present a receipt of purchase to leave the produce area. Additionally, several security guards roam the market. Though these are nothing more than the typical procedures for most large Venezuelan stores, Cecosesola experiences a mere one percent rate of theft, as compared to a five percent rate at the average Venezuelan supermarket. According to one member, “People who have been a here for a long time help keep watch.” 487 He explained that customers do not want to steal from the market because they realize “that we all pay for what is stolen. We all have the responsibility to make it back up.” 488 Another member seconded this opinion, saying, “We have to share the burden from the error of mis-writing, people stealing, among all of us.” 489

**Products and Distribution**

On average, Cecosesola offers goods priced 30 percent less than other stores and markets. This is possible because the cooperative values offering products at a fair price, even if it means losing money in order to offer that item. Fondos from previous years help to cover the losses that Cecosesola incurs from offering items lower than the government-set price or the price for which they obtained the items. Shortages are common, however, and occasionally Cecosesola can no

---

487 Interview 11.
488 Interview 11.
489 Interview 38b, Cecosesola associate, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, September 4, 2007.
longer offer a product, or must offer it in reduced quantity. During my visit, black beans had just reappeared after a long absence, and the feria was currently experiencing a shortage in powdered milk and eggs. As a result, Cecosesola was rationing both items (limiting a certain quantity to each family). According to one associate, “It’s easier to get stuff at Mercal, but after that, here, because we make whatever sacrifice is necessary to provide the product.” Cecosesola decides which products to offer based upon what people buy. The Compras (purchasing) equipo, a two-year rotation job for two people, is responsible for determining this information. At Quincalla, however, the people on the rotation decide autonomously what to buy, set the prices and, according to one current worker, are always changing which products they offer.

Feria Organization

Verdura (Vegetables and General Fruits): In this section, everything is sold for one set price per pound. Thus, the area distributes both vegetables and those fruits that are basic enough to be included in the set rate. Some items include: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, plantains, passion fruit, papaya, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, squash, melons, yucca, sweet potato, apio criollo (a Venezuelan root vegetable), etc.

Fruta (Fruits): This section sells fruits that range in prices per pound or item and that are also more fragile. Some items include: apples, apricots, grapes, strawberries, berries, pears, kiwis, etc.

Casa (Non-Perishable Foods and House Supplies): This is the second main area of feria (about the same size as Verdura), supplying all of the non fruit and vegetable items. Producers supply most products, but special sections sell the goods made by affiliated producers/cooperatives and the produce of Las Lajitas, an organic farm. Some items include: Canned foods, crackers, flour, eggs, sugar, coffee, grains, beans, sauces, snacks, organic herbs, spices, extracts, candy, toilet paper, detergent, cleaning supplies, etc.

Quincalla (Trinkets): This section of feria, set up like a booth with a glass counter, sells a random mix of cheap household trinkets and items. Most days, the proceeds of this section filter directly into one of Cecosesola’s fondos. During my visit, the money was going towards a fondo that provides support for the youth.
workers of Cecosesola to take trips to the mountains for recreation. Some items include: towels, shampoo, toiletries, kitchenware, dog food, candy, etc.

**Mini-Feria (Miniature-Feria):** This section, separated by *Verdura* by a gate, offers a lower price per pound than the main *Verdura* section and is designed to provide produce to families with very low incomes. Anyone can shop in this area, but the expectation is that families who can afford to do so will shop in the main *Verdura* section, thereby helping to maintain the existence of Mini-Feria. Some of the produce in this section is from exactly the same delivery batches as for *Verdura*, whereas some items are of lower quality (smaller in size, damaged, or from an earlier week). Mini-Feria also offers a much smaller selection of produce (broccoli, for example, is not offered here). During my visit, produce from this section cost $0.65 per pound, whereas produce in Verdura cost about $1.72 per pound.

**Affiliated Coops: Carniceria, Charcuteria, Comida Natural:** Items include: cheese, meats, fish, turnovers, *arepas*, sandwiches, cakes, ice cream, juice, natural medicines, etc.

*Cafetería:* All ferias contain a cafeteria that provides the main midday meal to Cecosesola workers, both during *feria* and on every other day of the week. Members write down their name before receiving food, and roughly $2.50 is removed from their pay for each meal. On a given day at Feria del Centro, 70-120 people will eat lunch. Working in the kitchen is a rotating job, generally filled by three people at a time. According to one woman, whom I spoke to while on meal duty, “There are always two women and one man in the kitchen so that the men learn to cook!” Members agreed that meals have improved significantly over time as Cecosesola has become more organized and also begun to self-educate about nutritional eating. A typical meal includes a bowl of soup, a plate with rice or noodles, a vegetable and a meat, a cup of freshly-made juice, a piece of fruit, and bread.

*Cecosesola Ferias: A Description*

**Feria del Centro:** This is the primary Cecosesola compound and the site of the largest *feria*. Besides the *feria* warehouse, the compound houses the storage *depósito* (site of extra items for *feria* and pick-up site for affiliated coops), the *Escuela Cooperativa “Rosario Arjona”* (main administrative center, library, meeting

---

492 Interview 8.
location, dormitory), the bank (within the feria warehouse and open during feria for customers), two affiliated cooperatives (Línea Blanca, a discounted-appliance service for members, and a smaller family cooperative that produces spices) and the recycling program for bags and boxes from feria.

**Feria Ruiz Pineda:** This feria, originally the bus parking lot and service center during the time period when Cecosesola provided Barquisimeto’s bus service, is now the site of a feria and also houses the administrative center for most purchasing and financial tasks.

**Feria del Este:** This is a newer feria, operating purely as a warehouse on distribution days.

*Supported Ferias: Cecosesola’s role*

Twenty-five affiliated cooperatives service the Cecosesola depósito to pick up produce and supplies that they use to run miniature ferias in their own communities.

**Community Healthcare**

Health services are Cecosesola’s newest community venture. Since opening the first clinic in 1995, the program has expanded dramatically. Cecosesola currently runs six “networked” clinics, which offer health services for associates and the community in general. In 2006, they served 155,000 patients. Associates receive certain services for free and others at a slight discount from the community price. According to one associate, who works in the Acupuncture center, there is capacity for everyone, so they have never had to turn patients away or make them wait a long time to see a doctor. Nonetheless, certain services cannot be offered in the community clinics, and for this reason the cooperative began plans for the Central Integral Cooperativa de Salud in 1999, which will open in 2008 and provide a greater range of care.

---

493 Interview 9.
Clinics

The clinics provide services in general medicine, pediatrics, and acupuncture, with three dental centers, three internal medicine centers, and four clinical laboratories. In 2006, the entire health network served 155,000 patients. The centers are maintained through health contracts with 6,500 families, who pay a weekly installment of 700bs ($0.33) to receive health care, and also through the fees associated with visits from associates and non-associates. The clinic I observed provided internal medicine care for a cost of 18,000bs ($8.37) for associates and 23,000bs ($10.70) to the general community. Pediatric care was free for associates and 17,000bs ($7.92) for the community. Two young associates working in the reception area asserted that the prices at Cecosesola clinics are significantly lower than anywhere else, except perhaps for the government-sponsored Barrio Adentro health centers.

Centro Integral Cooperativa de Salud

Construction of the hospital, a five-year planning process, was nearing completion during my visit. The approximate cost of the structure so far had been about 5 billion bolívares (2.3 billion dollars), a sum raised entirely by Cecosesola associates and the community. Each member contributed 10,500bs a week ($4.88), with affiliated cooperatives and community members providing substantial support as well. Cecosesola still lacked sufficient costs to finish the project, and was thus in the process of mustering more donations and signing a loan. However, one associate expressed that the collective decision had been made that the payments for the loan will not be raised through the services that the center provides; rather, they will be drawn from continued individual donations and various sources in feria that currently raise money for fondo. At the Assembly, this discussion emerged in the context of affiliated cooperatives, some of which had donated much more than others. Cooperativa Colibri, with a mere 8 associates, donated 2,060,000.00bs ($958.00) whereas Cooperativa John F Kennedy donated an average of 400.00bs/person. Further efforts were going to be made to equalize these donations. Despite the differences in contributions, multiple members emphasized that the center is communally funded, and thus also communally owned.

494 Interview 33.
Funerary Service

Cecosola originated out of various communities’ need for affordable funeral services. Government laws at the time prevented cooperatives from providing these services, so the original twenty members created a central cooperative with a board of directors, which could legally bypass the requirements. Today, the funerary service, the largest in the region, reaches 17,400 families in Barquisimeto, all of whom pay 1,400bs ($0.65) a year. Cecosola associates pay 700bs ($0.33) a year. The service covers up to eight family members and provides a coffin and accompaniment (by car or bus) to the cemetery.

Financing

The ability to self-finance is a key value at the heart of Cecosola. Various means support Cecosola’s economic autonomy and ability to support and further community investment.

Fondos

Cecosola associates contribute to health, cultural, agricultural, and educational fondos. These fondos support associates in case of accidents and also support members with higher than typical economic burdens (they themselves, or their children, may be pursuing an education, for example).

Financimiento: Financing for affiliated cooperatives and individuals

Cecosola possesses a financing department, Apoyo Mutuo, which provides financing to members. These communal funds allow members to purchase new capital (such as a commercial oven or new farm buildings) and to receive start-up funds for a new cooperative project.

Use of Net Gains/Profit

Most years, Cecosola possess net profits at the end of the year. At an annual meeting in September, generally attended by all 350 associates, members decide democratically how to distribute the profits. Typically, a portion of the profits
are directed towards fondos and the remainder is distributed to associates in the form of bonuses.

Sustainability Efforts

Cecosesola’s narrative reflects a strong dismay with environmental destruction and, thus, the cooperative pursues various activities to lessen its impact. Members run a recycling program at Feria del Centro, packaging all bags and boxes used during feria to distribute to producers for re-use. Cecosesola also owns a farm in a rural area where all organic refuse from feria is transported to be composted in a three-month cycle. The resulting compost is then sold to the community at feria.

Self-Documentation

Cecosesola is not interested in actively promoting that others adopt its mode of organization, but it believes strongly in documenting its own activities. These materials are used for the organization’s own self-reflection and also offered as resources to the (many) groups that approach Cecosesola for guidance in starting similar projects.

ECT Television: Equipo Cooperativo de Video

ECT Television is a video-production team that films key Cecosesola and community events and creates educational videos.

Cecosesola Self-Published Books

Cecosesola has written two books about its experiences. Associates write these books communally—no individual associates’ names appear in the publication. The books detail Cecosesola’s history, world vision, and experiences with collective organizing.
Cecosesola functions without assigning workers to set positions based on skill or need. Rather, individuals rotate on a voluntary basis through an ever-evolving set of *equipos* in all of Cecosesola’s many services. Though some jobs, such as *Compras*, require a two-year stay due to specialized skill-needs, most *equipos* evolve based upon their members’ interest and perception of where they are most needed.

*Equipos* include: administrative duties (working in the main office, coordinating meetings, etc), feria work (inventories of incoming and outgoing goods, running the depository, stocking shelves and weighing/placing produce, working the cash registers, carrying money from the cashiers to the control room, putting money away and guarding the safes, cleaning up after market days), health center operations (administrative, nursing jobs, medical care), compound maintenance (cleaning Cecosesola property, acting as nighttime security guards), cafeteria duty (buying food and cooking meals daily for members), and guiding and supervising Cecosesola visitors.

Workers can also chose to complete rotations at affiliated cooperatives, for example traveling to rural Sanares to work at Las Tinajas, the major bread producer, or at the organic farm, Las Lajitas. Furthermore, jobs are always flexible. Though an individual may currently be supervising the *Verdura* area of *feria*, he or she will step into any other area based on where the highest priority lies. No supervisor regulates members’ current *equipo* or organizes transfers between *equipos*. Generally, members simply self-organize by constantly communicating with each other to learn which *equipos* need special assistance. Other times, two members will decide to switch *equipos*. This is made possible by the strong bonds of camaraderie among all workers; in asking where I could find certain individuals, upon all occasions I was greeted by a specific response about a person’s current *equipo*: “Oh, he or she is in Verdura.” Despite an established system for job assignments, workers always keep track of each other’s present *equipo* and can recite it from memory.

**Pay/Salary**

Cecosesola believes in paying associates based upon need. If all associates had the same family situations, they would all receive equal pay. However, given that
family sizes differ and some associates are paying for the education of their children (or themselves), salaries vary among associates. For example, a single associate would receive 1,000,000bs/month ($466.29), whereas an associate with one child would receive 1,300,000bs/month ($606.17). Associates who are in school can receive an annual bonus of 280,000bs ($130.56) to help cover tuition and textbook costs. In this way, pay is not tied to ‘hours worked’ or number of years working at Cecosesola. At the end of the year, associates evaluate net profits and decide what part of this to receive as year-end bonuses (versus pouring into funds or other projects). Cecosesola associates receive much higher salaries than other Venezuelans with similar work and their salaries are much higher than the national minimum wage of 615,000bs ($286.77).

Medical Coverage and Sick Leave

All Cecosesola associates receive a health plan that grants them free preventative health care at Cecosesola’s health clinics. The plan covers about 80 percent of medical consultations and offers significantly discounted prices for the other services at the health clinics (as compared to the set community member rates). A health fund provides support in case associates need large, expensive operations and, generally, associates are asked to pay back a third of the cost, but it is not obligatory if they do not have the resources.

Cecosesola covers up to five consecutive days of sick leave for associates. After five days, associates must get a note from their doctor so that government social security will cover the additional time away from work. Unlike in typical labor contracts, Cecosesola does not grant associates a maximum number of sick days because, as one explained, “You cannot predict how many times you’re going to be sick.”

Vacation-Time

Associates receive 15 days of vacation leave their first year working for Cecosesola and this number increases by two days with each subsequent year. Dedication to the cooperative is so high, however, that associates frequently stay in Barquisimeto and continue to help out while on vacation.

Families and Spouses

495 Interview 36.
Cecosesola encourages families to work together at Cecosesola. It is not considered abnormal for associates to get married and, according to one associate, none of Cecosesola’s relationship conflicts in the past have taken place between family members or spouses.  

*Students and Young People*

Many students and young people work at Cecosesola part-time while attending school. After they graduate, they often begin working full time and can bring additional expertise to the cooperative.

---

496 Interview 3.

**ABSTRACT**

An examination of three infamous atrocities of the Salvadoran civil war and the attempts to bring those responsible to justice. The first case is the March 1980 assassination of Archbishop Romero, an outspoken critic of the Salvadoran government. The second case is the December 1980 rape and murder of four American churchwomen by a paramilitary death squad. The final case discussed is the November 1989 murder of six Jesuit professors and their two domestic servants on the Universidad Centroamericana campus. Ultimately, justice was never served, due to four factors: corruption within the government of El Salvador and the Salvadoran judicial system; a lack of power given to the United Nations Truth Commission; United States Cold War politics; and the inability of the United States civil courts to create meaningful accountability.


© 2009 *intersections*, Liam McGivern. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author
Justice Denied: Impunity During and After the Salvadoran Civil War

By Liam McGivern
University of Washington, Bothell

I.

The Salvadoran civil war, a twelve-year war that left an estimated 75,000 people dead\(^1\), officially began in 1980, following both the murder of Archbishop Romero and the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States. According to Robert White, who was the United States Ambassador to El Salvador at the time, “The Salvadoran military understood this [Reagan’s election] as a go-ahead signal and unleashed a torrent of violence.”\(^2\) Although Reagan’s election did mark the beginning of a new level of violence in El Salvador between the military and guerillas that would last until the signing of peace accords in 1992, it is misleading to refer to the Salvadoran civil war as lasting from 1980 to 1992. The struggle between the indigenous and rural poor people against the oligarchy has been ongoing since the nineteenth century. The oligarchy, who controlled El Salvador’s economy, military, and government, has been exploiting the indigenous people and peasants and suppressing labor organizations and opposition political parties with violence for more than a century; even massacring thousands of Indians and peasants in 1932 during what has become known as La Matanza.\(^3\)

The assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero on March 24, 1980 was an event that marked the heightening of an ongoing conflict that escalated to an all out civil war.\(^4\) An advocate for the poor in El Salvador, and outspoken critic of the oligarchy, Archbishop Romero was highly respected and popular among the people of El Salvador and his sermons were broadcast nationwide every Sunday.\(^5\) Romero worked with the Nongovernmental Human Rights Commission of El

---


Salvador, formed in 1978. They were the first group in El Salvador to document human rights abuses and murders. The group reported its findings to the United Nations and El Salvador became known as one of the six worst human rights violators in the world. Archbishop Romero, along with many others within the Nongovernmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador and within other organizations paid for their efforts with their lives. The assassination gained world-wide publicity and created enormous outcry within El Salvador.

Not long after, on December 2, 1980 an event took place that would bring the atrocities of El Salvador in to every American home. Four American women, three nuns and a missionary were raped and murdered by right wing death squads in El Salvador. The women were stopped at a checkpoint and taken to a remote location where they were raped and shot at point-blank range. According to Ambassador White, the Salvadoran military death squads differentiated between “good nuns and bad nuns, good priests and bad priests”, and it had been decided that these women were “bad nuns.” For their work feeding and clothing the poor of El Salvador they were called communists and murdered.

Nearly nine years later, on the morning November 16, 1989, a third, iconic atrocity of the Salvadoran civil war occurred. Six Jesuit priests, along with a domestic servant and her daughter, were murdered by the Salvadoran military in retaliation for a guerrilla offensive that occurred on November 11. The priests were professors at the Universidad Centroamericana, where the murders took place. The priests were known not just in El Salvador, but were internationally recognized for their work. The murders were found to have been committed by U.S. trained members of the Salvadoran military’s Batallon Atlacatl, causing outrage in the United States Congress.

These three events: the assassination of Archbishop Romero, the rape and murder of four American churchwomen, and the murder of six Jesuit priests and their companions, are representative of the atrocities committed throughout El

---

6 Hutchinson, 4.
7 Pellet.
8 Ibid.
11 Sriram, 7.
Salvador’s history and especially during the civil war. As advocates for the poor and indigenous people, members of the church were regularly targeted for intimidation, brutality, and murder at the hands of right wing death squads and uniformed members of the Salvadoran government.

As the atrocities committed mounted during the war, various mechanisms were employed, with varying degrees of success, to hold accountable those individuals who committed such acts. The rape and murder of four American churchwomen in December of 1980 represents the first attempt by the Salvadoran government to prosecute members of the military responsible for the murder of civilians. The Salvadorans arrested five members of the National Guard for the murders, but took no steps to bring them to trial. Under heavy pressure from Congress, with a bill sponsored by Arlen Specter, the U.S. cut of one third of all of the aid to the Salvadoran government until the five men who had been arrested for the murders were held trial death squad responsible. These men were found guilty and sentenced to the maximum of thirty years.\textsuperscript{12} The lawyers for the slain women, who were Americans, were told they could not raise the issue of military orders for the killings coming from higher up in the chain of command. If orders for the murders came from high up the Salvadoran military’s chain of command, the soldiers would use this as a defense in the trial. These men had to be convicted, so these questions were never raised. There was little satisfaction in the conviction for the relatives of the churchwomen and the few members of the United States government who wanted not only the men directly responsible for the murders to be held accountable, but also those individuals who orchestrated the murders, the men who had “command responsibility” for the men under their command.

Another attempt within El Salvador to prosecute military personnel responsible for the murder of civilians was made after the murder of the six priests and two women in 1989. Leading the investigation was the Commission for the Investigation of Criminal Acts [CIHD]. The CIHD was created in 1985 with funds from the United States to investigate human rights violations that were attributed to members of the Armed Forces. CIHD’s directors and personnel were themselves members of the Armed Forces. Evidence in the case was lost and the investigation was poorly conducted. Soldiers were even given time to formulate alibis before statements were taken from them. There have been practically no cases where the CIHD, formed to investigate human rights

\textsuperscript{12} Pellet.
violations involving military personnel, has found a member of the military responsible for a violation.\textsuperscript{13}

The investigation of the murders some gained legitimacy when President Cristiani, under pressure from the church and the international community to find those responsible, asked the FBI, Scotland Yard, and the Canadian and Spanish police forces to advise the CIHD.\textsuperscript{14} The FBI learned that Colonel Alfredo Benavides Moreno had confessed to the CIHD about his role in the murders, but this had never been reported and would not be admissible in court. After this revelation, President Cristiani created the Commission for Honor, which was a commission made up of members of the military to help with the investigation. The Commission named Colonel Moreno along with eight other men as being responsible for the murders. The Commission did not look for responsibility further up the chain of command.\textsuperscript{15}

After his arrest, Colonel Moreno consistently denied his role in the killings. The eight men under his command, however, all confessed their roles in the murders to investigators. Despite their confessions, seven of the men were completely exonerated. Colonel Moreno was found guilty of committing all eight murders. His Lieutenant, Yushy René Mendoza Vallecillos, was found guilty of the murders of the two women. Colonel Moreno was also convicted of conspiracy to commit terrorism. Both were sentenced to thirty years in prison, the maximum under Salvadoran law.\textsuperscript{16} The Salvadoran legal system gained two convictions from these murders, but six confessed killers went free. There was no effort by investigators to find how from how high in the chain of command the order for the killings came. The Salvadoran legal system was clearly unwilling to properly investigate the pattern of human rights abuses within its own military. What was needed was an external investigatory body to find who was truly responsible for the atrocities of the war.

The opportunity for this came after the signing of a peace agreement between the FMLN and the Salvadoran government in Mexico City on January 16, 1992.\textsuperscript{17} As a part of the peace accords, a United Nations truth commission was created to find which individuals, both from the military and the FMLN were responsible for human rights violations during the twelve year civil war. Every truth

\textsuperscript{13} A Breach of Impunity, 32.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{17} Loveman, 413.
commission is unique for the nation and situation it is investigating. In Chile, for example, the Rettig Commission led to a successor body which, over a period of years, further investigated what happened to individuals and assigned reparations to help achieve reconciliation. The Rettig Commission also investigated the whereabouts of Chile’s “Disappeared”. In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission acted as a substitute for the judicial system, investigating individuals and assigning fines, prison terms, or amnesty where necessary. El Salvador’s Truth Commission, by comparison, was not authorized to find guilt in a legal sense or to award reparations. The Commission could refer cases to the Attorney-General of El Salvador for prosecution but as evidenced by the previous discussion of the Salvadoran judicial system, justice was unlikely. The Truth Commission did not investigate the fate of El Salvador’s disappeared. The Truth Commission was also unique in that it was made up entirely of non-Salvadorans.

The Truth Commission’s mandate was to “investigate serious acts of violence that have occurred since 1980 and whose impact on society urgently demands that the public should know the truth”. The Truth Commission was not given power of prosecution and did not see prosecution within the Salvadoran judicial system as a viable option due to the “glaring deficiencies of the judicial system”. The commission was given eight months to fulfill its mission of finding the truth of what happened during a war that lasted longer than a decade and during which more than seventy five thousand people died.

A major obstacle to the Truth Commission’s ability to ascertain who committed crimes during the war was that it was extremely difficult to get people to talk about what they had gone through. The “transitional” government after the war was the same right wing government that had been in power for the final years of the war and there was great fear and apprehension among the people about testifying to the Commission. According to Thomas Buergenthal, who was one of three members of the Truth Commission, the commissioners had to hold

---

21 Popkin, 108
22 Sriram, 89.
23 Buergenthal, 218.
many “scary, cloak and dagger meetings” and needed to have their offices regularly swept for listening devices in order to assure the anonymity of those cooperating with the Commission. The three commissioners and their team of investigators went to the countryside to interview those who lived through the war. They visited massacre sites, inspected the work of forensic anthropologists studying specimens from the war, and subpoenaed government officials, members of the military, and guerrillas in their efforts to find the whole truth of what happened in El Salvador. The Salvadoran people have seen the sham trials of military personnel accused of human rights violations and it took a lot of work by the Commission members to gain the trust of the public.

II.

Of the twenty two thousand cases brought to the Truth Commission’s attention, only thirty three cases of symbolic importance were included in their final report. In these thirty three cases the Commission found that they had ample evidence to make a finding and to name those individuals who were responsible for human rights violations. For these cases, the Commission created three levels of evidence for its findings: overwhelming, substantial, and sufficient. Of the seven thousand cases that the commission actively investigated but were not included in the final report, ninety five percent were found to have been committed by government forces. The Commission found that in the case of the Jesuit murders, the “Minister of Defense had ordered the killings and most of the members of the Armed Forces High Command had been involved in the decision to kill the priests”.

The Commission endorsed the Jesuits’ call to pardon Colonel Moreno and Lieutenant Mendoza, who earlier were convicted of the crime, as those who ordered the killings remained at liberty.

The Truth Commission can hardly be thought to have provided justice or reconciliation within El Salvador. Before the Commission began its work, an amnesty was granted to those who had committed political crimes during the war, with the exception of, “persons who will be named in the Truth

24 Ibid., 219.
25 Ibid., 218.
26 Ensalaco, 660.
27 Popkin, 111.
28 Ibid., 112.
29 Ibid., 113.
Commission report as being responsible for serious acts of violence”. 30 After the
Commission issued its findings, however, a “broad, absolute, and unconditional”
amnesty was granted by the Salvadoran assembly as the report, according to the
assembly, was “unjust, unethical, illegal, and biased”. 31 The Commission’s report
called for the resignation of the Supreme Court and recommended that those
named in the report could not hold office for ten years. The report also
recommended that an investigation be led in to the rise of the death squads to
prevent them in the future, and that Salvadoran judges be named by an
independent council, and it recommended that a fund be created to help
compensate victims of atrocities during the war. 32 The Commission only had the
power to make recommendations; they had no power to implement policy.

Although Supreme Court Justices were replaced, per the recommendation of the
Truth Commission, other recommendations went unheeded. The death squads
resurfaced just years later, as there was no mechanism created to prevent them.
Although quite democratic, assassinations and accusations of fraud plagued the
1994 elections. In 1995 there were one thousand eight hundred complaints of
human rights violations against the government, mostly by political
demonstrators. 33 No effort was made to locate the “disappeared” of El Salvador,
and no fund was set up to help compensate the civilian victims of the war. Most
Salvadorans lost faith in the peace accords, democratic reforms, and with the
Commission because of President Cristiani’s “flouting of the Truth Commission’s
recommendations”. 34 The Commission was able to find the answer to many key
questions, such as who assassinated Archbishop Romero and who gave the order
for the killing of the six Jesuits, but nothing was done by the Salvadoran judicial
system with this information, and impunity reigned.

The general amnesty granted after the release of the Truth Commission’s report
was not the end of the story for some perpetrators of human rights violations.
According to the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789, the U.S. federal courts are
open “to…aliens for torts committed in violation of customary international law,
even when the case involves acts perpetrated in another country by a non-U.S.

30 Ibid., 109
31 Sriram, 89.
32 Ibid., 89.
33 Ibid., 90.
34 Ibid., 91.
With this law, victims of torture and other human rights crimes can seek justice in U.S. courts if their own nation’s court systems are unwilling, or unable to do so. There have been three cases in which the ATCA has been used to prosecute military commanders from El Salvador for their crimes during the war.

In 2000, the first case against former Salvadoran military commanders was brought against Generals Jose Guillermo Garcia and Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova for the having “command responsibility” for the 1980 murder and rape of four American churchwomen. Ambassador White was called to testify. White testified that he had on many occasions pleaded with the generals to put a stop to the death squads, arguing that the death squads had directly led to an escalation in violence. He testified that the generals had full knowledge of the crimes being committed by men under their command, and they simply refused to do anything about. In his testimony, he relayed a telling conversation:

“... Garcia finally admitted that perhaps one percent of his troops might be involved in death squads. I then pointed out that with sixteen thousand men under arms that meant that, at a minimum, one hundred and sixty uniformed criminals were murdering civilians with total impunity. Despite his admission, Garcia refused to make any commitment to take action against the soldiers”.

The general’s defense in the case was that they were simply carrying out U.S. policy in stopping the spread of communism. If they were doing anything wrong, they argued, why had General Garcia received the Legion of Merit, they highest honor the U.S. can bestow upon a foreign dignitary? General Casanova had also received the Legion of Merit, and a letter of commendation from President Reagan. U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador from 1985-1988, Edwin Corr, testified at the trial that General Casanova “made a tremendous contribution to the country and to the reduction of human-rights abuses”. The men were found to be not responsible.

In 2002, the same two generals, Garcia and Casanova, were brought to trial under the Alien Tort Claims Act. This time the claim was brought by three

---

36 White, 12.
37 Ibid., 13.
Salvadorans who claimed that they had been tortured by men under the generals’ command during the civil war. It was found that the generals had “command responsibility” for the tortures committed by their men and were ordered to pay $54.6 million dollars in damages to the plaintiffs. According to a church worker who testified at the trial, and who herself had endured twelve days of torture during the war, the court’s decision showed “that the Salvadoran military bears responsibility for what we, as a people, suffered”. 38

Although the perpetrators of his assassination were named by the Truth Commission’s report, Archbishop Oscar Romero’s killers were not held to account until 2002, when Alvaro Saravia was tried before a civil court in Fresno, California for his role in the murder. Saravia, the court found, had supplied the actual triggerman with a gun, logistical information, and transportation to commit the murder. At large at the time, Saravia was found guilty, in absentia, for committing state-sponsored murder and a “crime against humanity”. Saravia was ordered to pay $10 million in damages. 39 Saravia later surfaced, in 2006, and publicly acknowledged his role in the killings in an interview with El Nuevo Herald of Miami. Saravia asked forgiveness from the church and promised to tell everything he knew about the killings in El Salvador in a forthcoming book. 40

III.

As shown in this examination of the mechanisms used to achieve justice for the victims of rape, torture, and murder in El Salvador, justice has not been served. Trials held within El Salvador during the war were a complete sham, never addressing the fact that the crimes were part of a systematic effort on the part of the military to terrorize opposition to the tyrannical political and military regime in power. The Truth Commission, although effective in finding individuals who were responsible for crimes during the war, lacked prosecutorial power. Their key recommendations were not implemented, which led to the resurgence of death squads, a lack of closure for the relatives of the “disappeared”, no legal recourse for victims of torture, and no compensation to victims of torture and relatives of those murdered. The impunity for individuals who, despite having been identified in the report, were responsible for massive

38 Preston.
human rights atrocities, contributed to an overall lack of faith in democratic reforms by the Salvadoran people.

Trials within the U.S. under the Alien Tort Claims Act have held individuals responsible for their actions during the war, but they can only award monetary damages to those plaintiffs who brought the case. The result of this is that several members of the Salvadoran military have been ordered to pay millions of dollars that they do not have, to a handful of victims and their families who will never see the money. The moral victory in these cases must seem minute to the individuals who saw their families tortured, killed, or disappeared, individuals who are still living in El Salvador, where the situation, due to lack of meaningful reforms, is once again deteriorating to a point where fear, violence, oppression, and death squads rule the day.

**ABSTRACT**

The Climate Crisis is one of the most prominent issues for society today. In the United States, local governments, at the city and state level, have been documented to be powerful forces determining environmental policy and the centers of the greatest impact. Theory suggests that it is the business elite, in cooperation with the political elite, which determine the outcome of local environmental policy and its enforcement. However, some have pointed out the importance of stakeholders, citizens and consumers, as being influential in local environmental policy creation. I examine three models to determine which factors are of the greatest influence in determining which cities adopt environmental policy and which do not. Included are the investment model, prevalence of manufacturing employment should deter environmental policy; the homogeneity model, greater homogeneity of culture will increase likelihood of environmental policy; and the citizens’ characteristics model, those characteristics that individuals can migrate with will have the greatest effect. This paper examines the relationship of these models with the likelihood of a city to agree with the United States Mayor Climate Protection Agreement, a city-level version of the Kyoto Protocol, and finds statistically significant relationships for homogeneity, political culture, educational attainment and median income. Results suggest that business investment has no relationship with adoption of environmental policy and that citizen characteristics have a greater effect than theorized.
Examination of United States Cities as Forces in Environmental Policy

By Phaedra W. Boyle

University of Washington, Seattle

The Climate Crisis is a societal issue of the utmost impact. Environmental science has shown evidence that signs of a turning point in global warming are now happening in our lifetime including unprecedented glacier melt, rapid species extinction, and global-wide temperature increase unlike anything we’ve seen in our history (Harvey 2006; Moran 2007; Steffen, Anderson and Tyson 2003; Rahmstorf, Cazenave, Church, Hansen, Keeling, Parker and Somerville 2007). A heightened sense of urgency has permeated our economics, our lifestyles, and our laws. The methods and policies by which we react to this critical time are of growing interest in sociological and political literature. Although investigation in environmental policy is generally conducted on the global and national level, evidence suggests that an analysis in the United States is best conducted at the urban level. In this paper, I test three models that might explain why some cities adopt a particular environmental policy while most do not. These models include the investment model, the citizen’s characteristics model, and the homogeneity model. I examine whether homogeneity or wealth have the greatest influence on adoption of environmental policy at the urban level in the United States. I also examine whether it is individual citizen or metropolitan characteristics that have the greatest influence on whether cities adopt environmental policies or not.

Examinations of environmental policy are traditionally conducted on the global and federal level. Often the players are federal governments, private interest groups and public advocates. For example, Agnone (2007) finds that protest by individuals in combination with environmental advocacy, is the force that moves the political wheel of environmental policy at the federal level. As in the case of Agnone’s analysis, most environmental policy analyses are conducted at the global and national echelon. This is appropriate as environmental issues have global impact and, as van Vliet (1992) suggests, they can only be solved at the global level. However, there is a growing body of literature that suggests that urban environmental policy development is most relevant for capitalistic societies, especially for environmental issues, either because of economic control and development or because of the localized nature of the issues themselves.

A dominant genre of policy study is that of neoliberalism. Generally it is seen as a global and national reorganization of economics, essentially shifting economic control from the public to the private sphere. However, as Peck and Tickell (2002) suggest, it is also an

---

1 This research was made possible in part by the advice and encouragement of Stewart Tolnay and Lowell Hargens, professors of Sociology, University of Washington, Seattle.

2 For an excellent account of the effects of global warming, see the 2007 ICLEI report.
explanation for current reorganization of economics and politics at the urban level. Not only does economic control lay in the private sector but political control, such as manipulation of city zoning laws, is ultimately conducted by the private sector as well. Sociologists, such as Brand (2007) and While, Jonas and Gibbs (2004), take it one step further and relate this shift of economic power specifically to environmental policy at the urban level. In fact, Brand (2007) suggests that policies surrounding environmental issues have allowed neoliberalism to be the method by which mayors can wrest political power from the federal level. He argues that there is stagnation of environmental policies at the federal level while urban environmental policies surprisingly flourish. This is due to cities using indexes of how “green” they are to compete against one another. The more environmentally friendly a city seems to be to the public, the more attractive it is to its current and prospective citizens. Cities are no longer just public centers but they actively market themselves as if they were private corporations vying for the highest tax dollars. He also posits that environmental issues are one specific way that urban politicians are placing political responsibility on individual citizens. Urban governments enthusiastically encourage citizens to perceive the Climate Crisis as a domain of their control and responsibility. Examples of this are cities that fund advertisements for alternative methods of transportation, not through public transit, but bicycles and hybrid vehicles, which require individual investment in time and money. However, this allows for the possibility that environmental policy adoption is not influenced as much by metropolitan characteristics as it is by the distinctiveness of the individuals who live in the city itself, those who are attracted to the city’s environmental policy and those who actively take up the baton of environmental responsibility.

Gonzalez (2005) also proposes that urban environmental policy formation is a direct result of private investment coordinating with political elites. He argues that urban environmental policy adoption has always been more relevant than federal, especially in the United States. The first cities flourished and grew under the directives of private business owners and developers. When environmental issues arise, due to growing density, manufacturing and growing automobile use, those most fiscally invested are the first to move towards protection of their assets. This may mean stalwart opposition to new or a stricter environmental policy if such restrictions pose great costs, as is the case for manufacturing.

In contrast, Moran (2007) suggests that urban and state reaction to environmental policy is an occurrence of locality. In other words, those present at the sites of pollution are the most apt to take action. Investment in this sense is directly related to living and communing in the location of the pollution, not business investment. An example of this is in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In 1968 Chattanooga was determined by the Federal Government to have the most polluted air of any U.S. city. Over the past thirty years the community has made combined efforts to clean up not only the air, but water and soil pollution as well. There are now “greenways”, bike and running paths that connect all peripheries of the city to the center. Also, the city has invested in a fleet of 110 hybrid-electric buses that provide transportation for at least one million people, according to local estimates (Porter 2007). Environmental advocacy through citizens,
local business owners, and city government, made it possible to change the fate of this incredibly polluted city.

Moran (2007) also attributes higher levels of action to greater homogeneity of culture and ethnicity within the community. The more alike the citizens of a community are to each other the easier it is for them to agree on which policies are important to implement. This is especially relevant in his examples of cities in South America that must rally against international business that profit greatly from indiscriminately harvesting local resources at the community’s environmental detriment. Homogeneity may not play the same role in United States cities where development and industry have a longer history.

Cities as Centers for Environmental Policy

In the United States, burgeoning cities like Chicago, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Birmingham and New York, were the first to feel the environmental impact created through contaminated water and air. Gonzalez (2005) and Moran (2007) agree that cities like these were spurred into action because of pollution from increased use of coal and enormous population growth at the turn of the century. Later, Los Angeles experienced smog levels that reached unhealthy proportions by 1943. Air pollution caused vomiting, nausea, respiratory problems and death (CEPA 2008). Originally it was called a gas attack and was thought to be the fault of one butadiene plant. Further investigation placed responsibility on uncontrolled emissions from several industrial manufacturing plants and the majority of the pollution responsibility on the growing use of the automobile. Los Angeles joined the ranks of other polluted cities in establishing its own emissions policies (CEPA 2008; Gonzalez 2005).

In 1947, California Governor Earl Warren created the first state-wide policy for air pollution in the United States, the Air Pollution Control Act. The Federal Government followed with the 1955 Federal Air Pollution Control Act that provided research and technical assistance to the states, but no regulation or enforcement. That same year California amended its own Act to require enforceable controls on air pollution. The local smog issues were such that Los Angeles police were authorized to assist the State Department of Public Health with any enforcement necessary. Enforcement and regulation for air quality arrived from the Federal Government in the forms of the Federal Air Quality Act of 1967 and amendments to the Federal Clean Air Act in 1970, as well as the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The new Federal Air Quality Act of 1967 is seen as the first national basic standard, twenty years after the first state-wide policy was enacted.

The most recent Federal Clean Air Act of 1990 was also a reaction to stricter California emissions standards (Gonzalez 2005). In 1989 the states of New York, New Jersey and the region of New England decided to adopt California emissions standards. Later that year, California raised the bar even further. This would have formed a three-tiered
standard of emissions laws in the United States, the strictest two enacted by California in 1955 and 1989, and the least strict enacted in 1970 by the Federal Government. This would have created difficulty for the automobile industry and especially for the oil industry. It also would have undermined Federal authority in the realm of environmental standards, creating political and legal confusion. To avoid this ambiguity, the Federal Government created the Clean Air Act of 1990. This Act is especially relevant to the oil industry. It requires that “clean” gasoline, with oxygenated additives that reduce smog, be provided for the eight most polluted cities in the United States (Los Angeles, Houston, New York, Baltimore, Chicago, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and San Diego) as well as most of Connecticut, but that the oil industry can determine how to provide and produce that fuel (Gonzalez 2005). At present, several states including Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and California are working together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions produced via cars by 30 percent by 2016. This standard is stricter than Federal limits and endorsed by at least sixteen states (Broder and Barringer 2007).

Cities are also making political moves towards stricter environmental policy. In 2005, two separate meetings of mayors took place concerned with environmental policy. The United Nations World Environment Day Conference in San Francisco involved over fifty mayors from around the globe concerned with methods to reduce pollution impact in their cities. One week later, the United States Conference of Mayors convened in Chicago where 166 mayors agreed to sign a city-level version of the Kyoto Protocol, the Climate Protection Agreement, wherein they pledge to reduce emissions 7% below 1990 levels (Grzeskowiak 2005, Cochran 2007). As of May, 2008, 853 mayors have signed this pledge. This is approximately one third of all United States cities (U.S. Census 2008; Globalis 2007). In the United States, local government is the level where environmental policy has been created and continues to be at the forefront of all new policy conception and enforcement.

Dependent Variable of Environmental Action

In one analyses of city-level environmental policy, Portney (2003) considers thirty-four indicators of sustainability seriousness over twenty-four cities. These indicators include land use policies, transportation plans and style of governance. In an effort to typify what cities were more likely to succeed under these indicators he chooses independent variables such as percentage of lone commuters, use of public transportation, total government spending on the environment, and education level. Portney (2003) finds only three independent variables that are strongly positively correlated with greater support for environmental policy: location on the West Coast, median age, and percentage of high school graduates. Some independent variables are negative correlates: percent below eighteen years of age, percent African American, poverty rate and percentage of workforce in manufacturing. Independent variables that seem to have no relationship included median family income, average unemployment rate, median house value, government spending (environmental, per capita, and total),
percent Hispanic, percent over 65 years old, percent employed in service sector, percent lone commuters, percent commuters using public transportation, and percent Democrat. In a multivariate regression the only independent variables that strongly associate with sustainability are median age and percentage employed in manufacturing. The younger the population and the greater the percentage of the population working in manufacturing, the less likely that city will take sustainability seriously. This study strongly suggests that prevalence of manufacturing in the area is related to environmental policy. Portney (2003) utilizes a dependent variable that is difficult to define, sustainability, and it may be that his limited sample is unable to pick up the nuances he was looking for in regards to his other independent variables.

There are some indexes of environmental advocacy at the city level. Portney (2003) cites the “Green Metro Index” from the World Resources Institute in 1993. However, efforts on my part to research this index have been fruitless. There is no evidence that a “Green Metro Index” exists in the World Resources Institute catalogue. There are ratings that have been developed for the popular magazine, National Geographic, by the Yale School of Forestry, which gauge the environmental friendliness of all U.S. cities over 100,000 in population (total of 251 cities) and resulting in the “Green Guide” of 2005 and 2006. The “Green Guide” provides summary information for its top ten cities, but does not provide details of how the cities are scored; therefore some other data source is necessary.

A single indicator is available that proves useful for a large sample of United States cities. As mentioned previously, in 2005, The United Conference of Mayors endorsed the Climate Protection Agreement, a pact that can be signed by mayors that agree to reduce emissions to seven percent below 1990 levels in their cities, the same standards set out by the Kyoto Protocol (Cochran 2007). 740 mayors had signed that agreement as of December, 2007 and by February, 2008 there were 780 cities. While it could be said that pledging to the Climate Protection Agreement is no guarantee of instatement of widespread environmental policies, a 2007 survey suggests otherwise.

In April and May of 2007, 134 cities responded to a U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Center survey that meant to explore and summarize the actions that each city was taking to enact and enforce environmental policy. A majority of the cities surveyed changed their government transportation to alternative vehicles (either biodiesel or electric), use renewable energy as the main source of power for their cities, and are using energy-efficient lighting in all of their public installments and buildings. Over 75 percent of the cities surveyed are using various techniques to encourage or require the private sector to construct energy-efficient and sustainable building techniques (Cochran 2007). These results imply that reducing emissions, as well as other environmental advocacy, are taken quite seriously by the cities that have pledged to the Climate Protection Agreement. Analysis of factors that these cities have in common provides a better understanding of why some cities enact environmental policies while most do not.
In his examination of emissions policies in the United States, Gonzalez (2005) suggests that investment is the most relevant factor for environmental policy in a capitalist society. This theory posits that business elites behave in a combined effort. As Gonzalez puts it, they act as “a coherent social political unit or class” (2005: 27). Beilere and Konisky’s (2000) Great Lakes policy study supports this supposition. They examine how policy makers engage local citizens. They find that the citizens who are involved in the policy-making process are not representative of their communities. Instead, they are business elites comprising a minute percentage of the population. Those that agree on particular policies are able to push their agenda through. In this account, wealthy, business-owning individuals influence the political arena.

Examination of environmental policy in United States must consider the role of businesses within the location of policy adoption. Type of business is highly relevant. History has shown that industrial manufacturing contributes greatly to pollution (Gonzalez 2005). In contrast other types of business, such as the service industry, are minor contributors. For this reason, manufacturing businesses might be required to bear the brunt of cost if environmental policy becomes stricter. A high level of manufacturing businesses in an area may contribute to laxer environmental policies than in other areas. However, it is important to note that high density of manufacturing in an area may lead to an environmental state that requires political action. As Gonzalez (2005) and Moran (2007) agree, environmental policy was first created due to intense pollution experienced by those United States cities that had the most industry and population.

A community’s approach to pollution issues may depend on more than what businesses are present. As Moran (2007) points out that:

> After all, human agency takes place within an environmental and social matrix, and individuals are members of social groups with distinct shared economic, social, cultural, and political interests. Thus…we must balance this attention with a concern for how agents share similar values and make similar decisions that have cumulative impacts (2007:13).

In other words, how a community perceives its relationship with the environment may also hinge on how closely that community shares similar ideals. For example, some religious affiliations consider themselves keepers of “God’s world” and strive to improve environmental conditions (Barak 2003; Moran 2007). It is possible that religious affiliation allows likeness of ideals, ties one closer to the community and to the local environmental issues that affect it. Moran (2007) suggests homogeneity, of religion, ethnicity or otherwise, may be a factor in determining how a culture approaches the environment. Similarity of culture, ethnicity or race can help a community come to a consensus. Once a community decides that a policy is necessary, like ideals act as a
facilitator towards adoption of the policy. Therefore, if other factors, such as socio-economic status, make adoption of environmental policy more likely, homogeneity can act as a catalyst towards the action of that adoption.

Finally, Brand (2007) proposes that the private and political elite are utilizing environmental concerns to restructure not only economics at the urban level but environmental responsibility as well. Private business advertises new products that consumers should buy to protect the environment and public policy makers suggest that individual responsibility for transportation and property ownership are the best ways to protect the environment. This view puts the individual citizens of cities at the forefront of environmental policy, even if it suggests that these citizens are being coerced by the business and political elite.

I propose three separate models for prediction of environmental policy adoption. The first is based in the business elite theory and the history of manufacturing industry influence in environmental policy which I call the investment model. It also subscribes to the assumption that the metropolitan characteristics are more important than the characteristics of individual citizens since metropolitan characteristics are more likely to be closely related to type of prevalent industry. High levels of manufacturing employment indicate high levels of manufacturing business owner investment in a given city. High levels of such investment will influence environmental policy in one of two ways: either as a hindrance, since manufacturing industry would have to make costly accommodations in the face of new environmental protection, or as a facilitator, since sites of greatest pollution prove to be sites that necessarily need environmental protection. The characteristics of the given city of business investment will relate to whether the industry is established there or not. Such characteristics include wealth and density. Cities with more wealth and a larger workforce are more likely to have higher levels of manufacturing.

Individual citizens’ characteristics are considered independently in the citizens’ characteristics model. Citizens can and will emigrate from one city to the next and take their individual distinctiveness with them. An influx of particular types of citizens (i.e. wealthy or educated citizens) could create the urban area or it could be caused by the areas attractiveness to these particular people. Therefore, citizen characteristics, such as education and political preference are considered separately in this analysis. I suggest that higher individual education levels and conservative political preferences will effect environmental policy adoption inversely; higher education levels associate with higher environmental policy adoption and conservative political preferences are the opposite. Discussion of association between variables of the first two models is in the results section, since cities and their citizens are linked to each other in this analysis.

Finally, a third model addresses homogeneity of the citizenry make-up of each city in the homogeneity model. Essentially, these are the characteristics of individuals in contrast to one another in an urban area. This model suggests that greater diversity will
result in less likelihood of new environmental policies. Within a city diversity can occur in many ways. I address diversity of ethnicity, religiosity and age and how they influence environmental policy adoption.

Data and Variables

Data Collection: Data is drawn from several sources including the United States Mayors Climate Protection Center, the United States Census of 2000, CNN Presidential Votes 2000 and 2004, The Association of Religion Data Archives, and the City-County Data Book of 2000. Cities are defined as a gathered population of 20,000 or more people in a defined area. Data is available for 1035 cases on both the independent and dependent variables and are used in this analysis.

Dependent Variable: The dependent variable, whether or not a city was likely to advocate environmental policy, is determined by a list available through the U.S. Mayors Conference as of February, 2008. At that time 780 cities had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to seven percent below 1990 levels. Of the 780 cities on the list, 376 have available data. An additional 658 cities that did not sign onto the Climate Protection Agreement are also analyzed. This is coded as a dummy variable; “not pledged” is 0 and “pledged” is 1.

Independent Variables: Variables of analysis in the investment model are proportion of manufacturing employment within each city, median income of the city per one thousand dollars, percent unemployed, and population per square foot. These variables are all accrued from City-County Data Book of 2000.

Variables of interest in the citizen’s characteristics model are proportion of the population, twenty-five or older, who have obtained at least a bachelor degree and the proportion of citizens who voted for Bush in 2000. This data is available through the 2000 U.S. Census and CNN Presidential Votes 2000 and 2004 respectively. (Please note that 2000 Florida data is unavailable. 2004 data is used in its place and is presumed to reflect the same political culture of 2000.)

Variables in the homogeneity model are entropy scores calculated from the proportions of racial (White, Black, Asian, Native, Other or Two Races; unfortunately Hispanic is included in the White and Black categories), religious (Mainline, Evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox and Other; note that Jewish and Muslim affiliation is included in the Other category by this survey), and age (0 to 17 years of age, 18 to 44, 45 to 64, and 65 and older) categories represented in each city. Age and race data is available through the City-County Data Book of 2000 and religious data is found in The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA), as collected by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (2000).
Homogeneity of each city is measured using proportions of race, proportions of age categories and proportions of religious affiliation. These proportions are transformed into an entropy score for each category using the following formula:

\[ E = \sum (\Pi) \ln(1/\Pi) \]

Where \( \Pi \) is the proportion of each race, age or religious affiliation within the city depending on the score being calculated. This formula is also used by Iceland (2000) in his examination of segregation in relation to the diversity of a given metropolitan area. He adopts this method from Massey and Denton (1988). The greater the entropy score, the higher the diversity within the area being measured. A maximum score is the natural log of the number of categories being used. In this case, a maximum entropy score for race is \( \ln 6 \) or 1.792, a maximum entropy score for religious affiliation is \( \ln 5 \) or 1.609 and a maximum entropy score for age is \( \ln 4 \) or 1.386. Scores nearing maximum levels are signs of greater diversity within the city of interest.

Descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation) and correlations for all variables of interest are carried out. Analysis requires binary logistic regression since the dependent variable is binary in nature.

Results

All tests are two-tailed with an alpha level of .05. Initial correlations calculated between each independent variable and the dependent variable of Climate Protection Agreement adoption (CPA adoption) find that all variables are related except for the proportion of manufacturing employment and median income. The proportion of popular vote for Bush, level of unemployment as well as entropy scores for age, are all found to be negatively correlated with CPA adoption \( (r = -.183, -.088, -.067; \text{p-values} = .000, .005, \text{and} .031 \text{respectively}) \). Density, entropy scores for race and religion and the proportion that have bachelor’s degrees are all positively correlated with CPA adoption \( (r = .078, .097, .161, .192; \text{p-values} = .012, .002, .000, .000 \text{respectively}) \).

The variables of the investment model pose interesting relationships. The proportion of manufacturing employment has a negative relationship with median income and density. It has a positive relationship with unemployment. In general, the cities most likely to have the highest proportions of manufacturing employment will also have lower median incomes, higher levels of unemployment, and are based in cities with a sprawling infrastructure. Most importantly is the relationship that these variables have with CPA agreement. In this initial analysis, density has a positive association while unemployment has a negative one. Manufacturing employment and median income appear to have negative and positive relationships, respectively, that are not significant. At this initial stage, the investment model is not supported.
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPA Agreement</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>5160.6</td>
<td>3909.241</td>
<td>3801.0192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Race</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>1.501</td>
<td>.67253</td>
<td>.286086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Age</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>1.383</td>
<td>1.37770</td>
<td>.073850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Religion By County</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>1.560</td>
<td>1.05060</td>
<td>.184067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion Employed By Manufacturing</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>2.034</td>
<td>.13023</td>
<td>.149633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion With Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.1675</td>
<td>.07625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion Who Voted For Bush By County</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.4741</td>
<td>.12088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Unemployed</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>4.073</td>
<td>1.2904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income Per $1,000</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>15.882</td>
<td>139.895</td>
<td>43.61435</td>
<td>15.288172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Investment Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>Wald.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>95% C.I. for Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion Empl. By Man</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.439</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td>.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income Per 1,000</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>2.169</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Unemployed</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>13.164</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td>.809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Per Mile²</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>10.224</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>1.118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Citizen’s Characteristic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>Wald.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>95% C.I. for Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prop w/Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>5.243</td>
<td>.872</td>
<td>36.186</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>189.303</td>
<td>34.293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prop Who Voted Bush</td>
<td>-3.250</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td>33.159</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5. Regression Analysis of Homogeneity Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1 (a)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>95% C.I. for Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Race</td>
<td>.691</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>8.560</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>1.996</td>
<td>1.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Age</td>
<td>-.904</td>
<td>.896</td>
<td>1.017</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.313</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Religion</td>
<td>1.770</td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>21.365</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>5.872</td>
<td>2.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.728</td>
<td>1.311</td>
<td>1.737</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6. Regression Analysis of Investment and Citizen’s Characteristics Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1 (a)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>95% C.I. for Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prop Empl by Man</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.392</td>
<td>1.475</td>
<td>.606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Inc. Per 1,000</td>
<td>-.045</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>43.331</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td>.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Unemployed</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per Mile²</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.979</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prop w/Bachelor Deg</td>
<td>11.386</td>
<td>1.437</td>
<td>62.765</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>88091.9</td>
<td>52670.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prop Who Voted Bush</td>
<td>-4.322</td>
<td>.662</td>
<td>42.571</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.426</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>6.871</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>4.161</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7. Regression Analysis of all Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1 (a)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>95% C.I. for Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prop Empl by Man</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>.465</td>
<td>1.661</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>1.821</td>
<td>.732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Inc Per 1,000</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>50.901</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.948</td>
<td>.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Unemployed</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.895</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per Mile²</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prop w/Bachelor Deg</td>
<td>13.484</td>
<td>1.633</td>
<td>68.179</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>717911.87</td>
<td>29,243.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prop Who Voted Bush</td>
<td>-4.023</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td>34.526</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Race</td>
<td>1.400</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>22.891</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>4.056</td>
<td>2.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Age</td>
<td>3.331</td>
<td>1.122</td>
<td>8.821</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>27.963</td>
<td>3.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-6.034</td>
<td>1.739</td>
<td>12.039</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variables in the citizens’ characteristics model exhibit a positive correlation for proportion with a bachelor degree and negative correlation for proportion who voted for Bush with CPA adoption. These relationships support this model. The relationship they exhibit with each other is negative but is not significant.

Of interest is the relationship between variables of the investment and citizens’ characteristics models. Proportion of manufacturing employment is negatively associated with bachelor degree attainment and positively associated with voting for Bush. The strongest relationship is that of median income and bachelor degree attainment. In general, attainment of a bachelor degree allows for greater income. The significant positive relationship exhibited supports this supposition. This analysis also reveals that bachelor degree attainment is related to lower likelihood of unemployment.

Independent variables for the homogeneity model all exhibit significant relationships with the dependent variable. The more diverse the racial and religious make-up of a given city the more likely that city will pledge to the CPA. However, the greater variety in the age structure the less likely they will pledge to the CPA. Greater diversity, in respect to race and religion, appears to run against this model’s predictions.

A logistic regression analysis is run for each model. In the case of the investment model, all relationships seem to reflect their separate correlations with the dependent variable; Percent unemployment is negatively related ($r = -.138$, p-value = .000), density is positively related (although weaker; $r = .000$, p-value = .001) and manufacturing employment, as well as median income, are not significantly related. Of interest however, is that the relationship of median income becomes negative when other variables in this model are held constant.

For the citizens’ characteristics model, the regression analysis does not change their respective relationships with CPA adoption. However, both variables have stronger relationships when the other is held constant.

In the case of the homogeneity model, all of the relationships are similar to their correlations but greater diversity of age appears to have no significant relationship when other measures of diversity are controlled for, suggesting that this is either not a good measure of diversity or that religion and race are more prominent and suggestive of diversity in general.

Next I analyze the possible influence that the investment model, representing the cities in which the manufacturing investment occurs, may have on the citizens’ characteristics model, representing the citizens that can and will emigrate, taking their preferences and characteristics with them. When combining all six variables of interest (proportion manufacturing employment, median income, percent unemployed, density, bachelor
degree attainment, proportion who voted for Bush) the relationship between bachelor degree attainment and CPA adoption becomes incredibly strong ($B = 11.386$, p-value = .000). Individual educational attainment of a bachelor degree is the strongest indicator of whether a city will sign onto the CPA. Also of great interest is the emergence of a significant and negative influence of median income on CPA adoption ($B = -.045$, p-value = .000). These are intriguing results since median income and bachelor degree attainment are positively correlated with each other but are inversely related to CPA adoption. This analysis proposes that the cities that are most likely to sign onto the CPA are those that have large proportions of citizens with bachelor degrees and lower levels of income relative to other cities. Further implications of these findings will be discussed in the conclusion. Also of note, the proportion who vote for Bush remains negative and significant even when controlling for bachelor degree attainment, income and other factors ($B = -4.322$, p-value = .000).

Finally I analyze all variables together. Of the nine variables median income, proportion with bachelor degrees, proportion who voted for Bush and all three types of entropy scores are significantly related to CPA adoption. Median income and proportion who voted for Bush have a negative influence ($B = -.054$, p-value = .000 and $B = -4.023$, p-value = .000). Proportion with bachelor degrees, and all three entropy scores for race, age and religion have positive influences, ($B = 13.484$, p-value =.000; $B = 1.400$, p-value = .000; $B = 3.331$, p-value = .003; $B = 2.055$, p-value = .000). Of the predictors of CPA adoption, greater proportion of citizens who have attained bachelor degrees is the strongest. Controlling for all other variables of analysis increases the strength of this relationship. Also of interest is the emergence of greater diversity of age as a positive, significant predictor of CPA adoption.

This final analysis supports the citizens’ characteristics model. The strongest relationships of all of the variables are those that individual citizens can take with them if they choose to emigrate; that is cities with citizens that are highly educated and less likely to vote for Bush (and perhaps for the republican party in general) are the cities that will adopt the CPA.

Characteristics inherent to a given city and that influence investment are generally not related with the exception of median income. Controlling for all other factors, the median income of a city is negatively associated CPA adoption. This analysis falls short of supporting the investment model. In regards to the homogeneity model, results support the idea that diversity, not homogeneity, facilitates adoption of the CPA. All relationships are positive and fairly strong.
Conclusion and Discussion

Theory suggests that type of prevalent business is directly related to environmental policy adoption. This appears to not be the case. In both the correlation analysis as well as the logistic regression analysis, manufacturing employment had no significant relationship to CPA adoption. This suggests that manufacturing investment and employment has no effect on the future of environmental policy within a city. This may be due to the nature of the dependent variable, adoption of the CPA. A city’s pledge to the CPA does not require any certain activity on the part of the manufacturing industry. In fact, most cities have made public domain changes after pledging to the CPA, but only encourage, not oblige, participation by the private sector. Also, the nature of environmental advocacy and private business is changing. There are accounts of businesses in Europe that have jumped onto the carbon-cutting “bandwagon” because they have been forced by policy. But even in the United States, “where carbon cuts are voluntary, many companies are signing on anyway, either in anticipation of future controls or to keep increasingly ecoconscious customers at the tills” (Vencat 2006:2). Supporting environmental awareness can now be seen as a good investment and marketing practice. Other types of business may have a relationship, such as the service, retail and wholesale industries. Future examinations of environmental policy may want to explore these industries rather than manufacturing alone. Certainly, there is a wealth of learning to be had in the new and changing nature of economics in relation to environmental issues and policy.

In contrast, the more diverse the populace, in respect to race, age and religion, the more likely that city will pledge to the CPA. A political explanation may be that mayors of more diverse cities must include environmental policy action in their platforms in order to capture a more diverse voting population. Also, homogenous cultures can more readily have unscripted codes of conduct. It is possible that new environmental policies are not interesting to these communities because they have societal norms in place that deal with what they consider to be environmental issues. Although conservatism is suggested by this proposition, only diversity of race negatively related to voting for Bush in 2000 significantly. Homogeneity of age and religion did not have significant relationships.

Greater adoption of environmental policies in relation to greater diversity could also be part of a greater umbrella of public health programs. In a 2007 survey of 134 cities taking part in the CPA, it was found that 90 percent of the cities sampled considered green house gas reduction to be part of greater concerns towards general health (Cochran 2007). Literature shows that cities with greater minority populations also experience the greatest health, housing and pollution issues (Alexandre 1992; van Vliet, 1992). Perhaps the cities with the greatest diversity also have the greatest need for environmental policy and health care reform. Rather than pollution alone being a catalyst, as Moran (2007) and Gonzalez (2005) both suggest, general health and well-
being of the city and its citizens is also of importance. Policy creators may not necessarily utilize these policies for immediate environmental concerns but for health reasons. That was the case for Los Angeles when it first adopted emissions policies (CEPA 2007). The first restrictive and enforceable policies were put in place because of sickness and death due to emissions. It seems that one facilitator for environmental policy adoption is some level of direct threat to community health.

The indicator of greatest strength is the proportion of citizens that have college degrees. The more educated the citizenry the more likely they will be favorable to environmental policy adoption. Higher education institutions have often influenced their graduates. However, there is no current literature that delineates how much higher education influences the environmental concerns of its alumni, although education and environmental analysts agree that education is a priority of environmental advocates and is presumed to have an effect on environmental concern (Lawrence 1995; Lima 2003). Greater investigation into this area, the relationship between higher attainment of education and environmental advocacy, is clearly warranted.

The relationship between CPA adoption, bachelor degree attainment, and median income is of great interest. As expected, greater proportions of citizens with bachelor degrees is associated with higher median income of the city in which they live. However, in relation to environmental policy, cities with higher proportions of bachelor degrees and lower median incomes are the most likely to adopt environmental policies. It is important to note that the median income of a city is an entirely relative measure. It does not take as much wealth to have a good standard of living in one city as it does in another. For example, Manhattan Beach, California, in southwest Los Angeles, has a median income of $100,750. Someone with an income that can sustain themselves in Bloomington, Indiana (median income of $25,377) could not sustain themselves in Manhattan Beach. Therefore the influence of income on environmental policy is also relative from one city to another. However, one would expect that higher proportions of citizens with bachelor degrees would determine which cities have higher median incomes. There are many examples of cities that dispute this assumption. For example, Ithaca is a small town in upstate New York that has a median income of $21,441 and 26% of the population has a bachelor degree. They are also proponents of the CPA. Other cities similar to this are Eugene, Oregon, San Luis Obispo, California, and Greenville, North Carolina. Incomes may not be high but educational levels are far beyond average.

It seems that the density and wealth of a community have as little to with creation of environmental policy as does the height of manufacturing industry within a metropolitan area. The political culture, religious and racial diversity, and greater range of age structure and, most certainly, the level of educational attainment of the citizens in these cities, all effect adoption of environmental policy far greater than theorists imagined. Individual characteristics of citizens are the force behind a city’s adoption of
environmental policy. Whether it is the city that is catering to the citizens or the citizens catering to the city is beyond the scope of this paper but the power of the individual, as a stakeholder or consumer, must be considered relevant in the face of these findings. Whether this policy will make a difference in our current Climate Crisis is yet to be seen.

Works Referenced


California Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA), Air Resources Board. Retrieved February 12th, 2008. (www.arb.ca.gov/html/brochure/history.htm)


**ABSTRACT**

International travel provides a unique opportunity for self-exploration and the development of cultural awareness and multidimensional perspectives. The process of removing oneself from familiar surroundings and venturing into foreign and strange lands produces a space where the traveler may consider new philosophical ideas and develop new ways of seeing the world. I explore in detail the process of international travel and use travel narrative as a foundation for a discussion of difference, identity and the development of nomadic thought. Nomadic thought is a concept used to describe ideas and identities that exist outside established frameworks or hierarchical categorizations, and are in a state of perpetual fluctuation. I argue that international travel provides an inherent opportunity for self-reflection and transformation which can produce a space where nomadic thought and dialogue may occur. I conclude that nomadic thought is a critical component of international dialogue and conflict resolution, and should be a core component of international education programs.


© 2009 *intersections*, Erin Bestrom. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author
Moving Beyond Borders:
The Creation of Nomadic Space through Travel

By Erin Bestrom
University of Washington, Seattle

Every journey has a beginning, this is one of mine. Everyone’s journey must begin somewhere: a departure from somewhere, a step out the door, a movement beyond the cycles of everyday activities and lifestyle patterns, a step in a new direction. This first step is comprised of a fundamental change, the representation of an individual’s movement from familiar surroundings and interactions to a transitory existence based on new experiences, confusion and strangeness. The traveler’s first step on a journey represents the beginning of a process that will give the traveler a new perspective, a new way to see and understand the world. Though this first step is an important one, a single step cannot possibly encompass all the sensations and sights one may experience while traveling. Each succeeding step on a journey is just as important as the first, and each step represents a new direction and a new set of possibilities for the traveler. With every step, the traveler is engaging in a process that makes the strange familiar and the familiar strange.

Placing oneself outside a realm of familiarity, into a world where the traveler is the foreigner, the other, the stranger, gives the traveler a valuable insight into the meaning of difference and identity in our world, and a space to consider and engage with these topics. Though there is an endless plethora of ways to experience this process of engagement with the strange, I will focus primarily on international travel. I will discuss the importance of the travel process as a way to deconstruct one’s structured patterns of thought in favor of an unrestricted, positive and critical way of experiencing the world.

I will begin by explaining in detail the process of travel, of moving through the world in a way that engages the traveler in a new world of thought and dialogue, leading to a rethinking of one’s own identity. The process begins with a departure from the familiarity of one’s home. A departure from one place takes the traveler on a journey through new spaces, eventually arriving at a destination somewhere. At some point on this journey, the traveler experiences an event which is overwhelmingly strange and confusing, and in order to continue on the journey, the traveler must explore this strangeness, engaging in a process of understanding.
I will argue that this travel process creates a new ideological space for the traveler, which I refer to as ‘nomadic space’. It is a space which breaks through existing thought patterns or frameworks and becomes a place where the traveler can reinvent herself or himself. This discussion of nomadic space will be connected back to the process of travel, and I will suggest that the experience of travel and discussions of nomadic space should exist together to facilitate a movement towards dialogue and global understanding. I will then further discuss the implications of nomadic thought and introduce potential ways to encourage travel in education, as well as discussions of nomadic thought within travel programs.

Finally, I will conclude as most journeys are accustomed to conclude: with a return to one’s place of origin, a return to the familiar, and the ideological implications that this return may have on the traveler and her journey.

The theories presented within this paper are all different and unique. In many ways, the authors and proponents of these theories agree on many points, but there are also sections of each viewpoint which cannot be integrated into one unified theory. This paper is a space where multiple theories that would otherwise be separate and distinct may find themselves drawn together within a course of movement that spans several doctrines and many ways of thinking.\(^1\) I intend for this paper to maintain an organization that is conducive to the flow of ideas over several similar subjects, and hopefully this structure will lend to a nomadic way of moving through ideas.

The Process of Travel

I started my travels—where else?—in the airport. Many of my most vivid memories of growing up had come from those times when I’d say good-bye to my parents and get onto a jumbo jet as an “unaccompanied minor” to fly to school.\(^2\)

It is difficult sometimes to know exactly when a journey begins. In terms of travel, a journey represents the experience of movement into a new place; the physical movement of journeying signifies a transition into something new. For some, a journey is set in motion with a concept, the thought of a foreign place, a

---

\(^1\) Wang inspired me to include this section in my paper; she expresses very similar sentiments in the beginning of her own book, and I agreed so much with her reasoning that I felt compelled to present a similar argument. Hongyu Wang, *The call from the stranger on the journey home* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 19.

decision to go somewhere; some journeys begin with buying a ticket, or stepping onto a plane. For Pico Iyer—an author with a British passport, an Indian heritage, an American education and a global soul—the journey begins in childhood. Usually, the movement of a journey follows some sort of movement through space.

For the purpose of this paper, the term ‘journey’ will be used to signify a movement from familiar surroundings into an unfamiliar place. Being removed from familiarity is critical to the process of changing one’s perspectives and reconsidering one’s knowledge; if an individual is presented with a strange sight within familiar surroundings it is much easier to assimilate this strange occurrence into one’s own conceptual contexts than if that person were fully immersed in strange sights. In his book, Marvelous possessions: the wonder of the new world, Stephen Greenblatt, a Professor at the University of California at Berkeley, explains that travel “enables one to place familiar customs in relation to the customs of others and hence to view the ordinary and everyday in a revealing new light”. For instance, one may not perceive certain things given a particular context, and moving out of that context is necessary in order to see in a different way, from a different point of view.

The movement into a strange place often requires a significant amount of travel time. The physical act of moving away from a familiar place into a strange world is conducive to an opening up of a new way of thinking based on the steady, free-flow of thoughts. During a study abroad program in Berlin, Germany with the Comparative History of Ideas program, our class took a trip to Weimar on the train, and the physical movement across the country for an extended period of time provided unique insight, and allowed me to engage with my surroundings in a new way.

I’m currently sitting on the ICE (Intercity Express) train, watching the countryside go by. I just wanted to make a note about the train ride, because I love them so much. For some reason, train rides through the country—and even the U-Bahn (Berlin inner-city train lines) to some extent—make me feel so philosophical and allow me to imagine that I have even the smallest grip on reality. I have no idea why; I think it’s just the rapid movement through space and time, passing all the people in their cottages, living their own lives with no idea that I even exist. It makes me feel more in tune with everything.

---

The train moved smoothly across the country, with a subdued rumble of movement along the tracks, while my mind raced along with the flashes of new sights: a country house, a windmill, grain towers, a patch of trees, a river and a rusted fence. The rapid movement through new places allowed my imagination to run wild, preparing me for the new ideas and adventures I might find upon arrival at our destination in Weimar. Alain deBotton, author and world traveler, has a similar experience while riding on a train; he is thinking about the death of his father, about an essay he is writing, about his friends, and when his mind goes blank or encounters a difficult idea, he has only to look out the window, and his thoughts are helped along by the changing scenery:

Journeys are the midwives of thought. Few places are more conducive to internal conversations than moving planes, ships or trains. There is an almost quaint correlation between what is before our eyes and the thoughts we are able to have in our heads… new thoughts [at times requiring] new places. Introspective reflections that might otherwise be liable to stall are helped along by the flow of the landscape.4

The steady, silent movement of the landscape is a perfect introduction to travel because not only does this travel time provide a traveler with plenty of time to allow her mind to wander, but long journeys also provide a traveler with the acknowledgement that he is moving far from the familiar into an unknown land. The journey prepares the traveler for new experiences while allowing her to open up her mind to new thoughts and sights.

But travel isn’t always a smooth movement from one place to another, and being trapped in a place—an airport terminal, for instance—provides an environment for new thoughts and experiences as much as a train ride can. Many people think of traveling as simply a departure and an arrival, with a swift movement directly from one to the other, and people often become annoyed or frustrated when they are forced to wait in a place that is neither, a “between” place, a waiting room where the world seems to be passing by, leaving the traveler behind. With no place to go, we have the ability to sit, watching the world. In this way, the between-space of an airport terminal is similar to the between-space of the train car or airplane cabin. In each circumstance one’s mind can wander, imagining the various places people are going and who they will meet, where the rapidly descending planes are coming from and why the cabin full of people have ended up here.

Even considering the mental preparation that long journeys provide, arriving in an unfamiliar place can be overwhelming and exhilarating. Alain de Botton writes that upon arriving at Amsterdam’s Schipol airport, he is struck by the exotic, foreign signs hanging from the airport terminal’s ceiling and how different they are from the signs he would be likely to see in his own country. Concurrently, de Botton imagines that this sign is a product of a culture with a significantly different history; he recognizes the diversity of thought and practices that vary from place to place:

On disembarking at [the] airport, I am struck, only a few steps inside the terminal, by the appearance of a sign hanging from the ceiling, which announces the way to the arrival hall, the exit and the transfer desks… If the sign provokes in me genuine pleasure, it is in part because it offers the first conclusive evidence of being abroad. Although it may not seem distinctive to the casual eye, such a sign would never exist in precisely this form in my own country… I sense, confusedly, the presence of another history and mind-set.

This sudden awareness of differences is related to the acknowledgement that one cannot simply impose one’s own worldview or cultural history upon a new place. Further, and more importantly, the traveler at this point begins to realize that his own point of view and understanding of the world may not be shared by all cultures everywhere; different places have unique ways of perceiving things. de Botton understands that he must adopt a new way of thinking based on the acceptance of difference and a desire to understand the culture that produced this sign. This new way of thinking will be the foundation of a program of learning based on travel.

Like de Botton’s sudden realization of foreignness at Schipol, many travelers have a moment of sudden awareness, a jolting awakening, as a result of the strange sights around them. This jolt does not always occur at the moment of arrival in a new place, it can occur whenever an individual witnesses an act or sight which cannot be placed within the realm of the traveler’s existing understanding of the world. The traveler happens upon a scene that is so foreign and strange that it immediately provokes a sense of wonder and amazement that cannot be categorized into any existing framework of understanding; the absolute strangeness of that sight creates an absence of meaning which forces the traveler to pause and be overwhelmed with a sense of wonder. This moment may be brief, but is absolutely critical to the transformative potential of travel; it creates

---

5 Ibid., 67-69.
6 Greenblatt, 19.
a pause, a “rift in time” in which the individual is removed from all attempts at categorization or assimilation.\(^7\)

For me, this push into a new and foreign world lasted, on and off, for a whole day. I decided to venture into Nadi (pronounced Nan-dee) the small town just south of the hotel I was staying in. For sixty cents, I caught a bus to town. It took only about five minutes to ride into town, but already I was feeling miles away from my newly familiarized surroundings at the hostel. The bus had no windows, and the other riders, all Fijians, were casually watching the scenery flash past us—a school with pink or grey uniformed children engaged in after-school chaos, a man selling chickens in crates on the roadside, a small village, a woman drying her laundry—by the time we reached Nadi-town I was already in a state of wonder and amazement, and found myself two hours later, wandering the streets of Nadi in a daze, completely overwhelmed by the new sights around me, as if I had been moving through a dream. When I had finally returned to my hotel room, and tried to write about my experiences in town, I was at a complete loss for words, and though I was unable to fully articulate my encounters, I felt compelled to use the words “wonder” and “shock and awe” continuously.

Greenblatt also explores the use of the terms ‘wonder’, ‘awe’, and ‘marvelous’ by Christopher Columbus and the “discoverers” of the New World. The journals of Columbus and his crew consistently refer to the people, the new sights and strange behaviors they encounter as “marvelous” and the Spaniards “wonder” at the existence of these strange encounters. Though Greenblatt applies this appeal to the marvelous to the Conquistadores, it is easily applicable to all abrupt encounters with the strange. Travelers frequently experience an overwhelming amazement at strange figures or acts which are beyond their comprehension. Travelers who journey into the strange are often met with brief encounters which shock them into a state of awe.

This fleeting glimpse into the strange gives an individual an awareness of another world that exists outside of all her developed understanding of the world. The experience of witnessing a foreign scene is critical because it allows a glimpse into another world and a way of life that is not based on the same assumptions or experiences of the traveler; it opens up a space for a dialogue based on a different world, giving the individual insight into a place that cannot be comprehended with existing tools of understanding.

Descartes calls this moment of wonder and confusion a ‘first encounter’ characterized by a “sudden surprise of the soul” in which individuals are incapable of categorizing what they are seeing.\(^8\) However, once the moment has passed, individuals are returned to a state of consciousness in which they desire to understand or possess the scene they have witnessed by assigning it meaning.\(^9\) Greenblatt argues that there are two paths from the first encounter of wonder: in the first path, the traveler articulates the strange as being so radically different, so completely estranged that the situation cannot be resolved for the traveler without the transformation and appropriation of the strange; this path is best illustrated by a traveler who refuses to acknowledge difference, and forces her views upon the strange to a degree that the strange loses all autonomous meaning. The second path from wonder is based on a self-awareness that acknowledges a mutual estrangement: the traveler is simultaneously able to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange, forging links between the other and the self and accepting both.\(^10\)

Greenblatt’s book provides an insight into the historical consequences of walking the first path of conquest and appropriation, and ominously reminds readers of the importance of dialogue and transformative thought.\(^11\) Greenblatt includes a discussion of Herodotus’ *Histories*, an argument for the necessity of travel. Herodotus, a 5th century Greek historian, argues that he must understand alien cultures in order to place the history and achievements of his own culture in an appropriate context while moving beyond cultural narrowness. Herodotus travels in order to see the world, to collect information, dispel rumors and gain a personal, eyewitness view of the world.\(^12\) Herodotus leaves us with the wisdom that we must see and experience the world for ourselves, to understand on a personal level what lies beyond our familiar boundaries.

Herodotus beckons us out into the strange, lifting the veil over the world and allowing us to perceive the strange and be immersed in the marvelous. Once again, we come to Greenblatt’s two paths: the first path towards possession and conquest of the strange, and the second path down a rabbit-hole of wonder, forcing us to reach out in an attempt to grasp something that we can begin to understand, and engaging in a process dialogue and an acceptance of our new space.

\(^8\) Greenblatt, 20.
\(^9\) deCerteau, 213.
\(^10\) Greenblatt, 135.
\(^11\) Ibid., 43.
\(^12\) Ibid., 123-4.
For Hongyu Wang, a professor in Curriculum Studies at Oklahoma State University, walking along this second path is the movement into a ‘third space.’ Wang defines the third space as a place where multiple cultural identities can interact, but still maintain their unique qualities. This space is in constant motion, being constantly reformed and transformed by new experiences. The very act of reconceptualizing the strange and the familiar in new terms, while creating a reciprocal relationship with the strange is moving within the third space. For Wang, the third space embodies her struggles with Chinese and American identities: Wang is a Chinese citizen who moves to America to study, and after spending a significant time in America, she develops an American identity that cannot be reconciled with her Chinese identity. The two are not opposed, but neither are they able to be integrated into a hyphenated, blended identity. Wang’s frustration and creativity allow her to create a ‘third space’ where she can honor the uniqueness of each identity while exploring the interactions and interconnections between the two; a place that respects the in-between spaces between multiple identities.13

Similar to Greenblatt’s path of self-awareness and mutually beneficial dialogue, the third space is based on a new transformation of space: “Engaged and engaging, such a journey does not take over the places it visits. Refusing to occupy and conquer, a third space is ‘nomadic’.”14

Nomadic space is defined by the absence of set patterns or identities; it is a smooth space of fluctuation where individuals and identities are constantly being shaped by new experiences. Nomadic space is “intensities and becomings rather than representation, new relays and formations instead of the structure of categories and boundaries that has dominated mainstream practice.”15 Nomadic thought, then, is synonymous with Wang’s ‘third space,’ it is a way of thinking that does not separate differences into oppositional categories, but provides a dialogue based on becoming; it represents the relationship between separate entities and the potential for all things to change.

The task, then, of any travel program should be to reconcile a moment of confusion, a glimmer of awareness based on the ‘first encounter’ and incorporate it into a program of dialogue and nomadic thought. The development of a nomadic way of thought, of a third space where there are no hierarchies or subjugations is fundamental to the creation of a global environment that is not

13 Wang, 16.
14 Ibid., 148.
based on ethnocentrism and the assimilation or destruction of the strange.\textsuperscript{16} Kaustuv Roy, a professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University asserts that educational curricula should provide a space for dialogue where individuals can share their experiences in a diverse learning environment.\textsuperscript{17} This environment could be made most effective through travel programs or journeys that encourage nomadic thought.

Nomadic Spaces

The process of travel begins with a departure, then an arrival, it continues with an immersion in the strange inducing an epiphany of sorts, a sudden re-perception of reality, a shift into wonder and shock that cannot be overcome with the mindset the traveler began with. From this point, the process ideally lends to a dialogue and a shift of thought which accepts the strange, making it familiar while simultaneously allowing the traveler to question her own identity and past experiences in a new light—making the familiar strange. This process creates a philosophical discussion on nomadic thought and the process of change through the immersion and juxtaposition of ideas about foreignness, identity, the strange and the other.

Individuals grow up in very culturally specific, group-oriented ways. Every individual is a product of her or his own life experiences, and most maintain a unique and stable identity. The idea of nomadic thought is based on the deconstruction of these established identities in favor of identities that welcome fluctuation and change.\textsuperscript{18} These identities are referred to by Gilles Deleuze, a 20\textsuperscript{th} century French philosopher, as a state of becoming. Becoming refers to a process of constant change and transformation of the individual based on “dynamic interaction” such as the interaction one is immersed in while traveling.\textsuperscript{19} Becoming is a state of existence that moves beyond set categorizations or identities, but rather affirms the unique identities and differences between all people.\textsuperscript{20}

Deleuze’s nomadic thought is something which exists outside of the realm of the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16} Fred Dallmayr, \textit{Alternative visions: paths in the global village} (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998): 47.
\textsuperscript{17} Roy, 4.
\textsuperscript{18} Dallmayr, 56. A very similar argument is made by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, \textit{Nomadology: the war machine}, Foreign agents series (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986), 2.
\end{flushright}
‘State’. The State is not necessarily a physical entity comprised of borders but an institution of hierarchies and dualistic oppositions, it is a set of ideas, histories and truths which are common to a group of people and passed down over generations.\textsuperscript{21} The State utilizes a form of thought based on universality that first establishes this thought as the supreme and superior form of rational thought, and second, assumes that everyone, everywhere shares this same rationality.\textsuperscript{22} By moving out of the State into the realm of nomadic thought, one is able to consider ideas which are not present within one’s familiar cultural surroundings. If State thought is comprised of universal ideas and structured identities, then nomadic thought is based on the smooth flow of ideas and an absence of supreme truth or universality. If State thought is based on meticulous grids, hierarchies and striated spaces, then nomadic thought is based on a horizontal, smooth thought that moves across grid lines, connecting points which would be otherwise separated by State thought.\textsuperscript{23}

By engaging in the process of travel, one moves beyond the universality of State thought, into a world which utilizes a different form of thought or organization. Because the State imposes a form of universal thought on its citizens, first-time travelers who move outside of the State and experience a world that operates on a system that is different than the State thought they are familiar with may experience an overwhelming shock, and an inability to categorize or understand the strange. This connects back to the discussion of the ‘first encounter’ in the first part of this paper: a fundamental disruption of one’s foundations to the point of amazement and wonder. Perhaps it is the absence of meaning due to a void in one’s State-provided set of understandings that forbids the traveler of understanding the situation.

Engaging in a process of travel does not instantaneously change a citizen into a traveler, or a traveler into a ‘nomad’ but instead allows an individual to become something new, to adopt a new outlook that acknowledges the transitory nature of identity, and the changes in identity that accompany new experiences. Each step on a journey is unique and important, and represents a slight change in the threshold of becoming.

Though nomadic thought was first described in detail by Deleuze and Guattari, in the chapter entitled: “Nomadology: The War Machine” in their book \textit{A thousand plateaus}, it has since been adopted in several different forms by a number of other

\textsuperscript{21} Deleuze and Guattari, 2.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 18.
philosophers and theorists in a number of unique contexts. Rosi Braidotti, a professor of gender studies and contemporary feminist theory has adapted nomadic thought to a feminist redefinition of gender categories, arguing that nomadic subjects free individuals from the tendency of the State to center thought on male-dominated truth. Hongyu Wang explores the impact of nomadic thought on personal identities and school curricula. Wang does not explicitly invoke Deleuze and Guattari’s *Nomadology*, though her exploration of the ‘third space’—a place where multiple identities interact and change—very closely echoes nomadic thought. Kaustuv Roy uses Deleuze’s nomadic space as a springboard for the transformation of educational curriculum and pedagogy. Fred Dallmayr, a professor of policy and political theory at the University of Notre Dame, uses nomadic thought to argue for the deconstruction of ethnocentrism and the development of a global awareness.

Each of the above theories has unique explanations of why nomadic thought is important, though many of these implications are interconnected. First, nomadic thought encourages critical thinking and multidimensional considerations. Roy argues that nomadic thought releases us from the restrictive, linear relationships created by the State, allowing the free-flow of interconnecting ideas. Roy describes this form of thought as “rhizomatic”. A rhizome is a plant with roots that grow horizontally, forging with the roots of other plants and creating connections across different types of plants. This term was introduced by Deleuze and Guattari in *A thousand plateaus* as a metaphor for the movement between multiple ideas without borders, as opposed to the opposing and grid-like relationships established by the State. Rhizomatic thought, like nomadic thought, is a form of thought based on engaging with the world by crossing boundaries and making interconnections with a multitude of various ideas and across multiple disciplines.

Similar to nomadic thought and the rhizome, Wang suggests that opening up a third space for her students encourages them to think creatively about their own identities and break out of the institutional constraints that limit them. Deleuze and Guattari propose that nomadic thought frees an individual from the all-encompassing State thought, allowing her to proceed in a smooth space that is

---

24 Braidotti, 8.
25 Wang, 16.
26 Roy, 2.
27 Dallmayr, 47.
28 Roy, 90-1.
29 Braidotti gives an excellent summary of the metaphor of the rhizome in *Nomadic subjects*, 23.
30 Wang, 77; 107. Wang borrows the term “institutional constraints” from Michel Foucault.
not restrictive.\textsuperscript{31}

Second, nomadic space affirms difference: it creates an ideological place where an individual is freed from social constructions, and is free to shape his identity as he desires, instead of being trapped within a specific socially imposed category.\textsuperscript{32} Nomadic space is transformative, creative and accepting of all individuals.\textsuperscript{33} Third, Braidotti argues that nomadic thought can be used to deconstruct binary representations—specifically, for Braidotti, representations of women, but this logic can and should be applied to any categorical representation—by opening up new routes of thinking and new connections.\textsuperscript{34}

If nomadic thought has the potential to enact such profound change, it should become more readily available to all people. Programs which introduce and support nomadic thought in any form are an important step; however, travel programs are the best introduction into nomadic thought, as I have argued, because of the transformative potential of the travel process.

Each of these authors brings a unique and essential piece to the discussion of nomadology, and each author in some form or another suggests a transformation of existing State structures in favor of a more open, nomadic way of thought. However, this transformation must include a significant self-ostracism, a removal of oneself from familiar surroundings, in order to be successful.\textsuperscript{35} One cannot simply be taught nomadic thought; it must be experienced on an individual level.\textsuperscript{36} A change in curriculum and pedagogy is important to facilitate this change, but cannot create a significant transformation, because a curriculum is inevitably tied to State structures of universal thought because curricula exist within the boundaries of the state. Travel is an important way to facilitate nomadic thought because the travel process is so conducive to an actual experience of this type of thought.

The notion of a program of nomadic thought seems to present a significant theoretical paradox: if nomadic thought is predicated on the movement outside of categories and structures, how can a travel program be nomadic? There are

\begin{enumerate}
\item Deleuze and Guattari, 48.
\item Roy, 12. See also Wang, 77. Both Roy and Wang use Deleuzian notions of becoming in their classroom pedagogy in order to encourage their students to deconstruct and reinvent their identities.
\item Wang, 150.
\item Braidotti, 277.
\item Wang, 156.
\end{enumerate}
several answers to this question. First, programs need not be heavily structured, they can be flexible and allow students to pursue whatever subjects or disciplines they wish. Second, programs are just a basis for future reflections on nomadic thought; the real process takes place on an individual level, a program serves to prepare a person for individual journeys and insights. Third, programs can exist in any shape or form as long as they provide an open space based on dialogue and education. The existence of a structure does not preclude nomadic thought. The basis of nomadic thought is that it does not reduce thought or identity into categories as the State does.

What is of utmost importance is the development of nomadic thought by opening up new spaces for thought through the experience of travel. Programs should be established that support movement through places and ideas, and encourage wandering through the world while engaging in a dialogue with the strange.

Knowledge of nomadic thought is not and should not be a necessary prerequisite for travel, but it may be important or desirable for some to place their travel experiences within a greater context. For others, traveling in conjunction with a program which incorporates nomadic thought may provide a positive environment of understanding, as opposed to a rejection or a possession of the strange. In these terms, it may be helpful to refer back to Greenblatt’s two paths from wonder: a program of nomadic education may assist individuals in accepting differences and engaging in a dialogue with the strange, as opposed to an on-face rejection of new ideas, or attempts at conquest or negativity. Programs such as international study abroad programs can serve to create an environment where students can come together to speak about their experiences in a comfortable and dynamic environment.

Many school programs within the institution of the State have been implemented which attempt to deconstruct minor frameworks within the State, for instance Hongyu Wang’s open-structured and transcendent pedagogy based on giving students a space to flex their identities and question categories, or Kaustuv Roy’s pedagogy of becoming, based on a nomadological space of rhizomatic connections which create bridges of discursive associations. It sounds confusing, because it is confusing, and these ideas become even more inaccessible when one cannot connect the philosophical ideas to real-life experiences, such as those gained by moving through places and experiencing the strange. Though

37 Ibid., 156-157
38 Deleuze and Guattari, 18.
39 Roy, 44-45.
these programs are indicative of a breakthrough in educational pedagogy and teaching styles, it may be difficult for those who have never existed outside the institutions of the State to understand exactly what this thought is or why it is important.

When one is given the opportunity to understand the world through travel, she gains an endless horizon of experiences and information that cannot be taught or dispensed. These programs are a fundamental step in the deconstruction of State frameworks and categorized thinking, but must be accompanied with individual, real-life experiences to solidify the theory into realistic examples. Theory and reality must be combined in order to facilitate the greatest change. Furthermore, exposure to these theories should take place in a space that is outside of a person’s familiar surroundings and beyond the State’s institutionalized frameworks in order for the individual to be fully immersed in a strange world. For these reasons, international study or volunteer programs which incorporate nomadic spaces and encourage nomadic thought are critical components of any educational program.

Immersion in a strange place can only last so long, however, and for most people, educational programs are finite. Eventually, most travelers must end their travels by returning to their home. What happens when the long and winding road leads back towards its origins, and the traveler must return home? After the traveler has experienced so much, and engaged in a strenuous process of deconstructing identities, understanding difference and making the strange familiar, how does he return to a place of fixed identities and oppressing structures, a place where everybody knows his name, and his origins, and his identity?

Returning to the familiar, going home, is an inevitable part of the journey for most travelers. However, the “home” that many travelers return to is surprisingly—and often overwhelmingly—different than the home they left: what once may have been familiar to them is now strange, frustrating, uncomfortable or even fundamentally incomprehensible. This state is referred to as “reverse culture shock” and gives a traveler the chance to find out exactly how much he or she may have changed while being away. Reverse culture shock is a new step in the journey through thoughts and identities; it allows the traveler the experience of feeling like a stranger within one’s own familiar settings, which is a very unique and confusing process of re-familiarizing oneself with one’s surroundings in a process of re-evaluating one’s past history in the light of new experiences. Reverse culture shock expresses a perpetual displacement, an awareness that the familiar is only what one makes of it, and that even the familiar can become
strange. In Mandeville’s travels, a book compiled in the 14th Century by Sir John Mandeville, is a story about a young man who leaves home to travel the world. After years of travel, he comes upon a place where his own native language is being spoken to oxen. This is a great marvel to him, because, unlike today, apparently the widespread proliferation of languages and oxen was marvelous; he is amazed to see a place so similar in nature to his own home, and yet with such strange practices as communication with oxen, and he is dumbfounded by the absurdity of the men using this language to speak to livestock. And thus, he retraces his journey until he is once again within the boundaries of his homeland, only to find the very same man speaking out to his oxen, and realizes that he had witnessed the marvelous at the very boundaries of his own land, but had been so displaced and changed by his travels that he thought his own lands to be strange.\(^{40}\) Mandeville explains that, by experiencing the strangeness and marvel of his own familiar world, the traveler was forced to realize the absolute relativity of experience and knowledge by experiencing his origins as an outsider or stranger would. Mandeville’s account of this man is an example of classic reverse-culture shock: one’s thought patterns are so fundamentally changed by travel that they find their own familiar origins strange, absurd and incomprehensible. Greenblatt adds that this relativizing of knowledge may also come at the cost of being uprooted from one’s origins, at the cost of “never again feeling quite at home”.\(^{41}\)

The process of returning home is often more stressful and frustrating than journeying into the strange, because when one moves out into the unknown, she or he can reformulate an identity, can re-think existing structures and frameworks within the context of a new structure and new ideologies. However, when one returns home, she or he is confronted with structures which may now seem inadequate, inefficient or outdated. The returnee’s home now seems unfitting, society appears to be wasteful or offensive, and State institutions can be maddening, overly structured and oppressive. More importantly, travelers return home to friends and family who had, when the traveler departed for those distant lands, said goodbye to a completely different person than the one who is standing before them now. How can the traveler express the new ideas she acquired while she was away? The traveler must make an attempt to share information through stories, photos, souvenirs or videos; and, although each of these cannot fully explain what the traveler experienced, the process of storytelling gives the traveler a chance to explain their process of transformation while at the same time sharing the nomadic ideas and experiences he encountered while away. This process is cathartic for the traveler, giving friends

\(^{40}\) Greenblatt, 48. See also the text of Mandeville’s travels online at: http://www.cofc.edu/~mccandla/Travels.htm.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 48.
and loved ones a re-introduction to the new ideas and identities one may have gained while abroad.\cite{Storti}

However, it is often the case that the most transformative aspects of travel cannot be expressed in words or fragments of a journey; the formulation of travel stories cannot tell the whole story of travel. Pico Iyer writes that he is able to understand how much he has been affected by his travels when he returns home and recognizes that he has become estranged:

I know in my case that a trip has been successful if I come back sounding strange even to myself; if, in some sense, I never come back at all… I bring back receipts, postcards, the jottings I have made, but none of them really tells the story of what I’ve encountered; that remains somewhere between what I can’t say and what I can’t know.\cite{Iyer}

When one returns to the familiar, the remnants of one’s travels—in the form of pictures, ticket stubs, scribbles on a page, an airplane blanket, a collection of music—all help to tell a story of a journey, but once again, our identity becomes fluid, it is again beyond the scope of understanding or words. The new ideas the traveler grasped while abroad have once again become vague inclinations, veiled by distance, and the traveler must once again engage in a new dialogue with the strange—this time in the form of the home which has become confusing and strange.

When I was forced to return to America after living in Fiji for three months, I was frantic and distraught; this was my home now, and I did not want to leave. When I returned home, I was no longer sure where “home” was, I missed my friends and my routines. Like Iyer, I brought back small tokens of my time in Fiji, but my keepsakes were unable to fully tell the story of all I had seen and experienced, and upon my return I was unable to fully understand how I had been transformed by my travels.

Two days after my return to Seattle, I wrote about my thoughts at the time, and the trouble I had in reconciling my existence here. It’s strange to be home, I wrote, very, very strange. I feel torn between thinking I’m just a tourist here, but at the same time all these places are so familiar to me. And, I remember—driving down the Ave, I remember where to eat, where the buildings are. I feel like this

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Storti} Craig Storti, \textit{The art of coming home} (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997): 30-1.
\bibitem{Iyer} Iyer, 8.
\end{thebibliography}
should all be new to me, but I know this place. I knew the money would be
different, too, that I’d have to go back to ugly U.S. dollars, but mum, she had a
$1 bill in her bag today and when I saw it I was amazed. My whole life I’ve been
using these, but it looked so strange and foreign… like I’d never seen a dollar
before in my life. And the cars and steering wheels are on the wrong side. I feel
so uncomfortable here. No one says “bula” (Fijian for “hello”) or “yadra” (“Good
Morning”), everyone avoids eye contact… I miss [the food]. I miss the sun! It is
so cold here! And, when I walked back into the office, it’s just business as usual,
“hi, where have you been, let’s get to work.” But I feel so different! And
nothing here has changed. And I want to go home.

I had experienced a new world, learned a new language, new customs,
established a new identity; but now that I was home, no one understood my new
language, my friends and family were confused by my new identity, and no one
could fully understand the process of change I had undergone. I shared pictures,
foods, souvenirs and small mementos from a faraway, foreign land, but my
experiences were fleeting moments that I could not describe with photos or
stories, something that even I had trouble understanding. Returning home, I was
given the opportunity to understand how significantly I had changed, and was
able to reflect upon the small transformations that had taken place over the
course of my journeys; I was able to see familiar places in new ways and consider
the fluid nature of my own identity.

By becoming estranged from one’s origins, a new journey begins which recreates
the process of travel, creating a spiral of overlapping, interlocking journeys.
When one loses one’s sense of familiarity at home, one must engage in a process
of re-understanding her or his origins, which sets the traveler on a new journey
of understanding. The engagement with new ideas and ideologies remains a task
that does not end when one returns home—indeed, it only serves to spark new
experiences, connections and ideas; and, hopefully, along with these new
connections spring new desires to travel and explore more ideas and stranger
lands. Hopefully, this process also produces a desire to travel in others—family
and friends who see the strange, exotic and beautiful places through photographs
and souvenirs will be affected by an overpowering wanderlust, and must see for
themselves the fantastic world beyond their borders, producing new
connections, new stories and new nomads.

Erin Bestrom graduated from the University of Washington in 2006 with a double-major in Comparative History of
Ideas and Sociology: Globalization and Social Change. Erin now works at the University of Washington for
Classroom Support Services. She hopes soon attend Graduate School to study educational technology and
international education.

**ABSTRACT**

One of the most interesting aspects of the study of interracial marriage is the variation in approval that exists along racial, regional, age and gender lines. Among mixed black and white couples, the most common combination is a white wife and a black husband. Black men that enter marriages with women of a different race tend to have a high level of education, high level of income, and high status career compared to the average black male. The marrying-out of desirable black men, in combination with other factors such as institutionalized racism and high rates of mortality and incarceration, limit the number of potential black male partners considered economically viable. This tightened marriage market is particularly salient for well-educated black women, who have a harder time finding black mates with similar levels of education and economic prospects than do their white counterparts. This paper will utilize data from the General Social Survey to compare white and black females’ views on interracial relationships, tracking trends in opinion over the past three decades. Using the GSS data, I will test the effects that a series of independent variables, including race, age, level of education, geographic region, and urbanicity, have on opinion about racial intermarriage for these two groups of women over time.


© 2009 *intersections*, Madeline Baars. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author
While great strides in race relations have been made in the United States since the days of the Civil Rights Movement, racial divisions have by no means disappeared. Laws preventing interactions no longer exist, but strict social lines have been drawn that still separate American society by race. Most people live, work, and intermarry with those of their own race (Childs 2005). According to the 2000 U.S. Census, only 2.9 percent of all American marriages are interracial (Joyner and Kao 2005). This number is lower than would be expected if marriages were formed at random (without race as a factor in mate selection) (Moran 2001). Well-established demographic factors, such as imbalanced sex ratios, small minority populations (in the U.S. overall, but particularly in certain communities), and age composition, suggest that interracial marriage should be occurring at a higher level than is observed (Root 2001).

Race laws separating Blacks and Whites have existed since this country’s founding, and taboos about personal relationships between races have reinforced these divisions. Over the past few centuries, states have adopted numerous laws encouraging the separation of Blacks and Whites, punishing those in intimate relationships outside of their race. These laws were created to ensure that slave status corresponded with race (Romano 2003). For centuries, Whites and minorities were not allowed to mix freely, and so a social structure of race-separate communities was established (Childs 2005).

At various times in our country’s history, thirty-eight states passed anti-miscegenation laws regulating sex and marriage between members of different racial groups. Anti-miscegenation laws were especially strict in separating Blacks and Whites, and their legal separation lasted longest. All thirty-eight states prevented marriage between African-Americans and Whites, with regulations of Asian-White relationships differing from state to state (Moran 2001). There has never been a law preventing marriage between White Americans and Hispanics, although there were reports of Latinos being denied marriage licenses for appearing “too dark” (Moran 2001). The Supreme Court struck down all laws
prohibiting interracial marriage in 1967, with its decision in *Loving v. Virginia*. Anti-miscegenation laws were declared unconstitutional on the grounds that they violated racial equality and limited personal liberty (Moran 2001). According to the 1970 census, a mere 0.7 percent of American marriages at that time were interracial (Qian 1997). Clearly, although laws preventing intermarriage were gone, strict social barriers remained to keep races separate.

When South Carolina struck down its constitutional clause prohibiting interracial marriage in 1998, more than 40 percent of residents in some counties voted to uphold the symbolic ban (Yancey and Emerson 2001). It wasn’t until the year 2000 that Alabama became the last state to remove its long-vestigial laws barring interracial marriage (Wallenstein 2002). It is examples like these that serve to remind us that while America has changed in many ways since the days when interracial marriage was punishable by law, in many parts of the country, a change in opinion has yet to arrive.

Acceptance of Interracial Marriage

The treatment that interracial couples receive in society serves as a signal of greater-scale relations between racial groups. Interracial marriage functions as an “index of assimilation,” an indicator of how willing people are to enter into intimate and personal relationships with members of other races. How far have we really come since the days when interracial marriage was illegal? What challenges do today’s interracial couples face from White society and from minority communities? How do these challenges differ along racial and gender lines?

The largest factor in the low rates of Black-White intermarriage may simply be the historical relationship between Blacks and Whites. As a result of the long legal separation of the two groups which continued well into the last century, interactions between Black and Whites remain much different than the interactions between Whites and other minorities (Rosenblatt 1999). Even today, many Whites report that they consider relationships with Blacks “less acceptable” than relationships with Latinos or Asians (Childs 2005). While slavery has been abolished for nearly 150 years, there is lingering guilt, resentment, and racial tension that make the relationship between Blacks and Whites extremely complicated. Old stereotypes that paint relationships between Blacks and Whites as “immoral,” “vulgar,” or purely sexual, still linger (Childs 2005). Another commonly held stereotype, in both the Black and White communities, is that Blacks marry Whites to gain a higher social status (Foreman and Nance 1999).
Since the 1970’s, public opinion polls have consistently reported rising rates of approval for interracial unions. These increasingly favorable opinions can be observed for all races and ages and in both sexes. In 1968, 17 percent of U.S. Whites approved of interracial marriage; by 1997, 61 percent of Whites approved. As for African-Americans, 48 percent approved of interracial marriage in 1968, and that number reached 77 percent in 1997. These rising rates of approval are attributed to higher levels of education, income, and that individuals are increasingly likely to live in large communities (Root 2001).

However, some public opinion polls may mask respondents’ true feelings by simply not asking the right questions. For example, according to the National Opinion Research Center, 38 percent of White Americans in 1972 reported opposing laws against interracial marriage. Three years later, in 1975, a Virginia Slims survey found that only 14 percent of White women would both accept and approve of their daughters’ marrying Black men (Spickard 1989). In other words, opposition to legal restrictions is not the same as acceptance.

Female out-marriage is higher than male out-marriage in every racial group—with the exception of African-Americans. Black women have been found to disapprove of interracial marriage at higher rates than do Black men, and Black women are less likely to date Whites than are Black men (Romano 2003); in a 1982 survey, only 37 percent of Black women reported that they would consider “an intimate relationship” with a White man (Spickard 1989). Currently, out-marriage of Black women occurs at about a quarter of the rate for Black men (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1990).

Today, many interracial couples report the harshest disapproval coming from Black women (Romano 2003; Rosenblatt 1995). One Black man, married to his White wife since the 1970’s, reported that the looks he gets on the street now are similar to “the looks I used to get from White men. Now it’s looks of hostility from Black women” (Romano 2003). Recent research supports the hypothesis that White women are significantly more accepting of men marrying interracially than Black women are (Zebroski 1999; Pabset and Taylor 1991). One White woman reports a sentiment that seems to characterize the general attitude of many Black women:

The most negativity toward me because I was dating, and am now married to, a black man, comes from black women. There seems to me to be this kind of thing of like, “Well, you’ve taken one out of circulation, and that means there’s one less good one for me”. (Rosenblatt 1999)

This trend in public opinion stems from several demographic factors. For the last
50 years, there have been more single Black women in the United States than single Black men, which nurtures the feeling that there “aren’t enough” marriageable Black men (Romano 2003). Low sex ratios can result in changes in social patterns, such as devaluation of marriage, greater marriage instability, higher rates of singlehood, and greater female independence, all of which have been observed in the Black community (Tucker and Taylor 1989). Furthermore, man Black women regard out-marriage of Black men as a betrayal to the Black community, and as a rejection of Black women (Romano 2003; Root 2001). Interracial couples may make Black women feel like they have little value in a culture where White women are so valued sexually and European looks provide the standards of beauty (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1995).

Education and Interracial Marriage

The marriage market for Black women has shrunk over the past few decades, due to several factors: high mortality among Black males, high rates of incarceration for Black males, and institutionalized racism which prevents Black males from being economically viable partners (Root 2001; Zebroski 1999). Between 1970 and 1990, the percentage of Black women who were married declined from 62 percent to 43 percent (Crowder and Tolinay 2000). In the 1990’s, it was estimated that there were 150,000 more Black women than Black men enrolled in college (Root 2001).

In addition to those previously mentioned factors, Black men marrying out of their race has further diminished the marriage market, particularly for well-educated Black women (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1990). Because their pool of potential mates has been reduced, well-educated Black women must expand their marriage market. African-American women are more likely to marry men— of any race— with a lower level of education than they have than they are to marry men with an equal or greater level of education. This shortage of mates is also reflected in several other trends for Black women. When compared to Whites, Black women marry men who are often significantly older and men who are more likely to have been previously married (Tucker and Taylor 1989).

In his 1997 work, Zhenchao Qian found that White women were equally likely to marry a White man with a higher level of education than they were to marry a White man with less education. This indicates a shift to educational homogamy among partners: as women move into more of a bread-winning role, the emphasis shifts from the economic status of the male to the mutual economic potential of the couple. However, Qian did not find that this trend extended to
mixed-race couples. In 1980, a White woman was 109 percent more likely to marry an African-American man with more education than herself than she was to marry an African-American man with less education. The trend was similar for Hispanic women who marry African-American men—both White and Hispanic women tend to marry more-educated Black men.

White men who marry interracially are more likely to have a college education than those who marry other Whites (Fu 2001). How can we explain this trend? Many possible hypotheses have been suggested. Some propose that a higher level of education makes one less attached to racial identity (Gordon 1964); others argue that more education makes one more tolerant of others (Schuman 1997)—in other words, that education changes attitudes about race. Does this trend extend to all races and both genders?

Regional Variance in Interracial Marriage

Interracial marriage is often studied on the national level, which masks the dramatic regional variance that exists in marriage patterns (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1990). Variance in regional racial history, proportions of racial groups relative to one another, and sex ratios all affect rates of interracial marriages (Root 2001). Southern states were the last to overturn anti-miscegenation laws, and the legacy of those laws continues to persist. Between 1960 and 1970, marriages between Blacks and Whites increased 26 percent nationally. The number of Black-White couples in the North and West increased by 66 percent; in the South, the number of Black-White couples decreased by 34.6 percent (Heer 1974). In 1970, 4.5 percent of married Black males in the West had a White wife; only 0.4 percent of married Black males in the South had a White wife. By 1980, those numbers had risen to 12.3 percent in the West and 1.6 percent in the South (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1990). Heer (1974) also found that the number of marriages consisting of a Black husband and a White wife were rapidly increasing, and that the number of marriages composed of a White husband and a Black wife were decreasing—resulting in a tightening marriage market for Black women.

Support for interracial marriage varies by geographic region as well. This geographic variance is reflective of regional differences in attitudes and norms. Research done in the 1980’s found a 25 percentage-point difference in opinion between those in the South and those in other regions (Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985). Approval for interracial unions is highest in the West (60 percent of respondents in 1991), followed by the East (54 percent) and the Midwest (50
percent). The lowest rates of support for interracial unions have consistently come from the South (a mere 33 percent approved in 1991) (Root 2001). As of 1990, one in four interracial couples in the U.S. resides in California (Root 2001).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The trends detailed above have lead to several hypotheses that guide this research. The central hypothesis is that the increase in tolerance for Black-White intermarriage over the past few decades has been greater for White females than for Black females. This is expected because White women are more likely to be in interracial relationships than are Black women. Second, controlling for all other factors, urban-dwelling women are hypothesized to be more tolerant of interracial marriage than rural-dwelling women. Third, women living outside of the South are expected to have a higher tolerance for interracial unions than southern women. Fourth, because racial tolerance has been shown to increase with education, I hypothesize that the increase in tolerance for interracial marriage over the past decades has been greater for more-educated women than it has been for less-educated women. Lastly, because of the squeeze in the marriage market that intermarriage has created, I predict that the increase in tolerance for interracial marriage has been greater for well-educated White women than for well-educated Black women.

Data/Variables/Method

The data for this project come from the General Social Survey. The GSS is a public opinion survey that dates back to 1972, with data from as recently as 2006. The survey was given every year between 1973-1978 and 1983-1993, and conducted biannually in the periods between and from 1994 to the present.

The data are collected primarily from face-to-face interviews, with a small number of interviews conducted over the phone. The interviews last an average of ninety minutes each. For this project, the sample will be restricted to African-American and Caucasian women, as they provide the comparison for examination. Until recent years, the race of the respondent was decided by the interviewer, using the racial categories “White”, “Black” and “other”. If the interviewer was uncertain about the respondent’s race, the interviewer was instructed to ask what race they considered themselves to be. Beginning in 2002, interviewers asked all respondents to self-report racial identity, thus eliminating this potential source of human error. The interviewer now records a maximum of three racial categories claimed by the respondent.
For the purposes of this project, the data sample will be limited to Black and White women only—men, and women who are racially defined as “other,” will be eliminated. With these filters, the sample becomes much smaller, and it is composed of 14,927 women. Of these women, 13,101 (87.8 percent) are White and 1,826 (12.2 percent) are Black.

The dependent variable for this project is support for laws preventing interracial marriage. This variable comes from the GSS question, “Do you think there should be laws against marriages between (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) and Whites?” This question was asked of 14,927 women during the span of the GSS; it was asked to White women every year that the GSS was administered from 1972 to 2002 and to Black women every year between 1980 and 2002.

Several other questions also indicate the level of tolerance for interracial marriage. These are questions such as “How would you feel if a family member married someone of a different race (Black or White)?” and “Do you believe that there are special problems in marriages between Blacks and Whites?” These questions will not be used as the dependent variable in this study, as they are limited either by sample size (as is the case with the former question, which was asked only in 1980) or scope (believing that there are special problems between Blacks and Whites does not necessarily indicate a lack of support or disapproval for such unions). Because of these limitations, these questions are considered only briefly in the data discussion section.

Previous research has highlighted many of the variables that serve as correlates to the level of tolerance for interracial marriage. These are the independent variables of this project, and include race, age, education, “urbanicity,” and geographic region. Race is limited to Black and White. Age is broken into 15-year cohorts (18-30, 31-45, 46-60, etc). Education is disseminated into three categories: less than a high school education, high school education, and more than a high school education. “Urbanicity” has been broken in to three categories as well: suburban, urban, and rural. Geographic region has been broken into two regions, “South” or “non-South,” as identified in the GSS codebook.

To analyze the data, I will begin by constructing a series of cross-tabulations, in order to give a complete picture of the data set and the differences in the dependent variable for each independent variable. The first set of cross-tabulations will assess all women (Black and White) in a pooled sample. Next, to see the differences between Black and White women for each of the independent variables, separate tables will be created for Black women and White women.
Figure 1: Percentage of Women Who Believe There Should Be Laws Preventing Interracial Marriage
Finally, the data will be analyzed through multivariate logistic regression. This will enable me to assess the level of tolerance of an individual as a function of a set of predictor variables which are both categorical and continuous in nature. Through multivariate analysis, the effect of a given variable can be measured while controlling for all other variables.

Data Discussion

Looking at Figure 1 [previous page], it is obvious that Black and White women’s opinions are very different on this issue, but their opinions become more similar as time progresses. The central hypothesis for this paper is that the increase in tolerance for interracial marriage over the past few decades has been greater for White females than for Black females, a pattern that was not observed from the data. The increase in tolerance has been much greater for White women overall—40 percent of White women in 1972 supported laws restricting interracial marriage, compared to only 7.2 percent in 2002. As Figure one illustrates the support among Black women fell from 18.9 percent to 3.5 percent.

In 1972, 40 percent of White women responded that they would favor laws restricting interracial marriage. Black women weren’t asked for their opinion on this issue until 1980, at which time 18.9 percent responded in favor of such laws. By that time, the number of White women had fallen to 31.6 percent, still much higher than their Black counterparts. By 2002, the number of women of both races who supported laws restricting interracial relationships had fallen into the single digits.

Black and White women are strikingly different in opinion about interracial unions, regardless of other factors. For every variable, and in every category, Black women reported less support for restricting interracial marriage than did their White counterparts. But while their overall numbers were different, Black and White women showed almost identical patterns: for both races, the lowest rates of support for laws restricting interracial unions were women with more education, younger women, and women living outside of the South and rural areas.

White and Black women have different opinions about laws regarding interracial marriage, and they report far differently on several other, “less extreme” measures as well, as detailed in Table 1 (below). For instance, in 1977, there was a question included in the GSS that asked respondents how they would feel if a
member of their family married someone of a different race (Black or White). 81.4 percent of White women reported that they would be very or somewhat uneasy, while only 46.8 percent of Black women replied the same way.

Similarly, when asked whether they believed that there are special problems in marriages involving interracial couples, almost all White women (93.9 percent) believe that there are. In comparison, 64.4 percent of Black women feel the same way.

Table 1: Women’s Responses to GSS Questions Regarding Interracial Marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Women</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Women</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Women</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you believe that there are special problems in marriages between Blacks and Whites?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Women</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Women</td>
<td>93.9%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Women</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Should there be laws preventing intermarriage?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Women</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>14,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Women</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>13,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Women</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>1,826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this isn’t a measure for support of interracial marriage per se (one can believe that there are special problems between Black and White couples, and that does not necessarily mean that one does not support the right of such a couple to exist), the differences in opinion between Black and White women that is seen in other questions exist for this question as well. White women are more
likely to regard interracial relationships negatively than are Black women. Tables 3 and 4 clearly demonstrate that while the overall percentages are often markedly different, there are many common patterns in opinion for Black and

Table 2: Should There Be Laws Preventing Interracial Marriage? Responses of Black and White Women, 1972-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30 years</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>3,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45 years</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>4,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-60 years</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>3,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-75 years</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>2,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76+ years</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-11 years</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>3,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>5,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13+ years</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
<td>5,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>5,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-South</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>9,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urbanicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>4,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>6,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>4,219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

White women. For instance, the percentage favoring laws preventing interracial marriage increases with age in both groups. Regardless of race, the youngest respondents (those aged 18-30) are the least likely to support these restrictions, and the oldest (those age 76 and above) are the most likely to support restrictions. For Black women, the percentage supporting laws roughly doubles in each successive age group, until for the last two categories, which are separated by a closer margin of about 10 percent. Black women, particularly those under 30, overwhelmingly oppose restrictions on interracial relationships; the percentage supporting such restrictions does not reach double-digits until we consider women aged 61 and above. For White women, the percentage that
Table 3: Should There be Laws Preventing Interracial Marriage? Responses of White Women, 1972-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30 years</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>3,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45 years</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>3,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-60 years</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>3,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-75 years</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>1,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76+ years</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-11 years</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>3,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>4,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13+ years</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>5,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>4,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-South</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>9,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>3,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>5,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>3,901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

support laws restricting interracial relationships is much higher across all age categories. While only 13 percent of White women age 18-30 support laws restricting interracial marriage, White women age 61-75 are almost as likely (44.6 percent) to favor these laws as they are to oppose. While the margin is narrow, White women over 76 are actually more likely to support restrictions on interracial marriage (53.2 percent) than they are to oppose them. For both Black and White women, support for laws against interracial marriage is inversely related to educational attainment. 13.8 percent of Black women with less than a high school education support marriage restrictions, compared to 5.0 percent of Black women with a high school education and 2.2 percent with more than a high school education. Similarly, 52.4 percent of White women with less than a high school education, 25.7 percent of those with a high school education, and 9.8 percent of those with more than a high school education support laws
limiting interracial marriage. White women with less than a high school education are more likely to support laws restricting interracial marriage than they are to oppose them.

Regardless of race, those living in rural areas are the most likely to support laws restricting interracial marriage. 37.2 percent of rural White women, and 14.7 percent of their Black counterparts, support such restrictions. While the numbers are close, a higher percentage of suburban White women (21.4 percent) than urban White women (20.5 percent) reported favoring laws preventing interracial marriage; the pattern is reversed for Black women, with 5.4 percent of urban Black women, compared to 4.4 percent of suburban Black women, supporting such laws.

Striking patterns are also observed in regard to region. Both Black and White
women living in the South are more likely to support laws preventing interracial marriage than are those who reside in other regions. For White women, this difference is quite large. 39.5 percent of White southern women report support for laws restricting interracial marriage. In the non-South, 19.7 percent of White women support such laws. While the percentage of Black women supporting such laws is much lower, the same pattern holds, with 9.6 percent of southern Black women supporting such laws, compared with 3.7 percent of non-southern Black women.

Table 5 describes the logistic regression model. I found that all of the independent variables affect the dependent variable at a significance level of \( p<0.05 \). Additionally, all of the independent variables had a directional effect consistent with the hypotheses. As predicted, higher education attainment makes a respondent increasingly less likely to support laws against interracial marriage. Age has the opposite effect, as each additional year makes a respondent more likely to support such laws. A Black respondent is less likely to support laws against interracial marriage than is a White respondent, and each successive year makes respondents less likely to answer affirmatively to this question. Rural dwellers are more likely to support laws against interracial marriage than are their suburban counterparts, and urban residents are the least likely of all. Lastly, those living outside of the South are less likely to support the laws than those who reside in the South.

Potential Problems

One possible flaw in the data is the way that racial identity is reported. Both methods employed by the GSS leave room for possible error. For most of the survey’s duration, the racial identity of the respondent has been assigned by the interviewer. Since 2002, individual racial identity has been defined by the respondent themselves. By limiting the vast continuum of races and ethnicities to three fairly ambiguous categories ("White", "Black", and "other"), an unknown level of error is introduced in the data.

However, it is possible that this flaw has little effect. Because the concept of race is itself a social construction, using a researcher’s reporting of a respondent’s race may be less problematic than it seems. If you are perceived as Black, and treated as such, won’t you form opinions in line with the general Black community?
There is a second issue with this data set in regards to race: the issue of Hispanicity. Non-White Hispanics have only been identified as a separate GSS category from Whites for a few years; while the “other” racial category has been provided, Hispanics’ inclusion as “other” or “White” (or “Black,” for that matter) may have been arbitrarily decided, either by self-reporting or by physical appearance (such as skin color or hair texture). The demographic numbers are reflective of this effect; in the GSS sample, 80.9 percent of respondents are classified as White, and only 4.7 percent are classified as “other.” Whites compose a larger number in the sample, and “other” a smaller number, than is reflective of actual percentage of Americans classified in these categories.

Another possible issue arises from the method of conducting face-to-face
interviews. When asking questions about a socially sensitive topic like race, how much of what people report is truly what they believe, and how much is simply a reflection of what they think they should say? I don’t know the answer to that troubling question, but at the very least this data can be used to indicate trends—even if people don’t truly approve of interracial marriage more or less than they would have in previous years, just knowing what people think they should say is in itself a good indicator of social attitudes and norms.

Conclusion

Black and White women are strikingly different in their opinions about interracial unions, even when controlling for other factors. For every variable, and in every category, Black women reported more support for interracial marriage than did their White counterparts, often by margins in the double-digits. If Black women are more supportive of interracial unions, why are they much less likely to be in interracial relationships than are White women? Perhaps that question can be explained by the survey question itself. Earlier in this paper, the point was raised that an absence of support for laws against interracial relationships is not the same as support for such relationships. Could it be that cultural differences, guided by historical relationships, make Blacks less likely to favor restrictions of civil rights than their White counterparts?

While their overall numbers were different, Black and White women showed very similar overall patterns: for both races, those most likely to support laws restricting interracial unions were women with less education, older women, and women living in the South and in rural areas. Urban and suburban women were found to be more tolerant of interracial marriage than women living in rural areas, which was consistent with the hypothesis. The data showed that Black women are far more tolerant of interracial relationships than are White women. Women living outside of the South were found to have a much higher tolerance for interracial unions than southern women, regardless of race. The more education women possess, the more likely they are to not support laws limiting interracial relationships.

If interracial relationships were socially acceptable, there would be no paper to write, because they would not be a notable cultural phenomenon. But in today’s society, these relationships often uncover deep-set beliefs and racist sentiments that simmer under the surface. It is one thing to support diversity in public schools and in the workplace; it is quite another to invite a member of a different race to enter one’s home and family tree. Interracial marriage should not be seen
as the solution to the myriad of problems surrounding race in this country. Rather, interracial marriages serve as an indicator of social distance between groups. Because of the unique history of relations between the Black and White community, and the social segregation that endured well into the last century, relationships between Blacks and Whites provide an exceptionally interesting subject for study and analysis. The feelings these relationships stir up reveal much about the underlying values and structure of American society.

Suggestions for Further Research

Some emerging research suggests that while marriage rates have fallen, romantic involvement has not. This indicates that the very nature of marriage is changing. Recent research suggests that other kinds of relationships, specifically dating and cohabitating couples are more likely than marriages to be interracial (Tucker and Taylor 1989). Will these behaviors lead to higher rates of interracial marriage, or are these alternate unions now substituting marriage altogether? What effect will these new types of interracial couples have on the structure of the American family and on race relations?

Additional research needs to be conducted concerning more subtle indicators of approval of interracial relationships. For this paper, trends were observed by looking at support for legal restrictions of interracial marriage. However, this question is inherently limiting; just because an individual does not support laws restricting interracial marriage, does not necessarily mean that the individual supports such unions. In the GSS, questions about respondents’ comfort with interracial relationships, or about the possibility of the introduction of another race into their family, were asked in only a few years. These small samples provide a snapshot of race relations in a given year, but cannot tell us how these trends change over time. It is questions such as these that get to the core of public opinion on this issue, and their inclusion in future surveys is crucial to our understanding of these trends.

Madeline Baars completed her degree in Sociology at the University of Washington in 2008 with departmental honors. She is currently living Portland and working at an architectural firm. Her advisors, Stewart Tolnay and Becky Pettit, greatly assisted in the development and completion of this project.
Works Cited


**ABSTRACT**

Social identities have emerged as a major mode of social participation today, particularly with regard to politics but in other spheres (sexuality, religion, race, disability, etc.) as well. A conflict persists among anthropologists about whether identities can be productive for cultural study or whether identities are too subjectively produced, too circularly defined to be useful. This paper takes the position, articulated by a variety of writers, that while it is true that identities are social constructed through various subjective lenses and obviously nothing like the essential categories which they are sometimes used as, identities nonetheless are claimed and disclaimed by social actors for a variety of purposes. I attempt a synthesis of theory in language and sexuality studies as well as narrative and identity theory to produce a method and theory for looking at how the telling of personal narratives of a particular "genre" (in this case, 'coming-out stories') comprise a definite locus wherein actors create, deconstruct, define, and dissociate their own positions.


© 2009 *intersections*, Alex Kim. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author
Speaking “out”
Ideologies, identities, and individuals in coming out stories

By Alex Kim
University of Washington, Seattle

Introduction

“Most people come out because, sooner or later, they can’t stand hiding who they are anymore. They want their relationships to be stronger, richer, more fulfilling and authentic. Once we do come out, most of us find that it feels far better to be open and honest than to conceal such an integral part of ourselves.” – “Deciding to Tell Others” (Human Rights Campaign)

“I thought it’d be fun to be in a group of uh, of people that are um, you know- my skin color and um, supportive of uh, you know- our identity as gay folks, gay people queer people. But um, after going through that I started realizing, No. It is not a dream come true. It's not a happy ending. It's not a happy spot. You know? Yeah, maybe we're all Asian, maybe we're all queer but, a lot of us hold different views and a lot of us, you know- express ourselves differently.” Steve

Social identities have emerged as a major mode of participation in politics, religion, education, and even sex: sexual identities have recently gained a high level of prominence due to their politicization in much of the world. In light of this, however, it is worth wondering how exactly individuals come to be a part of a social identity – are identities something that individuals choose for themselves, or are they institutionalized categories imposed on large swaths of disempowered people? How are identities useful as ways to delineate, observe, and interact with groupings of people? How useful are identities as a way to mobilize political action? Religious, vocational, educational, political, ethnic, racial, sexual, illness, disability, and et cetera – a great proliferation of identities has been accompanied by a proliferation in anthropological studies of identity groups. Identities have attractive to social science because often they are claimed and upheld by individuals themselves.

This paper aims to understand more fully the process of identification by individuals. Its particular focus will be on the process by which individuals with same-sex desires come to claim sexual identities, and the methodology I use for this investigation is that of linguistic anthropology. Because all social practice is
mediated by language, I find linguistic anthropology to provide an excellent foothold from which to grasp the detailed workings of social participation.

I will therefore begin this paper with an overview of theories relating language use to social participation, and from there discuss recent frameworks for relating language use to sexual identities and also for relating the telling of personal narratives to the formation of identities in general. I will then attempt a synthesis of these literatures and use the result as my theoretical and methodological approach to the coming out stories of ten individuals I have recorded and transcribed for this paper. I will conclude by discussing the results of this analysis and their implications for the understanding of the way sexual identities are used and maintained, as well as for the study of identity formation.

Linguistic Practice and Social Difference

The search for linguistic manifestations of perceived differences between groups of people has been a preoccupation of sociolinguistics since its academic beginnings. William Labov’s (1966) studies of linguistic variation among New Yorkers uncovered patterns in how speakers pronounced the postvocalic /-r/ sound (e.g. “farr” versus “fah” when pronouncing “far”) that correlated with their socioeconomic class. In highly structured interviews with a stated focus on linguistic propriety, Labov found that speakers of lower and middle class tended to pronounce /-r/ sounds they had not pronounced during less formal interactions, in some cases pronouncing more /-r/ sounds than upper-class speakers did. This “hypercorrection” showed that New York speakers of English also possessed an idea that the pronunciation of the /-r/ sound at the ends of words was correct or desirable. This idea that a certain linguistic form is more desirable than another is an example of a linguistic ideology in action – that is, a “cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (Irvine 1989:255). In other terms, Labov’s work uncovered a linguistic ideology shared by New Yorkers of all socioeconomic classes that not pronouncing /-r/ sounds at the ends of words was “low-class” and undesirable.

Labov’s work led to similar studies of how social difference might manifest itself and also be reinforced through linguistic practice. Lakoff (1975) examined gender differences in language use, showing that forms such as tag questions (e.g. “John is here, isn’t he?”) and gender-appropriate adjectives (e.g. lovely, adorable, etc.) marked their speaker as a woman – Lakoff’s study was motivated by a feminist perspective which is interested in criticizing various manifestations of
power in social practice, of which language is of course one. Note here also the importance of linguistic ideology as a way of understanding how speakers speak and how they think about how they speak. As evidenced today by the publication of Blackwell’s “Handbook of Language and Gender”, the question of how gender differences are related to language differences has emerged as a full-fledged field in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, with many scholars looking at a wide swath of linguistic practices and varieties with an eye on how genders are differentiated and situated in terms of power and agency.

As a response to the mushrooming of work on language and gender, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) proposed a new theoretical framework for organizing these studies that has come to be called the “communities of practice approach”. By a community of practice they mean “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor” wherein “ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge…” (464). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s approach was an attempt to unify the study of gender differences and gender relations. Instead of presupposing the essentiality and import of the social groupings (e.g. men vs. women, black vs. white, gay vs. straight, etc.) to whom we attribute linguistic differences, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet call attention to practices (that is, deeds and words carried out in situated interactions) as the starting place. They write, “[I]n practice, social meaning, social identity, community membership, and the symbolic value of linguistic form are constantly and mutually constructed” (473).

Additionally, they point out the place of power in this scheme, writing that power in language is “Janus-like”, with individual agency in local face-to-face encounters on one side and social-historical dominance, normalization, and conventionalization on the other (474). This duality of power is crucial, for it means that practices that constitute membership in a marginal community (in relation to central, more powerful communities, of course) may constitute solidarity and resistance to power within other communities. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet write to avoid reinforcing the pervasiveness of gender as a categorical system, themselves preferring to open up a consideration of how communities “gender” their members in shared practices and how individuals negotiate multiple memberships to assert compliance or resistance. The approach of starting with instantiated practices to gain a window into the constitution of identities and social difference, and at the same time examining questions of differential power and individual agency, is the fruit of the
communities of practice framework, and theoretically it will undergird my work here.

Language and Sexuality

A cademic interest in language and sexuality (that is, the relationship between linguistic practice and sexual orientation as a social category and as a realm of desire) had a similar beginning and trajectory as the field of language and gender. Jacobs (1996) provides a cogent overview of the field in its earlier forms. Like Lakoff and descendant scholars, those working in language and sexuality began by looking for correlations between social groupings (in this case, gays and lesbians) and the ways in which they spoke. Jacobs’ review of the literature up to that point found that scholars had considered phonological variation, grammatical variation, speech standardization, lexical particularities, discursive forms, and paralanguage in their examination of “gay and lesbian language” up to that point (50). For instance, William Leap (1993) takes on what he considered unique attributes of gay men’s discourse. In what he calls a “language of risk”, gay men routinely use “discourse strategies which will enable them to maximize gains (confirmation of gay identity, successful gay oriented discourse) and minimize losses (unwarranted disclosure of gender interests, heterosexist backlash and homophobia)” (57). These early works focused themselves on establishing language and sexuality as a legitimate field by demonstrating that gay and lesbian people spoke in uniquely peculiar ways.

Kulick (2000) made an important critique that researchers of language and sexuality have grounded their work in the essentialist idea that lesbians and gays have a different way of speaking that is rooted in their identities as lesbian or gay – in other words, “gay and lesbian language” has become an essential trait constituting gay and lesbian identities (c.f. Gal and Irvine 1995). He writes, “[It] is important not to confuse symbolic resources that anyone can appropriate to invoke stereotypical images of homosexuality with the actual language practices, much less the identities, of individual gays and lesbians” (Kulick 257). Kulick points to attempts to define the object of study (that is, queer language) and argues that they are logically circular. He takes special objection to the methods and assumptions of William Leap: “What makes [the English] gay? The fact that gay men speak it. Why do gay men speak it? Because they are gay men. And so on, round and round” (264).

language and sexuality – they argue, Kulick states, that “the focus of research on queer language should be displaced from identity categories to signifying practices” (267). Still, he finds that the notion of performance brings with it questions of intentionality – does the speaker intend for her speech to constitute or signify a certain identity (or at least, the stereotype of one)? In light of the possibility that anyone, regardless of whether they are gay or lesbian, can use “gay or lesbian speech”, he considers performance theory to be little more than a proxy for the sexual identity categories it had hoped to supplant. Kulick justifies his weariness of sexual identity by a fear that identities introduce a structuralist limitation on understanding how people conceive of their sexualities. He writes that “because gender has a strong tendency to be analyzed in terms of mutually exclusive identity categories (namely ‘man’ and ‘woman’), the risk looms large that an analysis of sexuality will also be framed in terms of mutually exclusive identity categories” (70).

Instead of considering language’s role in constructing sexual identities, Kulick urges a scholarly examination of “phenomena like fantasy, desire, repression, pleasure, fear, and the unconscious, however one ultimately wishes to explain them, that in many senses make up sexuality” (271). This approach is now described as a “language and desire” approach, and has resulted in a rift among scholars studying language and sexuality – on one side, those who continue to have an interest in the constitution of sexual identities; and on the other, those who favor a definition of sexuality that focuses on the articulation and actualization of sexual desire.

Bucholtz and Hall (2004) favor the retention of identity in sexuality studies. They recognize the lack of theoretical coherence in previous work, particularly in its view of identity and how identities become instantiated in language and speech, but see potential in the ability of language and sexuality to “[allow] us to talk about sexual ideologies, practices, and identities as interconnected issues without losing sight of power relations” (471). Bucholtz and Hall assert that the major foundation of the opposition to studying identity with language is “the fallacy that linguistic forms must be uniquely assigned to particular identities in order to be socially meaningful” (475, c.f. Gal and Irvine 1995). They coin the term “queer linguistics” to describe an area of interest in how linguistic structures and practices constitute and point to sexual identities either directly or indirectly, whether intentional or not, and for a variety of purposes. Most importantly, Bucholtz and Hall write that the notion of essential identities cannot be written off because “social actors themselves use [them] to organize and understand identities” (477). In other terms, essential identities are available to speakers as
ideologies by which they can conceive of and organize their sexual selves. Furthermore, the ways in which speakers do this can be discovered through the analysis of linguistic forms, or more broadly also in social practice as developed by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet. In sum, Bucholtz and Hall write: “[Language] users both draw on and create conventionalized associations between linguistic form and social meaning to construct their own and others’ identities” (478).

Bucholtz and Hall also warn against the adoption of Kulick’s language and desire approach for its incompatibility with the established methods of linguistic ethnography and its movement towards psychoanalysis. They are also weary of the break from feminist theory’s concern with sexuality and power structures to a more confined view of sexual desire and practice. They argue that “desire cannot be separated from power and agency” and stress the importance of “the ideologies, practices, and identities that produce [social meanings of sexuality]” (486). Since linguistic anthropology emphasizes that language is “the mediating level between structures of power and human agency” (492), examining the constitution of sexual practices and identities in situated speech becomes a potentially valuable tool for understanding how individuals both reproduce existing systems as well as creatively alter them. Bucholtz and Hall stress that sexual identity is “an outcome of intersubjectively negotiated practices and ideologies” rather than an inherent trait of intentioned individuals – this, they argue, makes identity precisely useful for social scientists looking to understand the ways structural duality affects social meaning (493).

The negotiated nature of identity makes it especially amenable to linguistic anthropological analysis. For this purpose, Bucholtz and Hall elaborate a theoretical scheme for organizing linguistic practices around the negotiation of sexuality – this they call the “tactics of intersubjectivity” framework. These tactics consist along three axes: sameness-difference, genuineness-artifice, and recognition-marginalization, and Bucholtz and Hall term them “adequation/distinction”, “authentication/denaturalization”, and “authorization/illegitimation” (494). They hold that these tactics encompass the range of linguistic acts (both in formation and in interpretation) undertaken by individuals in the performance and negotiation of their identities, and as agents employ these tactics multiple interactive ways, a complex array of identity formations can emerge.
Table 1. Tactics of Intersubjectivity (adapted from Bucholtz and Hall 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive tactic</th>
<th>Negative tactic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sameness-Difference</td>
<td>Adequation – practices that establish sufficient similarity between an individual and others with a particular identity</td>
<td>Distinction – practices that assert differences between an individual and others with a particular identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuineness-Artifice</td>
<td>Authentication – practices that construct an identity as something genuine, essential and/or true</td>
<td>Denaturalization – practices that construct an identity as something pretentious, non-essential, or untruthful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition-Marginalization</td>
<td>Authorization – practices of power that legitimate certain identities as “culturally intelligible”, acceptable</td>
<td>Illegitimation – practices of power that withhold validation and social acceptability from certain identities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the midst of the ongoing debate over the place of identity in language and sexuality research, I hold with those who see identity as playing a crucial role in how individuals think and speak about their sexual selves and sexual others. Kulick, along with Deborah Cameron, continue to push for researchers to make sexual desire the primary focus of study in language and sexuality, but the methods of linguistic anthropology (namely, ethnography of speaking and interactional discourse analysis), as well as those of anthropology in general do not lend themselves towards the examination of inner desire. I agree with Bucholtz and Hall that such an approach teeters close to psychoanalysis which anthropologists are neither qualified to perform on their subjects nor ethically should presume to be doing with the methods available to them. Furthermore, we have seen that sexual identities, while perhaps originally conceived as academic inventions to facilitate the categorization of subjects, can be productively considered as ideological resources available to individuals to
discursively construct their sexual selves according to the tactics of intersubjectivity described by Bucholtz and Hall. Thus, understanding the role of identities in the experiences of subjects and looking closer at linguistic practices that constitute identities, we can expect to find the live, instantiated dual workings of social power and individual agency in the construction of sexual identities (c.f. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992).

Narrative and Identity

The specific form of linguistic practice that I analyze in this paper is personal narrative, told in conversational interaction. A significant body of theory already exists that connects personal narrative to social identity. Much of this theory, however, has been more thoroughly applied in literary criticism and discourse analysis—nevertheless, because I am looking at narratives as instances of conversational speech rather than as printed text or other media artifact forms, I believe that the a synthesis of frameworks from language and sexuality studies and the older field of narrative and identity studies is possible, and that this synthesis will be highly productive. But first, two major concepts from the study of personal narrative that I wish to import into language and sexuality studies are narrative coherence (Linde 1993) and dialogic voicing (Menard-Warwick 2005; Bakhtin 1981).

Charlotte Linde’s “Life Stories” (1993) is cited widely in many works that analyze personal narratives as a window into social life and identity. Linde defines a life story as the collection of all stories told by an individual throughout her lifetime that are primarily about the teller, and that are tellable and retellable over a long period of time (21). Particular narratives, then, are parts of an individual’s overall life story, ready to be told at a reasonable request. And while some details of one’s life are expected to be tellable, others are not. Linde gives the contrasting examples of “Why are you a physicist?” and “Why are you blue-eyed?”—of course, only the former question would reasonably elicit a personal narrative about how one came to be in a certain profession. Linde also points out that “the particular conventions governing what can and cannot form part of a life story are obviously not universal” (10). She gives an example of the question “Why are you male?” as reasonable and intelligible within a Hindu ideological system that views being born a woman as a sign of sin in one’s past life.

For Linde, the main function of a personal narrative is to create and present a coherent self to others. She borrows the idea of coherence as it describes texts—that is, a coherent text is one whose various parts and components are seen as
being in proper relation to each other, and which is also a “recognizable and well-formed text of its type” (12). Similarly, tellers of personal narrative work to form their life experiences, values, relationships, and statuses into an orderly relationship to one another, and they must do so according to recognizable patterns and forms.

What does coherence actually look like in a told narrative? Linde provides many examples of which I will highlight several here. Coherence must be understood on two levels—first, the local level of the told narrative itself making sense between the teller and listener as it is being told; and second, the global level of systems of ideology that govern what makes sense and what does not. Linde describes the local level of coherence as “adequate causality” — “a chain of causality that is acceptable by addressees as a good reason for some particular event or sequence of events” (127). The global level she describes as “coherence systems” — “[discursive practices] that represent a system of beliefs and relations between beliefs; [they provide] the environment in which one statement may or may not be taken as a cause of another statement” (163).

In the following example, a woman is asked why she chose to become a full-time editor:

“Um, I always knew I could correct grammar fairly easily and mark things up and then from the first job I got it seemed interesting enough to stay in. . . . But it’s just, it was a natural evolution. I always was nitpicky, I was always good at grammar, um I like to correct things rather than create them. And I’m interested enough in reading and I like to spend time reading, that at least now that I’m on journals that are even vaguely interesting, it can be a lot of fun. . . . Yeah, it’s almost unbroken flow. Also, I mean, being with Bob [her former husband] and correcting, you know, working on Write-On magazine with the writers [a magazine that her former husband edited] I really enjoyed that” (131).

Linde adds that, “Her account is structured around the claim that her present profession is the result of a natural evolution, based on her character traits… [but] although she mentions [that her husband was a writer and editor], she does not use [this] as the basis for her explanation…” (131). This narrative highlights the idea that grammatical precision and a tendency to “correct things rather than create them” should “naturally” lead to a profession in letters. Linde considers this “common sense,” but I find it more useful to avoid familiarity in analysis and instead say that this narrative displays a coherence system wherein one’s vocation should follow from one’s inherent traits.
In another example, a musician tells Linde when and why he began to consider himself a musician by trade:

“…I kept changing you know ideas about what I was majoring in. but music was something that I had always done and it was great, a thread, you know, cause it, I had always played in bands since I was about 13 years old and had always made music and I just, and I was in a band at the time and just stopped and said ‘Wait a minute. I’m not going to be an anthropologist, I’m not going to teach uh you know, philosophy, and I’m not going to do any of these other things, you know, because this is what I’m already doing’”(135).

Linde remarks that, “For him, doing music goes very far back… Temporal depth is a very strong form of causality. One tenet of our common-sense view of the self is that an activity, an aptitude, or an ambition that goes back to early childhood must be seen as intrinsic to the self” (135). In other words, the musician’s narrative displays a coherence system that justifies profession through duration of personal experience.

Linde provides a constructed example to show how different coherence systems make different narratives make sense:

1a. How did you come to be an accountant?
2a. Well, I guess I have a precise mind, and I enjoy getting all the little details right.
2b. Well, my mother started toilet-training me when I was six months old. (164)

2a and 2b are both possible responses to the same question 1a. Linde’s point is that while 2a’s coherence relies on what she calls “common-sense beliefs”, 2b’s coherence requires that the listener be conversant in what she calls the “popular Freudian coherence system, which attributes the real causes of events to experiences in early childhood” (164).

As we have seen, coherence is the central organizing scheme that determines the ways in which people tell and understand their personal narratives. Linde takes care to add that just as the teller is forming a coherent narrative in conversation, “at the same time the addressee works to reach some understanding of it as a coherent text and to communicate that understanding” (12). Thus, the creation of coherence can be seen as a social process – coherence is not an inherent trait of disembodied stories. This implies as well that an analysis of personal narratives should take the teller’s attempts to create a coherent story as a key methodological filter through which to grasp the formative assumptions and ideologies that entered into the teller’s construction of her narrative. The
coherence of a teller’s narrative carries with it what the teller assumed to be
shared interpretive values and ideologies between himself and the listener. In the
case of this paper, it is the potential of personal narrative to provide a view to
these assumed shared ideologies that I find compelling as a method towards
understanding the notions tellers carry about the identities they claim through
their narratives.

Another useful concept for analyzing the place of ideologies in told narrative is
that of dialogic voicing. Its precedent term, dialogism, was first developed by
Bakhtin (1981) in his analysis of the construction of European novels. He noted
that writers (and indeed, anyone who creates text, written or otherwise)
represented entire ideologies in the quoted dialogue of individual characters
within their stories. As writers placed characters in conversation with one
another and sometimes with the writer herself (as the narrator), Bakhtin
observed in novels the negotiation and competition of multiple “social languages”
— that is, “specific points of view on the world, for conceptualizing the world in
words” (292, in Menard-Warwick, 535). Menard-Warwick (2005) develops this
idea for her analysis of personal narrative told to her by a Nicaraguan immigrant
woman living in California. The woman’s narrative contains herself, her
grandmother, and her uncle, and tells of her uncle’s decision to join the rebel
Sandinistas:

“I remember that time we saw him come in with a backpack and he started to put
everything in the backpack. And so then my grandma, his mom, says, Uh son, what are
you doing? So then, Oh, mom don’t you see that the trucks are leaving. I have to take
advantage of the chance to catch a truck, because I have to go fight. And she says to
him, And you, who are you going to fight if you don’t even know those people. And
they haven’t even called you. So then he says it doesn’t matter. It’s necessary to defend
the people so that those ones don’t get in here” (543).

We can clearly see two different ideologies presented in tandem in this narrative:
her uncle voices an ideology described by Menard-Warwick as “revolutionary
commitment”, while she and her grandmother voice an ideology of “family unity”
(548-49). Through these characters, she voices several perspectives on the social
change that engulfed her family. Note that whether or not the individuals
represented in the woman’s narrative actually espoused the ideologies they were
voiced to have is not at issue here. The important point is that told narratives
contain opportunities to give voice to what the teller perceives as competing
ideologies in her experience. Menard-Warwick theorizes that by employing
dialogic voicing, tellers of narrative ultimately convey their own perspective in
relation to these multiple discourses and their itinerant ideologies, and thus that
the telling of narratives are valuable as social locations where tellers cope with perceived social transgression. In the narratives I analyze in this paper, dialogic voicing is used heavily to present various opposed perspectives and belief systems, and the teller usually also provides an evaluation of these perspectives.

In summary, narrative coherence and dialogic voicing provide two powerful analytical lenses with which to see how individuals form their own stories and perspectives out of existing expectations, conventions, and ideologies. Individuals constantly create coherence as they tell their narratives, thereby invoking what they assume to be values and interpretive frameworks they share with those listening. Furthermore, individuals voice characters in their narratives as representatives of conflicting ideologies, thereby providing a basis for evaluation and negotiation between them.

Personal Narrative and Sexual Identity – A synthesis

All the trouble of locating and developing tools for analyzing narrative is necessary because narrative is a rich resource for tellers and listeners to establish and maintain social identities. Schiffrin (1996) makes the explicit connection between the telling of narrative and the formation of identity. Because identities, rather than being fixed, inherent traits of individuals who claim them, instead emerge out of social interaction, the telling of narratives within a conversation provides a resource where identities can be asserted by a teller. She writes that the self, “arises within conversation – dialogical action that, by its very nature, marks a place for the new locator who is being inducted into it.” Schiffrin adds that our “identities as social beings emerge as we construct our own individual experiences as a way to position ourselves in relation to social and cultural expectations” (169-70). In other words, narratives reconfigure the teller’s relationships with other characters and events in the story in terms of the identity he is implicating in his telling, as well as situating his experiences and beliefs in the context of the experiences and beliefs of others. Schiffrin writes that “roles are not viewed as properties of individuals alone: our roles and statuses are bound together by sets of reciprocal expectations and obligations about what to do, and about how and when to do it” (196).

I do not think that the reciprocity of identity construction should necessarily be surprising – though it is often ignored or understated in anthropological work on sexual identities. If we agree that social identities are constituted in social relations, it should follow that there exists a set of social practices where identities are typically articulated and negotiated. I have established here that the
telling of personal narratives is one such set of social practices where tellers frequently form and implicate claims to particular social identities. In describing the telling of identity narratives as a social practice, I make an explicit connection to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s original framework of communities of practice. Thus, I take the use of narrative to claim and maintain social identities as a practice that defines individuals as members of a so-identified social grouping. This view is especially helpful for understanding the telling of coming out narratives as acts that make and keep one a “member” of the gay and lesbian “community”. I also find this view helpful for keeping in mind in equal importance of differences in sexuality as well as relations between and within sexualities. In other words, differences in sexuality among individuals are not the only determinants of their claims to gay or lesbian identity – the application and manifestation of power both outside and within the gay and lesbian “community” mediates what it means for individuals to lay claim to membership.

The importance of considering power and structure as part of the process of an individual’s claim to an identity is made more pointedly by Davies (2005), who writes: “A superficial reading of communities of practice might suggest that individuals have the choice of which communities of practice they belong to… However, gaining legitimacy is prior to gaining access to practice” (567). Of course, what is considered “legitimate” varies from group to group, but Davies’ thrust is only that researchers keep an eye to factors that constrain the ways in which individuals gain access to membership. She makes a distinction between central and marginal modes of participation in any self-constituted social grouping, and encourages a linguistic examination both of constitutive practices as well as legitimating structures.

Fortunately, there already exists a framework for examining both sexuality differences (identities) and sexuality relations (power) in linguistic practices: the tactics of intersubjectivity framework put forth by Bucholtz and Hall [see table, page 107]. The tactics were proposed as a theory for organizing the wide variety of linguistic practices that implicate an individual’s sexuality. I find no reason why these same tactics cannot also be applied to an analysis of personal narratives for the ways in which they constitute and legitimate a teller’s claim to a gay or lesbian identity. It seems likely that adequation/distinction, authentication/denaturalization, and authorization/illegitimation would all be at play in personal sexuality narratives since, as I have discussed earlier, the telling of these narratives is constitutive of one’s sexual identity. Various tellings, voicings, and evaluations within a teller’s story can be understood as tactically responding to existing ideologies of sexuality and sexual identity.
Coming Out and Coming Out Stories

Coming out is the widely recognized term, used both by mainstream community members as well as researchers, for the acts of communication that make an individual’s claim to a sexual identity known to others – Weston (1991) coined an early academic definition of coming out that is still quite useful: “claiming a lesbian or gay identity for oneself and communicating that identity to others” (44). Liang (1997) provides a more linguistic definition of coming out as “a speech act that not only describes a state of affairs, namely the speaker’s gayness, but also brings those affairs, a new gay self, into being” (293). Chirrey (2003) expands from this definition into a sociolinguistic examination of coming out as a performativa speech act (c.f. Austin 1962) and describes two facets of coming out: “coming out to oneself” and “coming out to others”. The former is “a recognition, acknowledgement and acceptance of same-sex desire within the self”, while the latter is, of course, the publication of the same (Chirrey 26).

Coming out is also defined as a continuing process by which an individual publishes and maintains a gay or lesbian identity. Chirrey writes, “[It] would appear that the gay or lesbian sexual identity is a fragile construction that needs to be continually reiterated” (28). Additionally, Liang points out that because “[not] everyone can know, and therefore not everyone does, and the default assumption of heterosexuality remains in place”, lesbians and gays are “faced with the burden of having to decide with every interaction whether or not to self-disclose” (Liang 292-93). This means that coming out, as Wood (1997) puts it, “cannot be represented as a single event, like the day someone accepted religion into her life, but must be represented as a series of life-long experiences” (258).

If coming out is to be understood as both an act of publication of one’s claim to a sexual identity as well as a process by which this claim is maintained, it follows that coming out stories will describe specific instances of coming out as an act of speech, while also serving to further the process of coming out through their telling. Through it all, the focal point remains the maintenance of a gay or lesbian identity and the reconfiguration of the teller’s relationships and experiences through the lens of that identity – therefore, examining ideologies present in these narratives should reveal the teller’s perspective on what it means to have come out and to be coming out as well.

There seem to be relatively few studies of coming out stories themselves – most literature on coming out focuses on the communicative act of coming out rather than stories about coming out (though I find many authors carelessly confound the two). Liang (1997) uses a somewhat similar analytical approach as I do in her
study of Asian-American and European-American coming out stories. She takes coherence as a focal point from which to examine the coming out stories she collected, paying particular attention to the portions of participants’ stories describing how the teller came out to himself – that is, how he was able to “understand his life as both a moral person... and a gay person” (298). She finds that European-American coming out stories “portray a protagonist who attempts to reject or deny his gayness and who does so until some facet of his survival is at risk” (303). Liang’s Asian-American coming out stories lack any description of an internal conflict, and Asian-American tellers justify this “by having become aware of their attraction to members of the same sex before acculturation of knowledge of negative valuations of same-sex attraction” (305). Liang concludes that the “downplay” of “the inward-looking, coming-out-to-self component of the coming-out story” demonstrates as “adherence to the values of Asian culture, whether as a cultural predisposition to withhold expression of emotions or as a bypassing of certain presuppositions of Western culture” (307).

While I draw much inspiration from Liang’s use of narrative coherence to analyze coming out stories, I find her conclusions entirely deserving of the sorts of harsh criticism published by Kulick (2000) and others who oppose the study of sexual identity in linguistic practice. Her attribution of the differences in “Asian-American coming out stories” to “adherence to the values of Asian culture” is flawed methodologically and theoretically. In her methods, she presupposed the delineation of Asian-Americans as opposed to European-Americans, which likely affected the correlation of differences she encountered. Her theory for explaining the differences treats “Asian values” as a monolith, and even more problematically treats Asian-American attitudes towards “Asian values” as unmediated by other ideological systems the speakers may have contact with or access to.

Moreover, Liang’s very definition of coming out as making public “the speaker’s gayness” obfuscates two very different aspects of the act of coming out – on one hand, it can be considered a publication of one’s sexual desire for members of the same sex; on the other, it can be considered a claim to a lesbian or gay sexual identity. It is very important to establish from an anthropological perspective that these aspects need not be equivalent.

Ideologies of Sexual Desire and Sexual Identity

In the introduction to their edited volume on the proliferation and reinscription of American conceptions and language for sexual desire and
identity throughout the globe, Boellstorff and Leap (2004) write: “In some instances, [same-sex desires, subjectivities, and communities] are not named in local discourse. . . . There is no single term that completely embraces the wide range of sexual and gender diversities under discussion. For that reason . . . we [use] the word gay as a referential shorthand . . .” (4). In the same volume, Peña (2004) contrasts the U.S. basis for sexual identity organized by “sexual object” (e.g. a man desiring a man is identified as gay) with what she calls the Latin American sex system where “sexual aim” determines identity – here, the aim to penetrate a sexual partner is “masculine” while the desire or position of being penetrated is “feminine” (235). From these examples alone, we see that there is a problem with assuming that when a man discloses his desire for the same sex, he is necessarily claiming a “gay” identity. The force that equates the two is ideological, not essential.

The uncritical propagation in the literature of this equation of sexual desire with sexual identity seems to lie at the heart of Kulick and company’s objections to the current state of language and sexuality studies. More recent works seem to be more guarded against the unintended universalization of the American convention of making sexual desire the subject of social identity. I still do not accept Kulick’s wholesale rejection of identity in sexuality research, because as culturally limited and centralized as the notion of sexual identities may be, they are still pervasive modes of conceiving of sexual desire that are becoming increasingly accessible to more people around the world, as suggested by Boellstorff and Leap.

In this way, I argue for a shift from thinking about social identities as originating in differences between individuals towards the concept of identity as ideology. A similar argument is made by Bucholtz, Liang and Sutton (1999) who write that this view considers "not merely how speakers conform to an accepted or imposed ideology, but how they rebel against or subvert a powerful system of beliefs. Ideological systems, they write, “themselves exist as cultural constructs, subject to processes of change and revision by individuals and groups” (14). The notion of sexual identity should be foremost understood as an ideological system, complete with justifying logics and conventionalized norms that work to erase the distance between desire and identity. In the same way, coming out and the telling of coming out stories are actions and practices that draw upon ideologies of sexual identity to adequate, authenticate, and authorize the claims of tellers while simultaneously reinforcing the ideologies themselves. Thus, every telling of a coming out story that creates a coherent connection between one’s sexual desire and one’s claim to a sexual identity completes the process by which the
ideology of coming out both serves as a resource for questioning or oppressed individuals while also constraining the ways in which individuals think about and live out their sexual desires in public.

Summary of Methods and Analytical Perspective

I collected ten coming out narratives from ten individuals (eight men, two women) over the course of seven months in the 2006-07 academic year. My interviews were largely unstructured – I typically only asked something akin to “What was coming out like?” When necessary, I prompted a continuation or elaboration with a follow-up question based on what the informant had said so far. The interviews resulted in about nine hours of recorded dialogue, from which I transcribed over an hour and a half of sections I considered most relevant to my analysis – this is favorably comparable to amount of dialogue used in studies of similar length I have reviewed from the literature. Because my initial research goal was to examine the coming out experiences of multilingual gay and lesbian people, my inquiries yielded a proportion of ethnic minorities much greater than the actual proportion of minorities in the gay and lesbian population I know colloquially. Nevertheless, I do not take the race and ethnicity of my informants as a presupposed category during my analysis of their narratives, though I will analyze their own invocations of their race or ethnicity as dialogic oppositions in their stories. All personal names have been altered or redacted to protect confidentiality. In the footnote below is a guide to the conventions I use to transcribe my informants’ narratives, adapted from Linde (1993).¹

Narrative coherence and dialogic voicing lie at the center of the analytical frameworks I have developed for this paper. In the told narratives, these will most often appear as:

1. Justification or evaluation, contemporaneously or retrospectively, of the teller’s actions; or,

2. Quoted dialogue where the teller is voicing other people in his story.

¹Transcription Conventions . In excerpted transcripts, all emphases have been added:
( ) blank parentheses mean an unintelligible recording
(yes) filled parentheses are a “best guess” as to what the recording is saying
(1.5) a timed pause in speech, in seconds
(.) an untimed pause of roughly 0.5 to 1.0 seconds
, a short, untimed pause (roughly less than 0.5 secs)
//…// text between double-bars indicates brief interruptions or interjections that do not significantly disturb the speech of the person already speaking
[And] text in square brackets shows overlapping speech; sometimes, square brackets show non-speech sounds (like laughter)
But- dashes indicate an abrupt cut-off to the sound
Like colons show a sound being drawn out
Such locations within the narrative should also be places where the teller employs tactics of intersubjectivity to position herself towards or against various ideologies of sexual identity that she voices in her narrative. How do coming out stories manifest socially-held ideologies of sexual identity and coming out? How do individuals negotiate the contact between their own conceptions and perspectives on their sexualities and those that are constituent to the ideologies that frame most discussion of sexuality in the United States? In what ways do individuals align themselves with mainstream ideologies of coming out and sexual identity, and in what ways do they differentiate themselves from the same? These are the questions I will now explore by analyzing the coming out stories of my informants.

Ideologies of Sexual Orientation and Identity in Coming Out Stories

I found there to be four major strands of ideology invoked or implicated throughout the coming out narratives of my informants. They are the ideologies of: 1) the immutability of sexual orientation; 2) the importance of sexual orientation to the self; 3) the deceit or shame of not coming out; and 4) the liberating quality of coming out. I should also note that by referring to the immutability of sexual orientation as “ideology”, I am not using the term “ideology” in the critical sense to call into question or doubt whether sexual orientation is truly immutable. In fact, my use of the term “ideology” throughout this paper never means to affect or evaluate the veracity of whatever it is I attach it to – rather, I am merely drawing attention to the use of certain ideas as organizing principles towards and against which individuals craft their narratives and construct their identities.

The Ideology of the Immutability of Sexual Orientation

Ellis: Well I guess I sat her down when no one else was home and I was just like Oh mom, I'm gay. Heh, like I really didn't set it up or anything. And she's like Oh. And then she started crying, and then she started asking me if it was a phase or something and of course it isn’t / / AK: Mm-hmm. / / so, (1.4) and that was that. But then we don't really talk about it anymore. (Ellis 1)

In this example, Ellis is telling me about the exact situation where he first came out to his mother. Ellis describes his mother’s response as questioning whether his orientation might be a “phase”, and Ellis immediately evaluates this challenge by saying, “Of course it isn’t.” In this narrative, Ellis presents (through his mother’s voice) an ideology that views sexual orientation as malleable or shifting, but then declares (through his own voice) such an ideology false. Through this
narrative, we see that Ellis assumed the immutability of sexual orientation to be a shared ideological value between Ellis and myself:

Ben: And one thing that my sister said that also kind of (1.1) also pissed me off, like- it's just very weird- I expected my mom and my sister to be the easiest. And they ended up being the hardest. (.) My sister said, you know, she thought it was me coming to Seattle that did it. She thought Seattle changed me // AK: Yeah. // because they promote it here // AK: Yes yeah totally. // and, whatever (Ben 5)

Ben is describing the reaction of his sister to a letter he wrote her telling her he is gay – from the start, he says that her reaction “pissed [him] off.” Then he gives a summary of what his sister’s reaction was – that is, her thinking that Ben’s new environment in Seattle “changed” him. That Ben would tell of such a reaction and his being upset about it shows that the ideology of the immutability of sexual orientation is taken to as a shared resource between him and me, his listener. Without this ideological frame, his narrative lacks coherence:

Ben: And so I was talking to my mom about this and how frustrating it was for me (.) everything that was going on, and she said “Well why is this frustrating for you? Are you afraid that it's changing your feelings about things?” // AK: Right. // And I knew exactly what she was talking about, // AK: Yeah. // you know? (Ben 5)

Similarly, Ben later tells of himself talking to his mother on the telephone about a female classmate who had just expressed to Ben that she had had romantic feelings towards him, despite the fact she knew of his sexual orientation. Here he voices his mother’s response to his frustration – she asks him two questions that ostensibly seem to contain no threatening language, and which could perhaps even be described as vague and unspecific as to their subject. And yet Ben tells me that he “knew exactly what she was talking about” as his evaluation of his mother’s questions. What’s obvious between Ben and myself here is the constant presence of the ideology of the immutability of sexual orientation, where any statement of suggestions contrary to this ideology (here in the form of his mother’s dialogically voiced question that suggests the possibility of change) is immediately “known” as a challenge to the teller:

Richard: I'm definitely as frank as I possibly can be, // AK: Right. // with like my sexuality with them. // AK:Yeah. // That it is non-negotiable. Because- because to me- it's because I think if there's any room for negotiation like, it's gonna be the end of me. You know? (Richard 4)

In another coming out story, Richard is going into detail about how he usually talks about his sexuality with his parents. He stresses that unless he leaves no
room for “negotiation” on his sexuality, “it’s gonna be the end” of him. This statement’s coherence depends on the teller and listener being aware of the ideology that the assertion of a gay self has failed if the people one has come out to still hold to the possibility that one’s orientation could change. These are four examples of many where the ideology of the immutability of sexual orientation was present in the coming out stories of my informants. All the narratives I collected authorized and authenticated tellers’ claims to a gay or lesbian identity by a common appeal to the ideology of immutability – there were no instances of negative tactics around this ideology.

The Ideology of the Importance of Sexual Orientation to the Self

The next major ideological strand I found in my informants’ narratives was the ideology of the importance of sexual orientation to the self – that is, the conception that sexual orientation takes up an essential, even central place in one’s total self. Unlike the ideology of immutability, I found that my informants employed both positive and negative tactics with respect to this ideology – some adequated their personal perspectives in alignment with the ideology of importance, while others distincted their perspectives by repudiating this ideology:

Ben: Cause coming out to my family, trust was sort of a given, but it wasn't about- it wasn't ever about trust with my family, it was about my family knowing who I was. And (.) // AK: Wow. // you know, if my immediate family doesn't know all of me, (1.0) that's- that's what I had a problem with // AK:Yeah. // you know, and that was- that's what it was always about. (Ben 4)

Ben’s statement that coming out would enable his family to know “who [he] was” implies that before they are aware of his sexual orientation, they in fact do not know who he is. The reorganization of “knowing” versus “unknowing” in this narrative is coherent only by drawing upon the ideology of importance – thus, we see that Ben holds this ideology to be shared between himself and his listener:

Tim: And, it's kinda like immanent feeling where I feel like if I miss this chance I'm never going to be able to face myself or face my parents and you won't be able to be completely whole yet. So it was really dire. I was like "eerrr", You know, I need to do this like as soon as possible. (Tim 1)

Like Ben, Tim adequates his own perspective on the importance of his sexual orientation in this narrative. His narrative implies that sexual orientation makes
him “completely whole” — it reflects an ideology that views the individual as composed of essential components of which sexual orientation is one:

Richard: I'm just their son that happens to be // AK: Uh-huh. // like, that happens to have this very very small part of yourself be different. (.) I- I think w- [coughs] in a very serious discussion, when you spell out the word 'gay' it's almost like (1.1) you're forcing yourself into a- into a little box, into all these (1.4) // AK: Hm. // into all these things that like (2.3) that doesn't have anything to do with you, you know? (Richard 2)

In clear contrast to Ben and Tim above, Richard distinguishes his views on the centrality of his sexual orientation from the ideology of importance. Here, he is telling me why he does not like to use the word “gay” whenever he talks about his sexuality with his family — he is explaining his strategy of reducing his sexuality to a near-triviality. He describes his attraction to the same sex as “simple”, simultaneously casting his parents’ various objections as overly complicated, unnecessary, and confusing:

Steve: Like everybody's just like, “Oh, there's a cool gay guy!” // AK: (laughs) // “[Steve]- [Steve]'s so cool, cool, he's the coolest gay guy I know.” Be-be-be-beh. And it's just like, (.) it felt weird because it's like, “You know, fuck you, you know? I'm not just only some gay dude.” (Steve 1)

In Steve’s narrative, he is telling me about the initial reaction of many of his peers in high school after he came out — while he voices them as being ostensibly accepting of his gay identity, Steve voices his evaluative response: “fuck you I’m not just some gay dude.” It might seem his response is incoherent and undeserved — after all, Steve does identify himself as a gay man, and his peers have seemed to accept him as one. But Steve’s response is understood coherently within an ideology that views one’s sexual orientation as a relatively minor or insignificant part of one’s larger self — therefore, by telling his narrative this way, he clearly makes a distinction between his opinion of the essentiality of his sexual orientation to his self and the ideology of importance.

The Ideology of the Deceitful or Shameful State of Not Coming Out

The third ideological framework I found running through the narratives I collected is a logical consequence of the first two I have already discussed and given examples for — if sexual orientation is both an immutable trait of an individual and also a very important component of one’s larger self, it reasonably follows that not making one’s sexual orientation known to others would be
indicative of deceit or shame on the part of the “closeted” same-sex attracted person. Here too, I found that my informants expressed a spectrum of perspectives about this ideology, some authenticating and adequating the importance of their coming out experiences by citing the feelings of deceit and shame they felt before coming out, while others illegitimated or distincted the disclosures of their sexual orientations to others in opposition to the ideology of deceit and shame.

In the following excerpt, Ben is concluding a story about an instance where he needed to counteract suspicions that he might be attracted to other men – in the story, his sister had earlier that day discovered him browsing gay pornography on the internet, and she had told his parents. Here, he has been confronted by his mother after he convinced his father for the time that he was not attracted to men:

Ben: And um, she's like, you know, if- (1.3) if you're gay, you can tell me, it's okay. An::(1.0) I was so close, to telling her then. (1.0) So very close. But (1.0) what (.) what my dad said scared me so much that I just couldn't. // AK:Yeah. // And so, I made up another, like, a different bullshit story [laughs] that she bought. Because she, deep down, wanted to buy something that was not the truth. (Ben 2)

I find this narrative to clearly embody the ideology that not coming out is deceitful or shameful – Ben’s own evaluation of his attempt to dissuade his mother that he is attracted to other men as “bullshit” reveals the ideology of deceit at work and also shows an authentication of his gay identity by a narrative appeal to this ideology:

Paul: And then the other thing I decided too was that, if I was gonna date someone, I actually just don’t wanna lie to my parents about it. (. ) Cause I knew, like (. ) like every time I went out, you know- I could just this- Hey like oh 1- I'm, hanging out with AJ or whatever. And, they probably would never guess // AK:Yeah. // anything and like, it would be fine, // AK:Yeah. // but, you know I- I wanted them to know. Because then-then like if I told them later, then there would never, my parents are very much about trust and like, they would feel that that's a really big affront to their trust. // AK: Totally. // And, and so they would basically kinda never trust me again like, is he really telling us the truth // AK: No. // now, or all these things. (Paul 1)

Paul’s first statement in this narrative draws on the ideology of deceit to draw a coherent link between dating another man and lying to his parents. He narrates a scenario where he finds he could potentially carry on a romantic relationship with another man, but counters this possibility with his view that it would irreparably damage the trust between he and his parents. It is important not to view sexual practice and public knowledge as a “natural” issue of trust and
honesty – it is an ideology of sexual behavior that makes one’s sexual practice a legitimate subject of disclosure and knowledge to intimate others. In this case, the ideology of deceit and shame justifies Paul’s choice to tell his parents about his attraction and activity rather than carrying on in private:

Tim: It’s that () guilt inside you that says hey you know if they have given you everything they can, (1.3) why are you trying to hide such an important thing from them?  (Tim 1)

As a final example of authentication and adequation around the ideology of deceit, Tim cites a guilt he felt before he had come out to his mother, and in the telling of his narrative here, he construes not coming out as a negation of “[everything] they have given you” – by doing so, he implies that not coming out is not only a deceit, but also a betrayal. Notice also his use of the universal “you” – in linguistics such universalized particles are called “deictics” and are often associated with statements meant to be generalizable beyond the individual who speaks them:

Richard: With my parents it was definitely like I am protecting you from something. Good. Like, I would’ve sooner had them die. // AK: Huh. // But, my- my mom found out about it. So, it was out of my control. I was pretty enraged actually. I was like I put-I took all this effort, y- y- you know? To try // AK: Uh-huh. // to like hide myself from you because I wanted to protect you. (.) //AK: Uh-huh. // So you wouldn't y- so you wouldn't be disappointed in me. I'm your only son. I'm the only person carrying your name. (1.6) //AK: Uh-huh. Yeah. // And uh, yeah. No. It was definitely not deceitful. //AK: Yeah. // Much more like it's for your own good. (Richard 5)

Richard is one of several informants whose sexual orientations became known to their families unintentionally – here, he justifies his intention to hide his sexual practice from his parents perpetually. Far from seeing this as deceitful (an ideology he even explicitly repudiates at the end of the excerpt), he considers himself to be “protecting” his parents from knowledge that, in his perspective, would be worse to them than dying. Richard’s narrative makes a sharp distinction between his perspective and more common ideas that what he tried to do was deceitful – instead, I find that the narrative coherence of his choices draws on an ideology of self-reliance and containment of personal issues that may cause burden on others.
The Ideology of the Liberating Quality of Coming Out

Analogous to the ideology of deceit is the ideology of the liberating quality of coming out – certainly, if not coming out is a state of deceit or shame, it seems reasonable that coming out would be imbued with values of liberation and self-expression against odds. Because the ideology of liberation is so closely related to the ideology of deceit, I will present three examples from the narratives at once – it is easy to see how they manifest this ideology in interaction:

Steve: And so: coming out to my family at first was, it was just like you know, my nephews and nieces I got like ten of them and uh, the older ones that are like 19 or 20 and 21, they understand it, like, the, man we see you know? We know, we were just waiting for you to come out blah-blah-blah-blah, you know? // AK: Yeah. // I was like, oh fine, you know, whatever. And so once I came out to them, it was so much easier to just be myself around my family. (Steve 1)

Ben: So like, midnight (.) on like a Friday night, I went downstairs [laughs] to Lander, walked over to Terry to the blue mailbox [laughs] dropped them in-

AK: And once you do it, you can't take it [back.]

Ben: [Yeah.] It was the weirdest feeling because it was like a weight was dropped // AK: Yeah. // with those letters being dropped in the mailbox but it was also, like, I knew I couldn't go back. Like it was, it was done and I had to deal with it whatever happens. (Ben 4)

Andrew: I feel good. I mean- // AK: Yeah. // noth- there's nothing to hide now. I mean- nothing to hide from my parents. Because everything I talked to my- every time I tell my parents like I'll just feel like there's something- something I'm hiding from them, you know. I haven't ta- I haven't been honest with them. // AK: Mm-hmm. // And ( ) I'm just kinda tired of that. (.) Like Dad asking me like When I'm gonna get marrie::d, when am I- when am I having grandkids. All the time. (Andrew 2)

Andrew, Steve, and Ben each implicate the ideology of the liberating power of coming out in order to make their narratives coherent. Within this ideology, Steve’s feelings of new ease around his family are adequately caused by his coming out to them. The ideology of liberation provides coherence to Ben’s narrated feeling that a weight was dropped, and Andrew’s statement that “there’s nothing to hide now” incorporates at once the ideology of the importance of his sexual orientation, the deceit of hiding it, and the liberation of revealing it. Steve, Ben, and Andrew all adequate, authenticate, and authorize their claims to a gay identity by positively aligning their experiences towards the ideology of liberation.
Some informants did not say anything in their narratives that involved the ideology of liberation. A few actually repudiated this ideology, justifying their decisions not to come out. Here, Kate is telling me why she would not have come out to her family if she had not been coerced to by a schoolmate:

Kate: Well (1.2) no it was just kind of like you know, I didn't wanna mess anything up. Like you know / / AK: Yeah. / / I knew my high school friends, after two or three years I could choose never to see them again but,

AK: Not your sister.

Kate: Not my little sister. (1.9) And so that was it. I was never gonna come out to my parents. I decided I was never ever gonna come out to my parents. (Kate 2)

She reports a much different perspective on the ideology of liberation – in her narrative, she says she decides not to come out to her parents because she doesn’t “wanna mess anything up.” She explains that while she has the freedom to dissociate from high school friends to whom she is already out, she cannot dissociate from her family. Thus, she constructs a narrative coherence wherein she is actually more liberated before coming out than afterwards.

Other Ideological Systems at Work

There were several other coherence ideologies I noticed in multiple narrative accounts – I will briefly highlight some examples of each.

Non-acceptance as Ignorance: In this narrative, Kate is telling me how she continues today to attempt to gauge how her parents are feeling about her and her sexual identity. She rarely asks her parents directly – instead, she described how she brought up current events or friends’ stories to force her parents to give their perspective on them:

Kate: So I mentioned that, () Oh, yeah, one of my friends, um, (1.5) said that, like, he really wanted to give blood but he can't because if you're a man and you've had sex with another man since seventy-seven, um, you can't. And my dad's like, "Well, that seems reasonable." And I'm like, “If you've had unprotected sex if a prostitute you can give blood within a year." () “Well, yeah, but you're more likely to catch it from a man.” I'm like, "But, you're… not…" [laughter] It's weird cause he’s really smart, and he's... (1.2) I don't know, I just totally don't understand any of this. (1.1) And how they can be so hypocritical about me. (1.0) And it's- they're like, "Oh Kate, it doesn't matter who you love, we love you." (1.0) And then they just stop talking about it, at all, and... (1.6) It's really weird. (Kate 6)
Kate finds her father’s opinion about the blood-giving ban against men who have sex with men incompatible with his professed support of her. What is interesting is that she constructs her father’s perspective as “weird” by placing her characterization of him as “really smart” in opposition to his opinions and “hypocritical” stance towards her. The ideological frame that makes this construction coherent equates one’s non-acceptance of another’s coming out to ignorance or low education level. This frame is present also in Paul’s narrative, where he is explaining to me why his mother’s reaction to his coming out was relatively less receptive than the reaction of his father:

Paul: And um, (1.2) and, I mean- she... (1.0) she went to a school that was entirely run by nuns all her life until she came to college, here at the U-dub. And, she's a devout Catholic but- you know, the other- the- I guess actually my mom is pretty conflicted because she's also a scientist, and she's just- she's very smart. And like, so, there must be weird things about that for her life. But, () so she was kind of upset. (2.7) She cried a little bit. But not like overwhelmingly. (Paul 2)

The Inherent Conservatism of Asian Culture: The majority of my informants were of Asian-American ethnicity. My original research plan was to examine the unique meanings and tactics of Asian-American gays and lesbian had for coming out to others – most of my appeals for informants therefore requested that those interested be “multilingual.” This became less important when, after reviewing the stories, the presence of ideologies in coming out stories became more salient as an analytical approach. Still, I think an identity-as-ideology approach is still productive as a way to see how ethnicity is voiced in the coming out stories of some Asian-American informants.

In this example, Winnie is explaining her parents’ reaction to finding out that she is attracted to women:

Winnie: And cause um, my dad's a doctor so he has a- he has these clinic- you know like doctors in Asian countries are kind of um, is conservative, and hard working (. ) kind of figure? Right? My dad's one of them, and, so, but like doctors have, like, I think, have high, like, social status // AK:Yeah. // there. Right? / / AK:Yeah. // And, like, you have like all these people around like look up to you respect you.
AK: Everyone, [yeah.]
Winnie: [Yeah] and,
Winnie: And my mom's a professor in Taiwan // AK: Uh-huh. // so they- they are kinda like okay so we have all these people who respect us, and how are they gonna see us if my daughter is gay? // AK: Uh-huh. // Yeah. (Winnie 2)

What is significant here is that Winnie's narrative employs a explanation for her parents’ reaction to her coming out that is not available to my informants who are not Asian – she invokes what I call the ideology of the inherent conservatism of Asian culture as a coherence system that adequately justifies her parents’ rejection of her claim to a lesbian identity. In another instance, Steve is telling me about the difficulties some of his family members have had in understanding his claim to a gay identity:

Steve: And I'm just like Look, I don't want to be a girl, I- I don't want to go change my sex, I don't want this and that, I don't want boobs, you know? // AK: [chuckles] // It's just who I am. // AK: Uh-huh. // I like () being with men. // AK: Uh-huh. // You know what I'm saying? () And so () it's hard for them to understand that because coming from um, our culture, uh, the Khmer culture you know? They don't even () have () they don't, they don't even have that, branch of (1.2) what is it. They don't understand what homosexuality is. (Steve 2)

As with Winnie, Steve draws from the ideology of Asian conservatism to explain the non-acceptance of some of his family. This ideology makes it coherent for him to state that “they don’t understand what homosexuality is” after giving no description of them besides that they are “coming from [the Khmer culture]”.

The use of this ideology may be indicative of an interactional environment that routinely accepts such monolithic and stereotypical drawings of an entire nationality’s political and social ideology. Alternatively, the use of this ideology by some of my Asian-American informants may reflect their position as continually engaging the intersection of their Asian and gay identities. This point will require more investigation than I am able to give here.

The Normal Coming Out Story

Most of my informants, at some point in the course of their narratives, directly or indirectly made reference to a “typical” or “normal” course of events surrounding one’s coming out to one’s family. The notion that there is a normal course for coming out is, obviously, an ideological tenet. I relate it more generally to what Rasmussen (2004) calls the “narrativization of gay and lesbian life where people are constructed as having no agency in the adoption of their sexual identity” – she writes that notions of what coming out should look like and
feel like have pigeonholed same-sex attracted people into having relatively similar stories and experiences about coming out (146). Thus, coming out stories can be thought of as a veritable “genre” of life narrative of which there are “good” and “bad” examples. Many of my informants showed an awareness of the “coming out story genre” in the course of their own stories.

In the next excerpt, Sean is concluding the narrative of how his entire family came to find out that he was bisexual after he accidentally mistook his brother for a female cousin (who he had already come out to privately) in an online chat and made a reference to his boyfriend at the time. His brother immediately began to tell various members of his immediate and extended family:

Sean: And he also called one of my cousins who he's really close to in Spokane where my dad's whole side of the family lives and so everyone knew. And by the next morning my mom found out. You know? So I didn't really have to come out to anyone. I guess my brother and um, word of mouth did that job for me. So the coming out process was really easy. Like I didn't have to like face anyone, sit them down and do whatnot. // AK: Yeah. // Um. (Sean 1)

Sean concludes his story by describing it as “easy”, and summarizes it with “I didn’t have to face anyone, sit them down and do whatnot”. This summary would only follow his narrative coherently under an ideology of the normal coming out story, which, as Sean alludes to, involves a personal confrontation, often sitting down. In fact, that Sean says that because he himself did not initiate the interactions by which his family learned he was bisexual, he actually “didn’t really have to come out to anyone”:

Ellis: I mean I guess- everyone- there’s- (1.2) everyone has sorta like a similar story. Everyone just sorta prays that they aren’t (1.3) // AK: Mm-hmm. // like that they’ll change and hope- but (1.0) you find out after a while that it doesn’t and then (.) you watch TV and you- you watch some Oprah special and you’re like Oh it's normal after all. One tear. // AK: [laughs] // And then you- // AK: Right. // you watch like Will and Grace and you’re like Oh: (.)You know. // AK: [laughs] // ( )You know, I mean, I'm not like that but-

AK: Yeah right. [laughs]

Ellis: I guess it’s sort of okay. [laughs] // AK: Yeah, right. // So. (1.5) It becomes more and more normal and I guess- (1.2) // AK: Hm. // or it feels more normal, but. // AK: Hm. // (Ellis 6)
Here, Ellis is actually narrating his own process of at one point being “in denial” about his sexual orientation and then eventually accepting it. But rather directly summarizing the process he himself went through, he appeals to a pattern that he supposes “everyone” goes through. Where Sean’s narrative shows a genre awareness of how the act of coming out should look, Ellis’ narrative shows a genre awareness of how coming out should be internalized and felt within an individual.

Genre awareness and the ideology of the normal coming out story that presupposes it show that my informants are all cognizant and conscious of socially-held values and norms for what it means to be attracted to the same sex, what an individual with such an attraction should do, and how to think of oneself as a same-sex attracted person. My informants’ coming out stories were constructed with these values and norms as the stage – as I have shown, some stories positioned themselves positively towards these ideologies, while others were negative.

The Mainstream Coming Out Ideology

To summarize the results so far, the four major ideological strands (immutability, importance, deceit, and liberation) I found in my informants coming out narratives served as resources for creating coherence within their stories. Additionally, the coherence they created did not always affirm and uphold the ideologies positively – sometimes my informants constructed narratives that tactically positioned their claims to a gay or lesbian identity in opposition or negation of these ideologies (with the exception of the ideology of immutability, which no one repudiated).

Even a cursory search for “coming out” on an internet search engine results in a slew of existing ideologies about what coming out should be. The Human Rights Campaign, a major lesbian and gay advocacy group, devotes an entire section of its website to coming out. For instance, here is an excerpt from a section of their website entitled “Deciding to Tell Others”:

Being brave doesn’t mean that you’re not scared. It means that if you are scared, you do the thing you’re afraid of anyway. Coming out and living openly as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or as a straight-supportive person is an act of bravery and authenticity. Whether it’s for the first time ever, or for the first time today — coming out may be most important thing you will do all day.

Opening up to the possibility that you may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or even just questioning means opening up to the idea that you’re on a path that’s your
own. It’s also why coming out and living ever more openly is a profoundly liberating experience.

Most people come out because, sooner or later, they can’t stand hiding who they are anymore. They want their relationships to be stronger, richer, more fulfilling and authentic.

Once we do come out, most of us find that it feels far better to be open and honest than to conceal such an integral part of ourselves.

We also come to recognize that our personal decision to live openly helps break down barriers and stereotypes that have kept others in the closet. And in doing so, we make it easier for others to follow our example (A Resource Guide to Coming Out)

Reading some of the Human Rights Campaign’s statements on coming out, I find a striking similarity to their ideological positions and the ideologies of sexual orientation and coming out I found in the narrative data I analyzed. The four ideological strands I found lead to the logical conclusion that one should, in all circumstances and as soon as possible, come out. They also provide a set of principles by which to justify a claim to a gay or lesbian sexual identity.

Furthermore, the genre awareness I demonstrated earlier then indicates the strong possibility that my informants (and perhaps many other same-sex attracted people) are acquiring ideologies of coming out from mainstream organizations such as the HRC.

Therefore, I will refer to the set of ideologies of coming out that I have been discussing at length as “the mainstream coming out ideology.” I will return to a critique of the mainstream ideology later – first, I would like to show some examples of conflicting ideologies and how they are managed in narrative.
Steve told me the story of his nightlife experience on a trip to Cambodia while he was working with a safe-sex education organization. During this narrative, he voices two very different ideologies for understanding sexual desire – his own, through which he identifies as “gay”, and the ideology of the “girls” at the bars and nightclubs he visits with his male colleagues which sees him as deceptive and deliberately avoiding their interest by making what to them is an obviously false claim to a gay identity. Steve says this is because he is not “flamboyant or girly”. He says that eventually, women at nightclubs came to understand that he was not sexually interested in them. In this dialogically voiced narrative, Steve articulates a conflict between his coming out ideology (which views coming out as an act of forthrightness and honesty) and the ideology of the people in Cambodia he tried to come out to, for whom the notion of claiming a same-sex desiring identity had to be linked to an ostensible desire to be female. Steve places himself as a mediator between the mainstream coming out ideology and the ideology he encounters in Cambodia – he claims a gay identity, but also rejects being “flamboyant or girly”.

In this next excerpt, Tim is narrating the moments after he told his mother that he didn’t “want to date girls” – he had just made a point to me about avoiding the use of the word “gay” due to its negative connotations in Mandarin:

Tim: And so, and my mom was like, (1.5) "Oh, so: are you telling me that you're, like, you're sexual orientation is gay?" So she actually used the word instead of me. // AK: Really? // Yeah. And I was like, "Um, yeah, and I don't really know how to say it." And she's like, "Well, but, but you have to change it." She's like, "But you have to change it. It's, you know, it's not normal. And, you know, and you know how much expectations your- you know, the family has of you and stuff." I'm like, "I know that and that's why I- why I say I just couldn't tell you guys because I don't want to disappoint you." And, my mom's like, "Well, you know, it's okay. Like, don't worry about it, we'll go see a counselor or something." And I'm like, "Mom, I don't think counseling is going to help.

270
I know myself well enough to know that's not the problem.” (1.1) My mom's like, “Well, maybe there's like (1.3) some master in Taiwan or China that they can do something to fix you.” (1.5) I'm like, “Um, yeah, Mom I don't think going into any religion will be able- or any practices will be able to- you know, solve it because it's not a problem. It's not a disease, it's not, you know, it's not a curse. It's nothing of that sort.” (Tim 1)

Tim voices two very strong ideological systems in conflict with one another in his narrative. We see the clear influence and presence of the mainstream coming out ideology, particularly the ideology of the immutability of sexual orientation and the ideology of the deceit of not coming out (by the fact that Tim told his mother he was attracted to men even though he told her that he didn’t “really know how to say it”). But equally present is the ideology represented by the words of his mother, which sees Tim’s newly claimed sexual identity as a psychological or medical condition that must be remedied. Tim voices his mother as telling him not to “worry” because they could “go see a counselor or something” – in this voicing, Tim shows the pervasiveness of the ideology he sees himself coming out in opposition. What follows is a dialogic exchange which concludes with his definitive statement that his sexual orientation is “not a problem” – a direct challenge to the ideology voiced in his mother.

In the final dialogic negotiation I analyze here, Winnie is telling me about the conversation she had with her father (a medical doctor in Taiwan) after he discovered she was attracted to women when he walked into a room where she was watching a movie with a girlfriend:

Winnie: [So he'll be like], yeah, he's like, “I know those lesbian patients. I know those homosexual patients. You are not like them.”

AK: Oh really?

Winnie: Yeah my dad is- m- m- my- dad said, he's like (1.1) “If you were, like, homosexual, like, you would like, like you would be attracted to, you- you'll want to have sex with an- any girls you want to. But you are not like that.” The- like cause I- I- I said, said that, “Well, I have a lot of, like girlfriends too. And like, they stay over but it's not like I want to have sex with them all the time.” And he said, “Yeah. That's why I said you are not homosexual.”

AK: Oh great, so you're not a [maniac.]

Winnie: [Yeah.] // AK: Uh-huh. // And he's like, like “I'm a guy, right? Like, if I'm, like with a girl, like with a woman // AK: Uh-huh. // like in one room, and the light is dim:ed, and like the- if the environment is right, like I might do something wrong. I don't know. Cause it's biological. It's- it's you know, desire, it's your sexual drive. But you don't have that. (.) It's not like that for you.” So I'm like, So you want to tell you
that, like, I want to have sex with girls all the time? So that you'll believe that // AK: Huh. // I'm lesbian? So weird.  (Winnie 3)

Even though Winnie did not intend to come out to her parents, she voices herself as representing the importance and validity of her sexual orientation — her objective in this exchange is to defend her claim to a lesbian identity. In this way, we can see that she voices herself as a representative of the mainstream coming out ideology. Winnie also voices a very strong opposition to her ideology in the dialogue of her father, who insists that “lesbian patients” are defined by women with hyperactive sexual drives. Like Steve, Winnie’s narrative places herself as a mediator between the mainstream ideology she voices herself and the medicalized ideology she voices through her father. She concludes that her father will only believe she is lesbian if she asserts that she has the “symptoms” of his lesbian “patients.”

Conclusion

I have now demonstrated the presence of multiple ideologies in the coming out narratives of my informants — they are present as resources and interpretive frameworks by which tellers create coherence in their life stories, and they are present in dialogic voicings that negotiate conflicts between multiple systems of meaning the teller finds himself in. The creation of coherence and the dialogic negotiation that occurs in my informants’ narratives are exactly the sites where their individual claims to lesbian or gay identities are constructed and maintained through the both positive and negative tactics of intersubjectivity.

It is important to consider critically the social categories that are often taken for granted in other spheres such as popular media and politics, and I find that the analysis of the narratives by which people claim membership in these categories is a fruitful way to make such considerations. My informants’ narratives show a wide variation in how they position themselves in relation to the mainstream coming out ideology — as we have seen, some deviate little or not at all, while other distance themselves greatly. What matters, though, is that these ideologies do not simply exist in a canonized state — they emerge through conversation and interaction, where consequently, they are sometimes changed and reinterpreted. If the ideologies that drive coming out and the coming out process can be seen as social constructions, then so should we regard critically the entire institution of coming out as a practice. There is a significant diversity of perspectives on what coming out means, despite there being no acknowledgement of this diversity in
the articulations of the mainstream coming out ideology by organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign.

Others have made similar observations. Snider (1996) writes that the coming out discourse constructs “not coming out” as “a crime [that] calls into question everything from one’s sexual identity to one’s responsibility to the lesbian and gay community” (297). She supposes that such forces coerce some queer people (especially people of color) into “the articulation and unnegotiable acceptance of the ‘outing’ discourse” (299). Similarly, Rasmussen (2004) writes that “[w]hen coming out discourses are privileged, the act of not coming out may be read as an abdication of responsibility” (146). She argues that the dominance and self-justifying power of coming out ideologies often ignore that they are “inevitably mediated by the particular bodies that are engaging in these discourses” and that “people’s ability to continuously negotiate their identity is necessarily mediated by varying circulations of power relating to age, family background, economic positions, and race” (144, 147). For these and other critics, coming out is a constraining gateway through which prospective gays and lesbians must pass through before gaining legitimate claim to a gay or lesbian identity.

The narratives of my informants demonstrate that individuals hold a profuse number of meanings on why, how, and if they should make their sexual orientations a social fact. Some of these meanings are derived from personal experience, while others are acquired through media and social sources. As with any practice that draws on a social ideology, coming out exists as a manifestation of institutionalized power that regulates who belongs and who does not. For this reason, politics and studies of sexual identity must take care to acknowledge and account for the multiplicity of understandings that occurs at the intersection of social ideologies and individual agency. The mainstream coming out ideology facilitates an individual’s entry into a highly structured notion of what it means to claim a sexual identity, so academics and activists should keep an eye to deconstructing the hegemonic power of this ideology.

At the same time, however, the mainstream coming out ideology provides a powerful resource by which individuals can invent and uphold novel social positions for themselves in situations where existing discourse would otherwise silence them. The utility of the mainstream coming out ideology as a resource for self-identification and resistance to dominant moral values is seen clearly in the examples of dialogic negotiation I discussed earlier. The tellers of the narratives voiced themselves as representatives of the mainstream coming out ideology in opposition to whatever counter-ideology they found themselves
reacting against. For these (and I expect many) individuals, gay or lesbian identity serves as a tool and resource by which they craft previously impossible sexualities. Criticisms of sexual identity and the coming out imperative often overlook the creative potential that ideologies of identity provide for individual agents who face an otherwise monolithic system of sexual meaning. Therefore, just as I advocate for academics and activists to keep an eye towards deconstructing the hegemony of the coming out ideology, I also implore them to respect and acknowledge how coming out ideologies are, for many individuals, paths to new forms of social participation that would otherwise not have existed at all.

Implications and Future Directions

Giddens (1984) proposed the duality of structure as a framework for relating social praxis (speech and action) to social theory (belief and ideology) – in Giddens’ view, neither praxis nor theory serves as the foundation for the other. Instead, they simultaneously constitute each other in the midst of lived and meaningful human experience. Much has been made of the concept of structural duality in sociology and anthropology, but I have not encountered many examinations of the mechanics of structural duality.

This paper ultimately should be regarded as a study of structural duality as it affects sexual identities. Other authors have established all social identities as constructs that emerge in social interaction – from here, it follows easily that identities are mediated on one hand by ideological systems and on the other hand by the individuals who claim them. The mainstream coming out ideology is a complete ideological system that governs the access to and meaning of sexual identities, but as I have demonstrated, it is individual agents who draw upon this system to understand and participate in sex. Ideologies are not canonical manuals from which individuals follow precise instructions as to the formation of their identities, nor are identities wholly subject to whatever claims and assertions an individual chooses to make about them. Ideology, identity, and individuals exist in a co-constituting relationship where each affects the others at all times. This is what I have endeavored to demonstrate by analyzing coming out narratives as unique sites of cultural production where ideologies, identities, and individual agencies are woven together by the demands of coherence and negotiated through dialogic voicings.

As noted by others (Linde 1993; Schiffrin 1996; Menard-Warwick 2005), coherence and dialogism are the properties of narrative that make them so useful
as a window into more fully understanding the mechanism of structural duality in the lived experience of people. This implies that the study of identity narratives and life stories can be extended to other types of self-claimed identities. Even the tactics of intersubjectivity, although developed for the analysis of sexual identity in language use, can be applied to analyze individual claims to a wide array of identities, be they related to religion, nation, ethnicity, race, vocation, disability, or illness.

The sophisticated understanding of social life afforded by the structural duality perspective is especially salient today, as identities become increasing important modes of social participation in the United States. An eye to duality resists the tendency of populist politics to over-romanticize the authority of the individual to craft an identity of her desire and choosing, and also rejects the tendency of social critics to overstate the oppressive and monolithic power of ideologies of identity as wholly determinant of one’s sphere of agency. Recognizing both the restrictive and resourceful qualities of ideologies of identity seems to provide a path away from the highly divisive and essentializing identity politics of today that is not also a path backwards into histories of identity-based oppressions already overcome.

Alex Kim completed his B.A. at the University of Washington in 2007 majoring in Anthropology with a minor in Mathematics. In February 2007, he presented the thesis published in this issue at the annual Lavender Languages and Linguistics Conference at American University. Currently, he is a Teach For America corps member teaching middle-school math in Newark, New Jersey. He continues to be interested in the intersection of language, narrative, genre, and social identity. His future plans include pursuing a Master of Divinity degree and becoming an ordained priest of the Episcopal Church.
Sources


ABSTRACT

As generations become further removed from the Holocaust, the process of memorialization becomes increasingly important for understanding the significance of the Holocaust, as memory is the tool through which the past becomes immortalized. In this essay, I compare the way in which the United States and Germany memorialized the Holocaust in the late 20th century by comparing the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston to the Memorial to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. Both Boston and Berlin have used memorials not only to publicly portray their involvement with the Holocaust in the past, but also to solidify their current remembrance of the Holocaust for the future. By looking at the historical and social debate that shaped the creation of each memorial and by examining the physical symbols and structures used to represent Holocaust memory, I use this essay to draw a historically unprecedented comparison between these two memorials to show how these two seemingly different memorials are fundamentally similar in their purpose to create a collective memory.


Fair Use Notice: The images within this article are provided for educational and informational purposes. They are being made available in an effort to advance the understanding of scientific, environmental, economic, social justice and human rights issues etc. It is believed that this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have an interest in using the included information for research and educational purposes.
The Similarities of Difference
A Comparative Analysis of the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin

By Lisa Mahlum
Chapman University School of Law

Holocaust Memorialization: The Need to Remember and Never Forget

It’s not for my parents that I pursue this endeavor…This Memorial will be for me. Because I was not there, and did not suffer, I cannot remember. Therefore, I very much need to be reminded. This memorial will be for my six-month-old daughter who will need to be reminded even more. It will be for her children who will need to be reminded still more. We must build such a memorial for all of the generations to come, who, by distance from the actual events and people, will depend on it to activate [memory].

The sky is black and night has come. In the distance, six glowing glass towers displace the darkness and a smoky haze fills the hollow chambers to create a cloudy luminescence. Reflecting on the site before him, Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel writes, “Look at these towers, passerby, and try to imagine what they really mean - what they symbolize - what they evoke. They evoke an era of incommensurate darkness, an era in history when civilization lost its humanity and humanity its soul.”

Dedicated in November of 1995, the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston is located on the Freedom Trail in downtown Boston. Architect Stanley Saitowitz designed the Memorial with six glass towers, each standing fifty-four feet high, lined up vertically on black granite. Along the black granite are carved various quotes about the victims, heroes, and perpetrators of the Holocaust. At one entrance, there is a granite timeline delineating significant events that lead to the Holocaust. Each glass tower is hollow and illuminated, so at night, the towers become radiant and create a stunning contrast to the daytime effect. On each of the glass panels are etched six million numbers from 000001 to 6000000 arranged in an orderly fashion. At the bottom of each tower is a six-foot deep chamber with one of six death camps engraved on the wall: Majdanek, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka, Belzec, and

---


Auschwitz-Birkenau. Smoldering coals illuminate the names of the death camps and create a smoky fog that fills the columns with a haunting opacity.³

A concrete vision—an ebbing field—an architectural anomaly—all are possible ways to describe the tombstone-esque site that blankets central Berlin in a field of stone. Passersby wonder what, wonder how, and wonder why this structure is before them. As historian Lawrence Langer observed when walking past the site, “the shapes represent blank invitations to visitors to decide where they have been summoned and what direction their sense of uneasiness should lead them in.”⁴

Dedicated in May 2005 and built on nearly a 20,000 square meter plot, the Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe consists of 2711 concrete stele arranged in a grid pattern on uneven ground that gently slopes up and down, thus creating the illusion of a field. Each concrete stele is 0.95 meters wide, 2.38 meters long, and range randomly in height from a 0 meter flat slab to a 4 meter tall stele.⁵ While walking through the Memorial, visitors are positioned within the stele in a variety of different ways and gain a unique sense of perspective.

⁴ Lawrence Langer, Using and abusing the Holocaust. Jewish literature and culture (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 141.
⁵ “Figures on the Memorial,” from the Official pamphlet for the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe, 2.
since some stele stand taller than the visitor’s height and some are shorter. Visitors can enter from all four sides, with each entrance offering a different viewpoint of the wave-like creation. The Memorial is a concrete masterpiece that has no landscaping except the 41 pine and Kentucky coffee trees that line the west side.\textsuperscript{6} Designed by architect Peter Eisenman, the Memorial is supposed to connote a feeling of overwhelming confusion when visitors walk through the concrete maze, forcing them to embrace their feeling of uneasiness. With no beginning and no end, there is no right way to view this sparse and lifeless Memorial.

Figure 2. Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Berlin, Germany).

Both Boston and Berlin have used memorials not only to publicly recount their involvement with the Holocaust in the past, but also to solidify their current remembrance of the Holocaust for the future. Despite the obvious differences in appearance between the New England Holocaust Memorial and the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe—the size, the design, and the location—the two memorials are nonetheless quite similar in their purpose for

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
memorialization and their method for creating public memory. By placing these
two monuments within the historiographical framework of memorialization and
by considering the processes of creation that surrounded each memorial in their
respective nations, one can see how the juxtaposition of these two Memorials not
only tells a distinct national story of American and German Holocaust memory,
but also reveals a common international story of suffering and survival. The
Boston Memorial and the Berlin Memorial both capture the dynamic and
interactive processes of memory creation that influenced the development of
each memorial through the stages of its ideological inception, its physical
construction, and its eventual completion. By uncovering the historical and social
debate that shaped the creation of each memorial and by examining the physical
symbols and structures used to represent Holocaust memory, one can see how
these two seemingly different memorials are fundamentally similar in their
purpose to create a collective memory.

I chose to compare the New England Holocaust Memorial to the Monument to
the Murdered Jews of Europe because they formed a parallel comparison based
on the following criteria: time frame of construction, purpose and scope of
commemoration, type of structure created for memorialization, location both of
the city in general and of the monument within the city, and level of public
involvement with memorial selection and process of construction. Because both
memorials had plans underway for construction by the end of the 20th century,
they were both built with the same historical distance from the Holocaust and
can therefore be compared within the same context of international political
influence. Also, since both memorials were constructed specifically to
memorialize the loss of 6 million Jews during the Holocaust, the scope of
victimization between the two memorials is the same and thus allows for an
analogous comparison.

In the years since the end of WWII, the Holocaust has arguably become one of
the most internationally cited events of the 20th and 21st centuries. With
references appearing nearly daily in newspapers around the world, the Holocaust
still captures the attention of the international community sixty-four years after
it ended. A proliferation of monuments dedicated to the victims of Hitler’s
genocide has sparked an international debate about how much memory is too
much and what type of commemoration is appropriate. Creation of
remembrance days, international conferences, research databases, museums, and
even popular films have prompted historians to wonder, “Why has the Holocaust
received so much attention, and why do we care?” Although several historians
have posited various theories for analyzing the importance of the Holocaust and
placing it within the framework of the 20th century, I personally espouse Norman Naimark’s assertions for analyzing the Holocaust as a “dominant metaphor of our time.” Rather than viewing the Holocaust as an event to mark the hoped-for end of genocide or the moment of absolute truth when people would cease to embrace genocidal violence, Naimark instead establishes the Holocaust as a framework for historical reference and analysis, around which nations and individuals can forge an identity within the context of the Holocaust. Memorialization of the Holocaust is particularly important to understanding the significance of the Holocaust, as memory is the tool through which the past becomes immortalized. As generations become further removed from the Holocaust, the ability to contextualize oneself within the framework of the Holocaust becomes increasingly dependent on memorialization.

The process of Holocaust memorialization reflects a delicate balance between giving credence to the horrors of the past, engaging the visitors in the context of the present, and inspiring a memory for the future. In the post-Holocaust years, physical constructions created as monuments and memorials have taken on a variety of forms and meanings. As the production of memorials has become a proliferating international phenomenon over the past fifty years, historians have debated the nature of Holocaust memorials, constantly deliberating what constitutes the most correct and respectful way to memorialize something as sensitive as the Holocaust. According to James E. Young, arguably one of the most informed experts on Holocaust memorialization, the purpose of Holocaust memorials:

\[
\text{[is] not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passerby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violations; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town’s feet.}^8
\]

For Young, Holocaust memorials should remain sensitive to the history of genocidal victims and employ symbolism and architecture that provoke memory creation through visitor interaction with the structure. Defining such memorials as “counter-monuments,” Young promotes an ideology of Holocaust memorialization that acknowledges the “void” left behind from the Holocaust and

---

emphasizes more than the memory of terror and destruction. Both the Boston Memorial and the Berlin Memorial are examples of counter-monuments. For generations of the post-Holocaust era who have no tangible memory of the Holocaust, memorials play an increasingly important role in solidifying the presence of the Holocaust within the minds of individuals and also within the framework of society at large. Holocaust historian Lawrence Langer also reflects a similar view to Young, believing that “when memory imprints on us the meaning of the presence of ‘absence’ and animates the ghost that such a burden has imposed on our lives, then the heritage of the Holocaust will have begun to acquire some authenticity in our post-war culture.”

The “void” and “absence” to which Young and Langer speak respectively, refer not only to physical emptiness created by the loss of Holocaust victims, but also to the way in which the memorial brings this absence into a physical presence. This transformation occurs across two dimensions: through the architectural design of the memorial and through the process of human interaction by which the memorial was imagined and eventually constructed. Holocaust memorials should not use overt symbolism or gross structures to loudly call attention to the devastation of the Holocaust. Instead, Young argues, they should use suggestive subtleties and abstractions to prompt the visitor to create his or her own interpretation from the absence of the structure. By inviting viewers “to establish an organic relationship to a past that one can never really inhabit,” Holocaust memorials use architecture and aesthetics to inform a body politic about the truths of the past while simultaneously imbuing them with an authentic sense of emotion, of caring, and of acceptance. While the physical structures and design of Holocaust memorials remain static and unchanging, the process through which memorials were created reflects a social debate of the politics and culture of the era. Only by looking at both the physical structure of a memorial and the process that led to a memorial’s construction can one understand the context and meaning of Holocaust memorialization.

---

9 Ibid., 198.
11 Young, *At memory’s edge*, 175.
12 Langer, *Using and abusing the Holocaust*, 141.
13 Young, *The texture of memory*, 4.
The Process of Memorialization: Uncovering the Debate over Memory Creation

A memorial’s shape is determined as much by its own coming into being as by the ideals that first inspired it.14

James E. Young

As a process initially started by Holocaust survivors after the unveiling of Norman Rappaport’s Liberation statue in New Jersey, the proposal to build a Holocaust Memorial in Boston was at first rejected. However, after the formation of a committee spearheaded by honorary chair person Kitty Dukakis, Jewish wife of then-Governor Michael Dukakis, the memorial became a defined project whereby the committee members decided to embrace all forms of argument and dissent by turning public debate into one of the very reasons for the memorial’s inception. Finding a place within the community would be the memorial’s primary function, and if the community could agree, then the memorial would be built on principles of self-justification; if not, then the memorial’s fate would remain unrealized by the same principle.15 At the behest of Harvard Professor Alex Krieger, the committee decided to solicit memorial designs from the general public in the form of an international competition that began in 1990. In the “New England Holocaust Memorial Competition Program,” the purpose of the memorial was defined as such:

This will be a memorial to the Shoah—the Holocaust—in which the Nazi Third Reich systematically murdered six million Jewish men, women, and children…The Memorial will be for the six million—a place to grieve for the victims and to mark the loss of their culture to history. The Nazis and their collaborators victimized many other groups, murdering countless other people, each of equal worth and importance. Still others, including survivors, those who aided them, and those who liberated them, were caught up in this great tragedy and carry the burden of that memory throughout their lives. In seeking a universal understanding of the Shoah, we acknowledge the place of each experience in the horror of that collective history. To remember this suffering is to recognize the danger and evil that are present whenever one group persecutes another. The Holocaust was the ultimate act of prejudice—in this case, anti-Semitism. Wherever prejudice, discrimination and victimization are tolerated, evil like the Shoah can happen again.16

14 Ibid., 324.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 327.
From this text, one can discern the carefully constructed intent of the memorial as proposed by the committee. Even though the scope of commemorated victims was limited to the six million Jews, the committee consciously reminded the potential architects that other victims and perpetrators were involved in the Holocaust, and their experience is included through the universality of the monument. Five hundred and twenty people submitted designs and after much internal debate within the carefully chosen jury of experts of national and international fame, the committee selected seven finalists to be revealed to the public to receive their input.¹⁷

Visitors to the finalists’ exhibit were asked to assess their likes and dislikes according to questions like, “What do these memorial designs help us to remember about the Holocaust? How do these designs and the Freedom Trail location help us see the relevance of the Holocaust in today’s world? What sort of experience can a Holocaust memorial provide to the individual and to the community?”¹⁸ There was a wide range of responses, many of which were reported in the Boston Jewish Advocate along with a tallied response of visitors’ favorite models. Some wondered about the significance of the Freedom Trail location and the role the Holocaust played in the context of the American Revolution, hoping memorial supporters would remember that Holocaust remembrance is an “oh so Jewish experience,”¹⁹ and recognize that “the Freedom Trail is what the Freedom Trail is; let us not conflate and confuse our rememberings.”²⁰ Others wanted to extend the scope of victims to include non-Jews; still others drew upon memorials in other cities to offer specific suggestions; there were even those who denied that the Holocaust even happened. As the public became a part of the memorialization process, the memorial became an example of a counter-monument—“a great fingerprint on society.”²¹

When considering the seven finalists’ designs, the jury was impressed by the breadth of memory response and various types of symbolism employed to convey such memory. However, six of the final designs failed to inspire the jury as much as the design by well-known architect Stanley Saitowitz. By looking at the

¹⁷ Young writes that “Members of the jury include Marshall Berman, a cultural historian; Rosemarie Bletter, an architectural critic and historian; Henry Friedlander, a modern German historian and survivor; Frank Gehry, world renowned architect; Katy Kline, an art historian, critic, and curator; Michael Van Valkenburgh, a renowned landscape architect; and Elyn Zimmerman, a sculptor and environmental artist” (The texture of memory, 326).

¹⁸ Ibid., 328.


²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Young, The texture of memory, 328.
reasons for the jury’s rejection of the other designs, one can gain a deeper understanding of what sort of memorialization the jury hoped to capture in the anticipated Boston memorial. Nancy J. Locke and Jan Langwell’s proposed “endless meadow” lacked the ability for further provocation and resonated too closely with the Germans’ planting of grain fields over mass grave sites; both the judges and public viewers feared this design would simply console visitors rather than provoke thought.  Two other proposed designs integrated the haunting symbolism of the Holocaust and used the memorial to evoke a sense of past brokenness in need of future mending. For example, Chung Nguyen and Chuong Nguyen proposed cutting a scar into the park to act as a path; Troy West, Anker West, and Ginidir Marshall proposed a great, glass Star of David bisected by a concrete path and railroad rails.  Two other proposed designs integrated the haunting symbolism of the Holocaust and used the memorial to evoke a sense of past brokenness in need of future mending. For example, Chung Nguyen and Chuong Nguyen proposed cutting a scar into the park to act as a path; Troy West, Anker West, and Ginidir Marshall proposed a great, glass Star of David bisected by a concrete path and railroad rails. Ultimately, the design by Saitowitz would become the winning model.

Intrigued by the audacious design of Saitowitz and his team of architects including Ulysses Kim, Tom Gardner, and John Bass, the jury believed the design would attract visitors from a distance and become “unavoidable, filling the empty park with light and life, pits of fire and pillars of ice.” The jury was also intrigued by the abstract symbolism of the design and subtle references to Jewish culture, feeling moved by the memorial’s ability to include rather than exclude other victim groups—an important part of the intent of this memorial. Using poetic prose to describe his own vision of the memorial, Saitowitz submitted the following text to the competition along with his memorial design:

Some think of it as six candles, others call it a menorah. Some a colonnade walling the civic plaza, others six towers of the spirit. Some six columns for six million Jews, others six exhausts of life. Some call it a city of ice, others remember a ruin of some civilization. Some speak of six pillars of breath, others six chambers of gas. Some think of it as a fragment of Boston City Hall,

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 329.
24 Ibid., 329-332.
25 Ibid., 332.
other call the buried chambers Hell. Some think the pits of fire are six death
camps, others feel the shadows of six million numbers tattooed on their flesh. 26

By looking at Saitowitz’s own description of his memorial, one can see how the
design on one hand wielded suggestive symbolism to prompt thoughts about
Jewishness, but on the other hand, remained abstract enough to allow for
personal interpretation as people attached their own symbolic meaning to the
memorial. When compared against the intents of memorialization as recorded in
the call to competition, one can see why Saitowitz’s memorial seemed so
attractive to the jury. In retrospective analysis twelve years after the Memorial’s
dedication, the truth behind Saitowitz’s words resonate as his memorial now
stands erect as a compelling counter-monument in the 21st century.

Located between steel skyscrapers on one side and colonial brick architecture on
the other side, the scale, the design, and the material of Saitowitz’s memorial
mediates nicely between the two worlds of urbanization and history. Some jury
members worried about the delicacy of the memorial’s materials, believing that
it would attract vandalism from rock throwers, chisels, and hammers. 27 Despite
the threat of vandalism, cultural historian Marshall Berman remarked, “If all the
skinheads in New England come and throw rocks at [the monument], it will only
become more eloquent. It will then be like a representation of the Kristallnacht
of the 30s.” 28 Although Berman’s remarks may seem insensitive or even
offensive to some, one must understand them within the context of public
memory creation. For Berman, the greater importance of the memorial is that it
finds a place within the functioning of the community, even if that means
undergoing defacement at the hand of vandals. Such vandalistic treatment, albeit
disrespectful of the memorial and the victims commemorated by the memorial,
would only increase public awareness, and bring the Memorial even more into
the public eye. After years of construction, approximately one thousand men,
women, and children gathered on October 22, 1995 to witness the product of
years of struggle and debate at the dedication and unveiling of the New England
Holocaust Memorial.

Overall, the public response to the dedication of the Boston Memorial was
overwhelmingly positive and welcoming despite public tensions surrounding the
Memorial’s construction in previous years. Taking its place amidst “testimonials
to patriotism, the American Revolution and religious freedom,” the Boston

27 Young, The texture of memory, 334.
Memorial touched the hearts of those who attended the dedication and drew many to tears. Scott Frank, a reporter for the *Jewish Advocate*, witnessed one man cross himself, read a quote off the glass, and cross himself again as he stared into the glowing embers; another man, seemingly homeless and dressed in raggedy clothes, threw a paper-wrapped bouquet of flowers at the ground, covered his face, and left the premises. Struck with emotion, visitors of varying religious denominations, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses all paid somber homage to the Jews lost under Nazi rule. Even a year later, after the initial hype of the Memorial’s opening had settled down, people were still touched by their memorial experience and were drawn to learn more. Holocaust survivor Steve Ross, who was on the founding committee for the Memorial’s construction, spent some time giving tours at the Memorial and witnessed viewers coming to commemorate the Jewish victims; “some cry,” he said, “some don’t ask questions. Most of them do ask questions and they want to know more.” In its inception, supporters of the Memorial hoped it would spark interest in the community and increase awareness as it propagated shared memory. After a year standing, the Memorial seemed to fill its role as a success.

In Berlin, the construction process of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe reflected a serious political debate that began before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1988 and lasted until the dedication of the Memorial in May 2005. On January 30, 1988, the citizens’ action group ‘Perspective Berlin’ called for the construction of a Holocaust Memorial in Berlin under the leadership of journalist and talk-show personality Lea Rosh and WWII historian Eberhard Jackel. On 30 January 1989, the 47th anniversary of Hitler’s ascension to power, Lea Rosh took out the following advertisement to be printed in German newspapers: “A half a century has passed since the Nazis came to power and since the murder of the Jews of Europe. But on German soil, in the country of the perpetrator, there is still no central site of remembrance to recall this singular genocide, and no memorial that remembers the victims. This is shameful.” Although there were some monuments created in Germany to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust, none of them explicitly accepted blame for the genocide or acknowledged the death of six million Jews. In 1963, there was a memorial built to the Jews of Berlin on the site of a former Jewish Synagogue on Munich Street,

---

30 Ibid.
but its scope of memorialization was narrow and hardly accounted for the widespread loss of European Jewry during the Holocaust. After a disastrous wreath-laying visit by President Ronald Reagan at the military cemetery in Bitburg, where Waffen SS Soldiers were buried alongside Wermacht conscripts, Chancellor Kohl decided to take matters into his own hands. By honoring Germany’s war dead, international dignitaries who paid respect to Germany’s cemeteries were partaking in a self-contradictory memorial whereby those being honored were those who perpetrated the Holocaust. Kohl decided to construct an appropriate monument after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Consequently, Kohl picked a location and built a monument called the Neue Wache, or “new guard.” He believed that with the reunification of Germany, he could create a “central monument to all the victims of war and tyranny and thus provide a common site for the unification of a people, as well, a reconciliation of victims and perpetrators, east and west, all united now in their hatred of the tyranny of war.” For the monument’s central display, Kohl selected one of his favorite statues—a bronze modern pieta with a mother holding a dead child by German artist Kathe Kollwitz. However, his memorial was not received well for several reasons. First, the pieta was a Christian figure—a somewhat contradictory choice for memorialization when the largest number of victims of the Holocaust were Jewish. Second, critics thought it was inappropriate to commemorate the loss of victims alongside the loss of their perpetrators. Even though the Neue Wache memorial sustained criticism until and even after its dedication in 1993, Kohl continued to support his monument.

Such disastrous encounters with Germany’s memorials, as with the Neue Wache, further fueled Rosh’s push for an appropriate Holocaust memorial in Berlin. In an early pamphlet distributed to solicit support for the proposed memorial, the following was printed regarding the spirit of the monument: “until now, there has been no central monument in the land of the perpetrators that recalls and warns about the deed.” Drawing explicitly on the need for the nation of perpetrators to accept responsibility for the past and to publicly commemorate the largest targeted group of the Holocaust, supporters of the proposed Memorial made this a theme through the next 11 years of public struggle and

33 William John Niven, Facing the Nazi past: united Germany and the legacy of the Third Reich (London: Routledge, 2002).
34 Young, At memory’s edge, 186.
35 Ibid., 186.
36 Ibid., 186-87.
political scrutiny. Those who opposed the construction of a Holocaust Memorial specifically dedicated to the memorialization of lost Jews believed it would become a “wreath dumping place” where international dignitaries would come to fulfill duties of protocol. 38 Others claimed the singular focus on Jewish victims would create a hierarchy of victimization, therefore creating a national position on who suffered the most. Historian Heinrich August Winkler rejected the memorial, describing in an article in Der Spiegel how the German “fixation on the Holocaust [represented] negative nationalism,” thus bringing down the morale of a unified Germany by dwelling on Hitler’s past regime. 39 A politically charged process, the debate surrounding the memorialization of the Holocaust itself became its own unique memorial.

During the first round of the 1994 competition, the committee received 528 entries that reflected a broad range of memory interpretation. Some entries were crass and disrespectful, connoting a nearly sacrilegious interpretation of Holocaust memory. One such entry was a Ferris wheel designed by Richard Gruber that had freight cars resembling those used for deportation in place of the traditional basket. In an attached explanation, the designer said his memorial design captured “the tension between hope and hopelessness, between a carnival and genocide.” 40 Another proposed memorial design consisted of a giant sixty foot tall oven modeled after those used in the death camps that would burn twenty-four hours a day in remembrance of Jews who suffered at the hands of the Nazis; the other shocking proposal was a large 130 foot vessel intended to represent all the blood lost by the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust. 41 All three of these proposals were exceedingly graphic and focused on the death, destruction, and terror of the Holocaust. Gruesome commemoration was not the purpose of the proposed memorial, which was actually intended to represent Germany’s gesture of responsibility and national commemoration. In response to these disrespectful memorial propositions, Lea Rosh reportedly reminded the jury: “‘This is not a playground for artists and their self-absorbed fantasies.’” 42 While none of these models even made it past the first round of the competition, a brief exploration of them illustrates the scope of perspective coming from the actively participating public. For those who thought such a memorial would be obscene, there were also those who thought that such memorials were appropriate and even necessary.

38 Ibid.
39 Niven, Facing the Nazi past, 216.
40 Wise, “Monuments to Victims, Not Heroes”.
41 Ibid.
42 Young, At memory’s edge, 189.
The winning entry selected in March 1995 by the jury of 15 members (including experts and laypeople appointed by the Bundestag, the Berlin State, and the original citizens’ group) was a design proposed by Christine Jackob-Marks. Her proposed memorial was a twenty-three foot thick tombstone that covered almost an entire block of land bearing the names of all the known Jewish victims. However, within hours after the announcement of the winning entry, Jackob-Marks’ design faced harsh criticism from significant political figures including Ignatz Babbis, a prominent Jew, Mayor Eberhard Diepgen, and even Chancellor Kohl. Many decried the ‘tilted gravestone’ as “too big, too heavy handed, too diverse, and finally just too German.” The only mainstream support of the mega-tombstone was Lea Rosh, whose support was practically insignificant amidst the proliferation of criticism. Columns and op-ed pieces appeared in *Der Spiegel* as experts and laypeople alike castigated the failure of the Berlin Memorial. One *Der Spiegel* columnist, Henryk Broder, wrote that the collection of 528 designs should be regarded as a “quarry [where] anthropologists, psychologists, and behaviorists could examine the condition of a confused nation wanting to create a monument to its victims in order to purify itself.” After a few weeks of this media outcry against the Berlin Memorial, an entire volume of objections was published, which bore the following text on the back cover: “If the aim is to remember the perpetuity that this great nation once murdered nearly six million human beings solely for having been Jews, then this monument must remain uncompleted and unbuilt, an unfinishable memorial process.”

Even though the public outcry seemed to discourage the nation’s attempt to memorialize the Holocaust, the committee remained dedicated to the cause and embarked on a second round of competitions, public scrutiny, and ultimate success.

Hoping to further encourage the memorialization process and elicit continued public support, the committee organized a series of public colloquia in January, March, and April 1997 in which prominent artists, historians, critics, and curators would publicly address the ways in which the plans for the Berlin Memorial might be rectified. Even though the first two colloquia attracted public attention and encouraged amicable relations between the speakers and organizers, a dark cloud seemed to settle over the process as speakers began questioning the rationale behind even having a memorial. For example,

---

43 Wise, “Monuments to Victims, Not Heroes”
44 Young, *At memory’s edge*, 190.
46 Ibid., 178.
47 Ibid., 192.
historian Jürgen Kocka thought a memorial dedicated to solely Jewish victims was unnecessary in light of the other groups who fell subject to Hitler’s persecution; Michael Stürmer, a speaker at the first colloquium, thought the large dimensions of the Memorial’s location would encourage the creation of an inappropriate monstrosity rather than the subtle memorial supported by the commission.48 Asked to speak during the third colloquium about the international context of Holocaust memorialization, James E. Young found himself confronted by a public audience increasingly frustrated with the spectacle of the abject failure of the proposed memorial.49

Sensing the palpable anxiety emanating from the committee and general public alike, Young discarded his carefully prepared lecture and instead spoke from the heart in an effort to reassure the audience of the memorial’s need within the context of Berlin’s history. He told the audience, “you may have failed to produce a monument, but if you count the sheer number of design hours that 528 teams of artists and architects have already devoted to the memorial, it’s clear that your process has already generated more individual memory-work than a finished monument will inspire in its first ten years.”50 Young’s speech reminded the crowd that although the finished memorial was the ultimate goal, the individual memory and awareness already created through the memorial’s debate was an intrinsic part of the process. By turning overwhelming skepticism into a renewed sense of purpose, Young’s speech reignedited the committee’s dedication to the memorial and provided the momentum needed to launch the project into its final phase.

After Young’s speech, Speaker of the Berlin Senate Peter Radunski asked Young to join a Findungskommission of five members to pick an appropriate memorial design in what the committee now called an extension to the original process started in 1995.51 Stressing the importance of a counter-monument, Young encouraged the committee to adopt a concept of memorialization rather than a specific mode of design. The artists’ designs should incorporate the following: a clear definition of the Holocaust and its significance; mention of Nazi Germany’s role as the perpetrator of the Holocaust; the current role of unified Germany as a

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 191-93.
50 Young, The texture of memory, 193.
51 Ibid. The four other members include Christoph Stozl, director of the German Historical Museum in Berlin; Dieter Ronte, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bonn; Werner Hoffmann, a preeminent 20th century art historian in Germany; and Josef Paul Kleihues, one of Berlin’s most respected arbiters of postwar architecture (195).
rememberer of the Holocaust; the contemporary generation’s relationship to creating Holocaust memory; and the aesthetic debate about the memorial’s physical structure. As newly appointed arbiters of German Holocaust memory, the members of the Findungskommission asked a dozen or so world-renowned architects and designers to submit memorial designs in addition to inviting the nine finalists from the 1995 competition to submit revisions of their plans. After a process of conducting interviews, hearing architects’ presentations, and evaluating designs against the stated purpose of the memorial, the Findungskommission picked four finalists whose designs would be previewed and screened by the public: Jochen Gerz’s “Warum?,” Daniel Libeskind’s “Stone Breath,” Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra’s “Waving Field of Pillars,” and Gesine Weinmiller’s “Eighteen Scattered Sandstone Wall Segments.” These four proposals were selected for their abstract design and ability to encourage a unique interpretation of memory creation from each visitor who passed through the memorial—an essential goal for members of the Findungskommission who, largely due to Young’s influence during the colloquia, envisioned the creation of a counter-monument. Not long after the finalists were chosen, consensus was reached around Eisenman and Serra’s design, and Chancellor Kohl invited them to Bonn to further explain their design and consider the possibility of implementing a few changes to the original plan. As an architect, Eisenman saw the requested revisions as an inherent part of his job; as an artist however, Serra thought the suggested changes rendered his original design nearly obsolete and decided to withdraw from the process. After Eisenman incorporated the proposed changes into his revised design, Eisenman II, the Findungskommission unanimously proposed it to the chancellor and memorial commissioners.

Even though the Memorial finally had a concrete design in 1998 with Eisenman II, it took years before Germany saw its completion. With the elections of summer 1998, the Memorial underwent a series of politically charged debates that almost halted the completion of the memorial. The most contentious part of the debate surrounded the proposed addition of an Information Center to further explain the history and context of the Holocaust. However, on 25 June 1999, the Bundestag met in the public eye to debate Berlin’s “Memorial for the

---

52 Ibid., 197.  
53 Ibid., 200.  
54 Ibid., 205-11.  
55 Ibid., 204-07.  
56 Ibid., 209.
Murdered Jews of Europe" and to take a final vote on the approval for construction. After a heated but civil deliberation, the Bundestag approved the memorial in a vote 314 to 209, with 14 abstentions. The following three parts were the Bundestag’s stipulations for the Memorial’s construction:

1) The Federal Republic of Germany will erect in Berlin a memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe on the site of the former Ministerial Gardens in the middle of Berlin;

2) The design of Peter Eisenman’s field of pillars will be realized, as well as a small place of information that will detail the fate of victims and the authentic sites of destruction; and

3) A public foundation will be established by the Bundestag to oversee the completion of the memorial […] The foundation will begin its work with the memorial’s groundbreaking in the year 2000.

Over the next six years, the Memorial underwent construction with the final stele erected in December 2004 and the public dedication presented in May 2005.

In the aftermath of the Memorial’s dedication, the German public responded with a variety of mixed reactions. For many Germans, the production of a Holocaust memorial that accepted culpability for the Nazi past and acknowledged the distinct Jewish component of Holocaust victims was inherently surreal. Even Eisenman, when reflecting in December 2004 on the completion of the Memorial’s construction, revealed a skeptical undertone in his own work when he said, “I never at many moments thought we would build this and here it is.” The speeches at the Memorial’s inauguration ceremony reflected a mixture of skepticism and excitement surrounding the Memorial’s much awaited unveiling. Paul Spiegel, president of the Central Council of the Jews in Germany, opened the ceremony by expressing his concern for the Memorial’s exclusion of non-Jews saying that the Memorial consequently suggested an unnecessary “hierarchy of victimization.”

---

57 Ibid., 222.
58 Ibid., 223.
59 “Chronology,” from The official pamphlet for the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe, 2.
In response to Spiegel’s remarks, Eisenman, who spoke next in the program, explained that architecture cannot be a “panacea for evil” and act as a solution to all problems. Wolfgang Thierse, president of the German parliament, expressed great hope for the future of the memorial as it “acts on the limits of our comprehension [of the Holocaust]” and serves “as a place of memory [to help the public] face up to the incomprehensible facts [of the Nazi past].” Even in its completion, the highly debated Memorial still resonated with of the controversy surrounding the process of construction that had lasted for more than a decade.

In an NPR *Morning Edition* broadcast on the Memorial’s opening, reporter Emily Harris used interviews to capture the general public’s perception of the new Memorial, which much like the authorities speaking at the inauguration were torn between support, impartiality, and dislike of the Memorial. In her own observations, Harris recorded the variety of ways visitors interacted with the Memorial—a teenager skateboarding across the stele, an elderly gentleman and one-time supporter of the Nazi regime quietly sobbing, and parents with children trying to articulate the significance of the Memorial—a juxtaposition that demonstrated in actuality the variety of visitor responses anticipated during 17 years of the debate about Memorial. A now permanent fixture in Berlin’s landscape, the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe will continue to elicit a wide range of memory creation in the next phase of German history.

Physical Structure of Memory: Location, Architecture, Symbolism, and Meaning

> By themselves, monuments are of little value, mere stones in the landscape. But as part of a nation’s rites or the objects of a people’s national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory.

> James E. Young

Just as memorials draw upon the significance of the landscape and location on which they are built to construe their own meaning, the very construction of a memorial in turn changes the meaning of the landscape. For Young, “a monument becomes a point of reference amid other parts of the landscape, one node among others in a topographical matrix that orients the rememberer and

---

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
65 Young, *The texture of memory*, 2.
creates meaning in both the land and our recollections." For the two memorials considered in this paper, the landscape for construction plays a central role in the type of memory created through the memorials. In Boston and Berlin alike, the location engages the visitor in a certain way that not only involves them with the design and symbolism of the memorial itself, but also draws them into the immediate meaning of the nation’s history.

Placed along the historic Freedom Trail in Boston, the New England Holocaust Memorial resonates with the spirit of American democracy as it reflects America’s role not only as a nation founded upon the principles of liberty, but also as one of the nations that liberated the Jews from Hitler’s control in 1945. A stop that attracts nearly sixteen million tourists a year, the Freedom Trail is located in central Boston and has, according to its official website, “16 nationally significant historic sites, every one an authentic American treasure.” Although not one of the official sixteen stops on the Freedom Trail, the Boston Holocaust Memorial in effect becomes an added stop on the Freedom Trail as it sits along the red brick path when walking from the Boston Common to the Bunker Hill Monument specifically located two stops after the Boston Massacre site, one stop after the Fanueil Hall site, and one stop before the Paul Revere House. This location positions the Holocaust within the framework of American democracy and freedom—the essence upon which our country is so proudly founded. The Holocaust was the antithesis of freedom, a moment of terror and genocide, but by placing the memorial for the murder of six million Jews on the Freedom Trail, the visitor experiences the tension between liberation and victimization. As liberators from the Holocaust, Boston’s decision to place its Holocaust memorial along the Freedom Trail resonates very closely with our nation’s own ideals of freedom both domestically and internationally.

The location of the Berlin Memorial suggests a historical relationship to Berlin’s role in the Holocaust as well as its role as a modern city that publicly acknowledges its past. Berlin was the capitol city where Hitler and his leaders met to discuss, plan, and legislate the process of WWII and the Holocaust. The north-eastern part of the Berlin Memorial site is situated directly on top of Goebbels’s bunker and office villa, which was left untouched by construction;

---

66 Ibid., 7.
67 Ibid., 324.
70 Young, The texture of memory, 324.
Hitler’s “fuhrerbunker” is only 200 meters south of the Memorial site near Vosstrasse. With such close proximity to the very sites where Hitler and Goebbels executed their plans against the Jews, the Berlin Memorial prompts visitors to consider an interesting juxtaposition of perpetration and victimization, culpability and responsibility. Memorializing the death of the Jews at the site where their death was planned presents visitors with a deeply reflective memory experience. In contrast to the historical relevance of the site is the modernized, urban space that surrounds the Memorial. Located at the heart of Berlin, the Memorial expresses public life because it is near embassies, cultural institutions, businesses, residential areas, and the Tiergarten; since the memorial is integrated into the historic urban space as well as the government district, it uses its spatial location to build a relationship with civil society. By placing the Memorial at the heart of every-day life, Germans demonstrate their willingness to publicly accept responsibility for the Holocaust amidst their political and business culture.

Boston and Berlin as cities allow for a parallel comparison because both cities are central representations of their nations’ broader ideals: Boston for its symbolic relation to the spirit of American democracy and its importance as a crucial colonial city, and Berlin for its relation to German values as a central city for government action prior to, during, and after the Holocaust. Even though Berlin is a national capital and Boston is not, both cities play a central enough role in their countries’ past history and present politics to provide a microcosmic representation within a broader, national analysis. Because neither Boston nor Berlin were cities that housed concentration camps, they are also similar because neither city was directly involved in the murder of the Jews. By first understanding the symbiotic way in which the location infuses the Memorial with meaning and the way in which the Memorial shapes the landscape, one can then look at how the architecture acts as a tool of memory creation.

Both the Boston Memorial and the Berlin Memorial use physical structures to engage visitors in the present, connect them with the historical truths of the past, and instill a memory of the Holocaust for the future. Enriched with symbolism, the New England Holocaust Memorial uses a meaningful architectural design to evoke within the visitors a sense of Holocaust remembrance. In his own words, architect Saitowitz described his vision for the memorial’s reception: “I hope that visitors to the Memorial take away with them the ungraspable nature of the Holocaust, the completely overwhelming, inexplicable dimension of dimension.

71 “FAQ” from The official pamphlet for the memorial for the murdered jews of europe, 5.
72 Ibid., 4.
And coupled with that, a sense of hope that survival and the building of this memorial make possible.\textsuperscript{73} By creating a Memorial that combines distinct symbols with abstract architectural designs, Saitowitz hoped to overwhelm visitors with a sense of sadness and incomprehensibility—a moment of silence where the visitor turns to the memorial for inspiration, comfort, and understanding. One symbol used in the Memorial is the number six million; by etching six million numbers on the glass panels of the six columns, the Memorial becomes symbolically suggestive of the tattoos emblazoned upon the six million Jews who died under the Nazi regime. The names of death camps engraved at the base of each tower prompt the viewers to remember the horrors of death that befell the European Jewry.\textsuperscript{74} Although the architectural design calls directly upon significant symbols of the Holocaust, the design remains subtle enough to be suggestive instead of literal and to inspire therefore, a countless number of personal interpretations, memories, and understandings.\textsuperscript{75} Through architecture, design, and symbolism, the Boston Memorial becomes “a [physical] marker—a place to grieve for the victims and for the destruction of their culture—a place to give them an everlasting name.”\textsuperscript{76}

In contrast to the Boston Memorial, which uses subtle symbolism in its architectural design, the Berlin Memorial does not use any suggestive symbolism to reference the Holocaust. Rather, architect Peter Eisenman preferred to leave the symbolic invocation of the Holocaust to the discretion of the viewer. When asked about the rationale of his design, Eisenman said, “the enormity and scale of the horror of the Holocaust is such that any attempt to represent it by traditional means is inevitably inadequate…Our memorial attempts to present a new idea of memory as distinct from nostalgia…We can only know the past through a manifestation of the present.”\textsuperscript{77} For example, the number of 2711 stele bears no significance in relation to the number of Jewish victims; they are simply the number that mathematically fit onto the given area. With entrances on all sides of the grid-like structure, the Memorial encourages the visitor to determine his or her own way to explore the architecture, allowing for a highly personalized experience of memorialization. The absence of symbolism also grants much room for personal interpretation because there is no suggestion, even slight, for

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Peter Eisenman, Press Conference, 1998.
how to interpret the Memorial. Some viewers interpret the stele as tombstones for the Jews who died; others interpret the Memorial as a maze intended to elicit a sense of confusion similar to the experience felt by Jews as they were deported from their homes and placed in Camps; others do not attach any Jewish symbolism to the Memorial and view it as a space for contemplation and reflection. A true counter-monument, the Berlin Monument uses its architectural structure to recognize that remembering what was lost is as important as remembering how it was lost.  

Despite slight differences in the usage of architectural symbolism, both memorials are linked by the common purpose of inviting visitors “to establish an organic relationship to a past that one can never really inhabit […] and implicate its audience in the difficult but essential tasks of imagining an absent pain and mourning an unending loss.” With both Memorials striving to provoke the visitor to define his or her own memory based upon his or her interaction with the architecture, both Memorials fulfill their role as counter-monuments and represent a growing trend towards abstract and interactive Holocaust memorialization in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

While the Memorials use abstract architecture to promote a variety of emotional responses and personalized memory, they also rely on passages of text to guide the viewer through the historical context and explain the universality of Holocaust remembrance. By looking at the text and historical information contained within the physical design of the Memorials, one can see how the designers of each memorial strove to create a delicate balance between singling out the Jews as the specific victims of commemoration and framing them within the broader history of the Holocaust at large. Also, each Memorial relies on text (as opposed to architecture or symbolism) to create a broader sense of tolerance inspired by reflections to the Holocaust—a sense of tolerance for others’ differences and of intolerance for genocide.

The Boston Memorial places textual references throughout the Memorial to show the visitor broader Holocaust history, to expand the scope of remembrance to include other victims, and to inspire a more complete awareness of universal suffering. At the entrance to the first tower the word “Remember” is inscribed in the pathway in English and in Hebrew; at the exit from the last tower, the word “Remember” is inscribed in English and Yiddish. By book-ending the Memorial

78 Young, *At memory’s edge*, 198.
79 Langer, *Using and abusing the Holocaust*, 141.
with these inscriptions in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish, the Memorial acknowledges the scope of Jewish victimization by including translations in the dominant Jewish languages. To recount the process by which the Jews were targeted under the Nazi regime, the Memorial has a black granite time line on the Fanueil Hall side entrance of the Memorial delineating the chronology from the beginning of Hitler’s reign in 1933 until the end of WWII in 1945.\textsuperscript{81}

Focusing on the events that led to the ultimate destruction of the Holocaust, the time line provides visitors with the information needed for him or her to start understanding the gradual process of Nazi persecution that ultimately resulted in the Final Solution.

On each of the glass towers bearing the name of one of the six concentration camps is inscribed personal quotes from survivors of each death camp. The following is a quote etched on the tower of Sobibor from survivor Gerda Weissman Klein, who was rescued by a U.S. army soldier whom she later married:

\begin{quote}
ILSE, A CHILDHOOD FRIEND OF MINE,
Once found a raspberry in the camp
And carried it in her pocket all day
To present it to me that night on a leaf.
IMAGINE A WORLD in which
Your entire possession is one raspberry and
You give it to your friend.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

Every number etched in the glass represents an individual who has a personal story like the girl’s experience cited above. Even though every story cannot be accounted for, the Memorial’s placement of personal narratives in contrast to the six million numbers etched on the glass provides the viewer with an organic image around which he or she can form his or her memory. By giving the visitor a way to relate to the person rather than just the number, the Memorial captures the delicate “interplay of historical and personal narrative, encourage[ing] visitors to understand the history of the Shoah, while never forgetting the individual lives devastated by it.”\textsuperscript{83}

The final forms of text included in the Memorial are factual statements inscribed into the granite walkway at various points throughout the memorial. These statements aim to encourage a universal understanding of the Holocaust experience and highlight other victim groups targeted by the Nazis, as well as moments of heroism and shame. One statement reads, “THE NAZIS ALSO TARGETED THE ROMANI PEOPLE, commonly called Gypsies, as ‘racially undesirable.’ Hundreds of thousands of them were imprisoned or murdered.”

By recognizing the victimization of the Gypsies, the Memorial, while dedicated to the victimization of the Jews, avoids a hierarchy of victimization by acknowledging other targeted groups. Other groups mentioned in the factual statements include homosexuals, Poles, Slavic peoples, and Catholic priests.

To capture a moment of heroic resistance, one statement reads, “AFTER THE GERMAN ARMY INVADED DENMARK, the Danish people mobilized to ferry 7,800 Jews to safety in neutral Sweden. At the end of the War, 99% of Denmark's Jews were still alive.”

The Memorial includes reference to survival to recognize that despite the terror and evil that prevailed throughout the Holocaust, there were moments of heroism that should not be overlooked. Finally, the Memorial includes a statement invoking a sense of guilt or shame: “BY LATE 1942, THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ALLIES were aware of the death camps, but did nothing to destroy them.” With this statement, the Memorial makes a bold gesture to recognize that the allies were not blind to Hitler’s evils and were even at fault ignoring signs of genocide. Even though the Memorial is situated in the heart of the Freedom Trail and celebrates the role Americans played in liberating victims from the Holocaust, it also humbly recognizes, if only briefly, the imperfections of a redeemer as noble as the United States. By comparing the usage of text in the Boston Memorial to the Berlin Memorial, one can start to see similarities emerging in the Memorials’ over-arching purpose of memorialization.

Because of the architecture of the Berlin Memorial, the text for the viewer to read is contained in the Information Center, which serves as a “portal” to the diverse sites of German Holocaust memorialization and attempts to contextualize the Memorial within a broader history while offering the visitor a sense of the universality of the Holocaust. Located underground on the south-eastern corner

---

85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
of the Field of Stele, the Information Center was designed by Dagmar von Wilcken and provides information on Holocaust victims, places of extermination, and other memorial sites. With five different rooms containing various types of information relating to the Holocaust, the Information Center is a crucial component to the Memorial because it connects the concrete facts of the Holocaust to the abstract representation of the Memorial. The first room is called the Room of Dimensions where there are fifteen autobiographical accounts of Jewish men and women written during their persecution by the Nazis. This personal account is supplemented by a video explaining the broader historical context of the persecution of the Jews since 1937. In the second room, or the Room of Families, the Center tries to give the visitor a portrait of the various milieus of Jewish religion and culture before, during, and after the Nazi occupation. Focusing this discussion around the personal accounts of fifteen families, the Center strives to capture a broad exploration of Jewish culture while grounding its discussion in specific examples. Throughout the exhibit, the Information Center tries to find the balance between the broad and specific to convey to the visitor a sense of the scope of Jewish suffering without making it seem ethereal or un-relatable.

Room three, or the Room of Names, represents the “dramaturgical climax of the exhibit” where testimonies of Jews who were persecuted or lost under the Nazi regime are read aloud in an attempt “to dissolve the incomprehensible abstract number of six million murdered Jews and to release the victims from their anonymity.” Also in this room are the names of all known Jews who died in the Holocaust, which were placed in the care of the Memorial Foundation by the memorial Yad Vashem in Israel. In the fourth room, or the Room of Sites, the Center tries to present the process by which the Nazis persecuted the Jews by using historical film and photo clips to highlight 200 localities where Jews were persecuted and destroyed. In the final room, there is a database that tracks current events at historical sites and research institutions throughout Europe.

94 Ibid.
Visitors are allowed to access these databases to conduct their own research. Once again, the visitors now have the chance to explore the broader scope of the Holocaust and further tailor their experience with the Memorial to reflect their own interests.

Perhaps one of the most important features of the “Information Centre for the Commemorated Victims and the Historical Sites of Remembrance where Atrocities were Committed” is the role it plays in situating itself with respect to the other Holocaust memorials in Berlin including The Topography of Terror, the Jewish Museum of Berlin, the House of the Wansee Conference, and other memorials in the near vicinity. The Berlin Memorial places itself not only in the historical context of the Holocaust at large, but also within the broader context of memorialization, thus maintaining the sites’ “own specific remit [while] not compacting with the other sites of remembrance.”

The Information Center also integrates discussion about other victims of Nazi persecution to avoid creating a victim hierarchy and to recognize that the scope of victimization extends beyond the Jews. Finally, the Center provides a database where visitors can explore a chronological account on the process of memorialization from the Memorial’s inception in 1988 to its dedication in 2005. With over 500 press articles about the public debate surrounding the Memorial, the Foundations Board of Trustees “gives the visitor an insight into the seriousness and the variety of problems which had to be solved during the realization of the project.”

By placing the discussion of the process of memorialization in the Information Center, the Foundation for the Memorial recognizes that the process behind memory creation is just as important as the finished memorial itself.

In both Boston and Berlin, the Memorial uses text to provide the viewer with a richer understanding of the Holocaust as a significant historical event. Even though the specific mechanisms by which historical information is presented to the visitor differ between the Boston Memorial and the Berlin Memorial, with Boston’s text being directly incorporated into the architecture of the Memorial and Berlin’s text being contained away from the Field of Stele in the Information

96 “The Holocaust Memorial Database”, The Official Pamphlet for the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe.
Center, the motivation behind historical contextualization and the effect it has upon the visitor remains the same. Beyond the more immediate historical context that explains the events that produced the Holocaust, the memorials also strive to situate the Holocaust within an international discourse of meaning and tolerance—a universal recognition of the atrocities of the past and a need for tolerance in the future. In the New England Holocaust Memorial, the introductory panels at the entrance of the Memorial bear the following text that reveal a message of universality:

To remember their suffering is to recognize the danger and evil that are possible whenever one group persecutes another. As you walk this Freedom Trail, pause here to reflect on the consequences of a world in which there is no freedom - a world in which basic human rights are not protected. And know that wherever prejudice, discrimination and victimization are tolerated, evil like the Holocaust can happen again.100

In Berlin, the official Resolution passed by the German Bundestag on June 25, 1999 offers a similar vision of universality with the following statement of purpose:

With the memorial we intend to honour the murdered victims, keep alive the memory of these inconceivable events in German history, and admonish all future generations never again to violate human rights, to defend the democratic constitutional state at all times, to secure equality before the law for all people and to resist all forms of dictatorship and regimes based on violence.101

Even though both Memorials acknowledge the universal applicability of Holocaust memory and tolerance, they place their statements within the framework of their own nation’s history of the Holocaust, thus producing an interesting interplay between national and international memory. The Memorial in Boston invites the viewer to pause along the Freedom Trail, within the context of American democracy, and think about the universal need for protecting people against human rights violations. In Berlin, the statement from the Bundestag places German’s acknowledgement for the protection of the democratic state and admonition against violent dictatorships against the backdrop of German culpability for Nazi atrocities. Even though the historical discourse for each nation remains strikingly different, their need for memory

101 “Resolution passed by the German Bundestag.”
reflects an inherent similarity that transcends past differences of politics and instead recognizes present similarities of humanness.

Conclusion: The Formation of Collective Memory from Boston to Berlin

The crucial issue in the history of memory is not how a past is represented but why it was received or rejected. For every society sets up images of the past. Yet to make a difference in society, it is not enough for a certain past to be selected. It must steer emotions, motivate people to act, be received; in short, it must become a socio-cultural mode of action.  

Alan Confino

As the ramifications of the Holocaust have reverberated internationally to create an increased awareness against the atrocities of genocide, the process of memorializing the Holocaust has become an international phenomenon. In the late twentieth century as the number of living Holocaust survivors gets smaller and smaller, the responsibility for preserving the past becomes increasingly bestowed upon the hands of the present. Holocaust Memorials become “collective frameworks used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord with the predominant thoughts of the society.” The Memorials in Boston and Berlin are the lenses of the present through which two nations view the past and allow for the formation of a collective memory that crosses national and international boundaries.

Through the dynamic process of memory creation, two counter monuments in contrasting cities of liberation and perpetration embraced similar techniques to situate the Holocaust within the discourse of the present and create a symbol from which future memory will emanate. In America, the Holocaust became an issue of remembrance for the entire American nation rather than just for the American Jews. In addition to commemorating the loss of European Jewry, American Holocaust memorials became a ‘moral compass’ for the nation as Americans rallied behind the opportunity to decry Hitler’s genocide and to support the democratic tolerance that founded their nation. The construction of the New England Holocaust Memorial cannot be separated from this historical context; the six glass pillars themselves will remind us of the decades of stories, experiences, and ultimately memories of a nation and a people that allowed for such a public statement of collective memory to be made. The Memorial for the

Murdered Jews of Europe was a hallmark achievement in light of Germany’s post war historiography because it represents both the German willingness to accept responsibility for the perpetration of the Holocaust as well as the public recognition of the victimization of European Jewry. The field of stone has become an important international symbol for Germany because it was the first national effort to recognize the systematic murder of European Jewry. Both the Boston and Berlin Memorials fulfill their role as counter monuments by representing the dynamic process of political and social memory creation that underlies the static façade of the finished structure.

Since the Boston and Berlin Memorials are rooted in the politics and culture of the present, the remembrance of the Holocaust becomes a negotiation between the historical records of the past and the political agenda of the present. The creation of a collective memory is a constant interplay between the past and the present, the state and the people, and the community and the individual. The presence of the Boston and Berlin Memorials prompts individuals to cultivate their own Holocaust memories; as enough people visit the Memorials and become aware of the past, the scope of memory creation expands to include more and more people until their combined memories form a collective memory. The tenets of memory differ from person to person, but the source of inspiration remains the same. In a way, the Memorials become the arbiter between the past and the future—a structure in present that simultaneously embodies the historical truth and perpetuates its commemoration in the future.

Lisa Mahlum is a 2007 UW graduate in History and Human Rights, with College Honors. She is the author of "A Long Way Gone: Child Soldiers and the Paradox of Law and Culture within the Nation State," published in the *Washington Undergraduate Law Review*. She was also 2006-2007 Mary Gates Research Scholar and recipient of the 2007 Thomas Powers Prize for Best Undergraduate History Research. She is currently a first year law student at Chapman University School of Law in Orange, California.

---


**ABSTRACT**

The post-Cold War period has experienced a rise in the use of child soldiers fighting in conflicts worldwide to numbers exceeding a quarter of a million. This research focuses on child soldiers in Chad, and how the worsening regional instability in Central and Western Africa forces more children into both Internally Displaced Persons camps and refugee camps, creating a vicious cycle of violence in which children are vulnerable to being used as soldiers. Although most of the countries perpetuating this practice have signed and ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, children continue to be caught up in soldiering while protection of their human rights remains largely unenforceable. The current debate involving the age of accountability and appropriate punitive measures draws attention away from potential solutions. The policy proposals made in this paper support incentives to create compliance within the Chadian government, but the most significant proposal favors a long-term solution of regional grass roots peace building and human rights education.


© 2009 *intersections*, Mary Jonasen. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author
Child Soldiers in Chad
A Policy Window for Change

By Mary Jonasen
University of Washington, Bothell

Child Soldiers and the Civil War in Chad

In recent years, the number of child soldiers fighting in conflicts worldwide has escalated to 300,000. This is a human rights crisis of epic proportion in which countless lives are devastated, and victims are created in many facets of this complex problem. Most of us see children as needing protection and nurturing, and the image of them as fighters, often ruthless and brutal, is deeply disturbing. The inherent nature of children—easily influenced, readily obedient, fearful of authority and lacking the maturity to make sound judgments—positions them as one of the most vulnerable groups within any society. Their status as minors restricts access to their own autonomy leaving them additionally susceptible to becoming child soldiers.

What is the best policy to protect the human rights of children recruited into military service in Chad? This paper will explore the historical background on the use of child soldiers as well as current issues specific to Chad. Child soldiering is impacted by many issues, including perspectives from international human rights law, the agency of childhood and child development, defining the age of majority across cultural boundaries, gender specific problems, the impact of globalization, as well as current and historical geo-political conflicts with state and non-state actors, the rehabilitation and reintegration of children back into their communities and the culpability of criminal behavior and determination of victim status for both child soldiers and civilian populations violated by child soldiers.

We must have due diligence in examining all facets of this complex issue in order to find sustainable, effective solutions.

---

Child Soldiering in Context

Children have been used in military service for the past several hundred years. Prior to the development of a formalized universal education system in pre-industrial Western culture, military apprenticeship or service was often a desirable “vocation.” In the Seventeenth century, children as young as eleven years old were documented as having been engaged in formal training and serving in active ranks alongside adults. In more recent cases, children and youth represented the core of the Nazi resistance in Warsaw ghettos. In response, some critics ask how contemporary child soldiering differs in the current context from past comparisons.

One critical distinction between the use of child soldiers in Warsaw was that these children were not plucked from what was considered a normal childhood to fight in a conflict they neither wanted nor understood, but were compelled to fight to preserve the lives of their families, community, and culture. The difference in the use of child soldiers in pre-versus post-Cold War periods appears to be focused around a central point. Collmer attributes the current success in the use of child soldiers to the calculated exploitation of the specific traits of childhood that are used to manipulate children into unquestioningly obedient, fearless and brutal killing forces.

Although some children join voluntarily, the majority appear to have been abducted or otherwise coerced. The following excerpts illustrate the brutality and manipulation targeted toward children:

That night the LRA [Lord’s Resistance Army, Uganda] came abducting people from our village, and some neighbors led them to our house. They abducted all five of us boys at the same time…They told us not to think of our mother or father. If we did, then they would kill us. Better to think now that I am a soldier fighting to liberate the country. There were twenty-eight abducted from our village that night…After we were tied up, they started to beat us randomly; they beat us up with sticks.

Martin P., abducted February 2002 at age 12

---

3 Collmer, 8.
One eighteen-year-old male tried to escape but was soon captured. Soldiers laid him on the ground and told us to step on him. All the new recruits participated—we trampled him to death. During my time with the LRA, there were other children who escaped and seven of these were caught. Of them, two were hacked to death with machetes and five were clubbed or trampled. We were either made to participate or watch the killings. The youngest recruit was maybe nine or ten years old.5

Mark T., seventeen year-old

The rebels attacked my village—all the huts were burned and many people were killed. The RUF [Revolutionary United Front, Sierra Leone] rounded up those who lived. Then they took some young boys to go with them. They said they would kill us if we did not go. They gave me a rifle and told me to kill this woman…she was my relative [aunt] and I didn’t want to hurt her. They told me to shoot her or I would be shot. So I shot her… I did it to survive.6

16 year-old boy

These accounts illustrate the abuses children have endured when being abducted and terrorized into compliance. In a 2007 interview, a senior Chadian National Army (ANT) officer on the frontline in eastern Chad stated to Human Rights Watch that children make the most desirable soldiers, “because they don’t complain, they don’t expect to be paid, and if you tell them to kill, they kill. [President] Deby had trouble finding soldiers who are willing to fight for him, but children will do what they are told.”7 Although this paper will discuss issues surrounding whether children make a choice to participate in soldiering, the context of the discussion examines the reasons children are vulnerable, with less emphasis on the issue of choice, and more on uncovering why children fight in wars.

In 1990 the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations.8 Chad signed and ratified this convention in the same year, and in 2002, signed the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. Despite numerous agreements to abide by these conventions Human Rights Watch has evidence that both the Chadian

5 Ibid., 10.
6 Michael G. Wessells, Child soldiers: from violence to protection (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 59. The RUF is the Revolutionary United Front, Sierra Leone.
7 “Early to War: Child Soldiers in the Chad Conflict”, Human Rights Watch 19, no. 9 (July 2007): 20. The ANT is the Armée Nationale Tchadienne, Chad.
8 It is noteworthy to this study that the United States has signed both of these documents but has only ratified the later (Honawa 35). See note 32.
government and rebel forces continue to actively recruit children both forcibly and voluntarily.  

Civil War in Chad

Chad’s history of post-colonial independence from France has been one of conflict, within which change has ordinarily occurred by means of coup d’état. Rebel forces have made numerous attempts to overthrow Idriss Deby, who rose to power in 1989 and remains the current president. Varying degrees of conflict have occurred during Deby’s tenure. In 2005, and early 2006, rebel forces located in Sudan’s Darfur region gained strength as well as sponsorship from the Sudanese government and launched successful cross-border attacks against the Chadian government troops (ANT). In response, the Chadian government provided support to anti-government Sudanese rebels who retaliated against the government of Sudan. The situation rapidly escalated into a deeper proxy war, which in turn significantly contributed to swelling numbers of refugees in the northeastern portion of Chad.  

In May 2007, the Chadian government pledged cooperation with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to demobilize all child soldiers in their ranks and by mid-July 2007 had produced several hundred children, some as young as eight years old. However, these represented only child soldiers from the allied non-state forces. The ANT has not turned over any child soldiers from their own ranks, and there is evidence, through interviews with Human Rights Watch with internal commanders, that the ANT is hiding children within their ranks and intentionally withholding them from demobilization.  

Chad remains in a volatile state of instability with the latest coup attempt against President Idriss Deby, which occurred on February 2008 according to news reports from Human Rights Watch. During this outbreak of violence, 20,000 Chadians fled to Cameroon to seek immediate safety. The Chadian government accused Sudan of backing the coup and forcing more Sudanese refugees into Chad. In addition to the 180,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the country, the number of refugees from Sudan’s Darfur region is nearing 250,000.

9 Ibid., 14-18; 23-24.
10 Ibid., 10-18.
11 Ibid., 21.
In February 2008, internal fighting in Chad cut off humanitarian aid to nearly 400,000 refugees, while international peacekeeping forces from the U.N. and the European and African Unions continued to press for access into Darfur to help stabilize the region. Simpson reported further that Deby threatened to forcibly expel Sudanese refugees from the country. Refugees and IDPs are caught in a worsening cycle of violence that leaves large numbers of unprotected children and adults essentially defenseless against forcible recruitment.

Agency of the Child and the Age of Minority/Majority

Human rights, Ignatieff writes, is the, “language of individual empowerment, and empowerment for individuals is desirable because when individuals have agency they can protect themselves against injustice.” The inability of children to manage their own rights and to self-advocate puts them in a place of particular powerlessness. Children are forcibly and voluntarily recruited into military service, by both state and non-state actors, fighting in intrastate conflicts or internal power struggles in developing countries. The most common objective in these irregular conflicts is persecution, expulsion and the extermination of an ethnic group.

The degree to which children actually choose to join military service and the degree to which they are coerced is the subject of debate. Wessells provides evidence through first hand interviews and field observations of children who are reported to have joined voluntarily and claim to have done so because they feel safer in a military group, especially if they are issued a weapon and seek revenge for crimes committed against their families and communities. They desire respect and access to resources, which have been denied them through internal family struggles or extreme socio-economic poverty. Wessells also documents the higher prevalence of children who are orphaned or separated from families due to war to be forcibly recruited. Age is a factor in the successful recruitment of children who have been enlisted both forcibly and voluntarily because of their

---

14 Simpson.
17 Collmer, 1-2.
lack of agency, inability to exercise their human rights, underdeveloped self-determination, and their malleability.\textsuperscript{18}

This malleability and lack of self-determination in children creates highly desirable qualities for making them ideal soldiers, as compared to their adult counterparts. Children are a readily available and expendable source of new soldiers, whose young age, social and moral underdevelopment results in unthinking obedience. They do not form factions to rise up against their commanders; they do not take bribes or negotiate; they often do not understand the leverage of terror that they wield, but are able to exact it upon others they have a very high need for acceptance; and they do not expect to be paid.\textsuperscript{19}

Although public outcry has risen against the use of child soldiers, Achvarina and Reich claim that there is a lack of scholarly work resulting in inadequate critical analysis. The authors point out that, “[t]he value of scholarly work may therefore be that it contributes to a more systematic formulation of the arguments and a more rigorous comparison of their explanatory power” and significantly impacts viable options to policy makers.\textsuperscript{20} Commonly cited reasons for voluntary recruitment are poverty and orphan rates. Singer attributes the rise in child soldiering rates, especially since 1990, to three related factors: the flood of small affordable arms into the global market after the end of the Cold War, technological improvements to weaponry, making them more manageable for a child to use, and increased intrastate conflicts that have become more brutal and criminalized.\textsuperscript{21}

In the same study, Achvarina and Reich present the primary causal factor of participation rates of children in conflicts, as directly related to the degree of access combat forces have to refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. Using data collected in the Liberian conflicts of 1989-96 and 1999-2003, Achvarina and Reich argue their case by determining the given proximity of access to refugee and IDP camps as the dependent variable. In the first study group the combat forces had little access to IDP and refugee camps, and in the later group there was high access to the IDP and refugee camps. The authors

\textsuperscript{20} Achvarina and Reich, 163.
found that the increase in child soldiers between their two study groups was dramatic and offer this evidence to support their theory:

The rates of child soldier involvement in Liberia’s two wars are very high by historical standards, at 29 percent and 53 percent respectively. Yet the degree of protection provided to children in the two conflicts varied significantly… But it was not the demand for children that was the key factor; it was the supply of children that distinguished the two cases. Children were available in far greater numbers in the second conflict as unprotected IDPs and refugees had nowhere to seek safety.22

This study does not diminish the contributive impact of poverty, lack of resources, and the vulnerability inherent in children, but it re-focuses attention on IDP and refugee camps, which could have significant implications for policy change.

Cultural Relativism and the Concept of Childhood

The cultural construct of childhood creates challenges to the adoption of, and adherence to, universal standards in the prevention of child soldiers. Historic and ethnographic accounts of children emphasize their duality as victims and perpetrators, creating a point of divergence between the agency of the child as being accountable and competent versus dependent and vulnerable. Although child development theories are broadly accepted across many different cultures, the relevance of chronological age in determining adulthood is not universal. There is no clear standard that crosses cultural boundaries defining the capacity of a child to become fully responsible or emancipated with relation to age. Rosen argues that in many societies children and youth are granted substantial autonomy in health care decisions, participation in child custody hearings, and in judicial proceedings.23 Rosen cites an example from the Warsaw Ghettos in World War II Poland, where over 2,000 youth and children self-selected to fight Nazi occupation. Many of these children did so against the wishes of their parents.24 Children, particularly teens, are receptive to new ideologies, as they define new belief systems, form their own identity and gain autonomy.25 The degree to which children are perceived as having the capacity for adult level cognition and actions varies across cultures and specific situations. Therefore, the question of their responsibility as adults becomes a divisive issue. Even if children

22 Achvarina and Reich, 161-62.
23 Rosen, 132-38.
24 Ibid., 137.
25 Ibid., 132-38; Wessells, 53.
are exhibiting adult behaviors, they are not necessarily capable of the abstract thinking or cognition of an adult.

It remains undisputed that all children across cultural boundaries are at one point innocent and in need of protection, but the point of contestation is in determining the age at which responsibility begins. Wessells illustrates this point when he quotes an Afghan commander, “[t]his soldier – he’s 14 but he’s not a child anymore. In our culture, he is expected to do the work of a man, and this includes fighting.” The author further states that this viewpoint is shared by many African societies, as youth of the same or similar ages are responsible to help support the family and contribute on an adult level.

Rosen points out that the Western legal system frequently reclassifies children as adults, and the prosecutorial results rarely benefit children. Approximately 200,000 offenders under the age of 18 are prosecuted as adults each year in the United States, with the purpose of punishing them to the fullest extent of the law. Rosen cites the case of a twelve year old convicted of murder, who is currently serving a term of life imprisonment due to his prosecution as an adult. Even in issues of lesser severity, minors are held liable for things that are fully lawful for adults, such as the use of alcohol and sexual activity.

If children are viewed as either fully culpable or fully innocent, it becomes problematic not only in the duality of child soldiers to be both victim and perpetrator, but also in their capacity to contribute to political discourse. The Children’s Movement for Peace in Columbia has been nominated for a Nobel Prize for their outstanding work in peace building efforts. In 1999, UNICEF’s Executive Director, Carol Bellamy spoke at the Hague Appeal Peace Conference and argued that, “broad acceptance of the child’s role in peacemaking could help generate new ideas and fresh vision for breaking inter-generational patterns of violence, discrimination and failure.” Wessells also emphasizes this point with a UNICEF report on the contributions of youth worldwide in conflict prevention activities. A young person comments on their own involvement in advocacy for peace: “we are tired of only being the victims; we want to be the ones who make a difference.” If we assume that the child’s underdeveloped cognitive and

26 Wessells, 35.
27 Rosen, 136.
28 Ibid., 136-37.
30 Wessells, 245-46.
emotional skills deserve impunity, does this cost them the ability to contribute to political discourse and peace building efforts? The failure to examine these two issues in the same light threatens to drive them into mutual exclusivity, and as a result children lose their voice at the cost of protection.

Duality of Child Soldiers and Human Rights and International Law

Human rights and international law provide points of reference for accountability in three main areas: first, for child soldiers as perpetrators of criminal acts; second, for children as victims who should be protected against becoming child soldiers; and third, for adults who recruit child soldiers. Arts & Popovski discuss several documents pertinent in the examination of the human rights of children and youth as soldiers: The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the fourth Geneva Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to name a few.\(^{31}\) The most significant among these is the CRC, adopted by the U.N. in 1989, which was signed and ratified by Chad in 1990. It speaks broadly to the human rights of the child with articles 35 through 41 applying most directly.\(^{32}\) Honawa elaborates on the Optional Protocol to the CRC drafted in 2002, which provides specific guidelines regarding the involvement of children in war and armed conflicts in Article 38:

[The Convention on the rights of the Child states that] governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Children under 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in war or join the armed forces. The Convention’s Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict further develops this right, raising the age for direct participation in armed conflict to 18 and establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment for children under 18.\(^{33}\)

Can children be seen as either fully innocent or fully culpable as they participate in the acts of warfare? They occupy a unique duality as both victim and perpetrator, which human rights and international law attempt to address. In 2002, the government of Sierra Leone created the Sierra Leone Special Court (SLSC), to prosecute those most responsible for war crimes committed after


1997. The establishment of the SLSC provides a context and framework for
discussion of the duality of children as perpetrators and victims, as well as other
legal and humanitarian concerns. Desmond Tutu addresses this issue when he
writes:

> We must not close our eyes to the fact that child soldiers are both victims and
> perpetrators. They sometimes carry out the most barbaric acts of violence. But no
> matter what the child is guilty of, the main responsibility lies with us, the adults.
> There is simply no excuse, no acceptable argument for arming children.  

Human Rights Watch reports three former commanders were found guilty of
war crimes by the SLSC for the recruitment and use of child soldiers under the
age of fifteen. Both the ruling and the formation of the court itself have
broader implications, setting legal precedent in the accountability of those who
bring children into war, as well as justifying prosecution of former child
soldiers. In 2000, when the establishment of the court and its guidelines were
announced, human rights organizations supported protection for children under
the age of 15 at the end of the war, ensuring they would not be subject to any
potential prosecution, while at the same time criticizing the guidelines’ inclusion
for prosecution for children who were ages 15 to 18 years of age.

There is ample evidence that children have committed many atrocities,
seemingly of their own volition, without having been drugged or coerced, but
their culpability is subject to debate. Rosen disagrees with the international
consensus, which has existed since the mid-1970s, that children under fifteen
years of age should be immune from accountability. He is critical of humanitarian
organizations, which he claims vilify military life, as they enjoy favored status by
the U.N., and become the self-appointed definers of ‘civil society’. It is
important to consider the implications of Rosen’s viewpoint of accountability for
two main reasons.

First, is that if children are moral agents, they must be held accountable. Rosen
uses the Sierra Leone Special Court’s (SLSC) prosecutorial guidelines as evidence

---

34 Arts and Popovski, 103.
35 The 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) established a permanent court for
the prosecution of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. A significant accomplishment
of this body was defining the recruitment and use of children under fifteen as a war crime (Wessells 237-40).
36 “Sierra Leone: Landmark convictions for use of child soldiers”, Human Rights Watch, June 20, 2007,
37 Arts and Popovski, 26-27; Ramgoolie, 151-53.
38 Rosen, 134-36.
that justice cannot be served for the innumerable Sierra Leoneans who suffered greatly at the hands of children who perpetrated heinous crimes, unless these children are punished.\textsuperscript{39} Secondly, if the capacity for a child’s self-sufficiency and resilience is not recognized, even though these traits may have been subverted for devious purposes while children were at war, it will preclude them from meaningful contributions to solution building and political discourse after the war. Rosen objects to the notion that children should be immune from any prosecution, and yet still be allowed to be, “active players in the social order and shape the dynamics of the world around them.”\textsuperscript{40}

Arts and Popovski support the idea that holding children accountable for crimes of war does not necessarily require criminal prosecution. The CRC, article 12 states that a child shall be provided, “the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly or through a representative or an appropriate body.”\textsuperscript{41} The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to provide an alternative to criminal prosecution through a formal process of redress for victims and perpetrators and creates a forum for reconciliation.\textsuperscript{42} The TRC bore the lion’s share of cases when the SLSC turned its focus to prosecution of only those with the greatest responsibility for the commission of war crimes.\textsuperscript{43} The SLSC is the only international court that has the authority to prosecute children, and although no children of any age were tried in the SLSC, international legal precedent was set with this establishment of the guidelines.\textsuperscript{44}

If children are acting, whether primarily or exclusively, on the commands of adults, the argument seems justified in excluding them from prosecution, but in doing so, an unexpected paradox arises. Removing children entirely from accountability may not only preclude them from the benefits of reconciliation and healing, but it may also unintentionally jeopardize them further. According to Arts & Popovski, there is fear that total impunity for children could effectively escalate the commission of the most heinous crimes. By forcing the un-prosecutable to commit the most serious crimes, the youngest of soldiers become the logical perpetrators. Accountability is diverted away from adults

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 146-49.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 55-56, 132-35.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Arts and Popovski, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ramgoolie, 159.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Rosen, 149.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Arts and Popovski, 5.
\end{itemize}
who use children as their proxy, and children, perhaps, become the exclusive participants of atrocious acts. 45

Female Child Soldiers

According to Wessells the stereotypical image of a young rifle-toting boy has become the popular icon of the child soldier and has further marginalized female child soldiers. From 1900 to 2003, girls were involved in fighting conflicts in 38 countries and were found in the ranks of state and non-state forces. In Columbia up to 50 percent of opposition forces are girls, some as young as eight years of age. In Sri Lanka up to 42 percent of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) are girls, and in the Sierra Leone conflict, up to 35 percent of soldiers were girls. 46

Dye points out that girls often suffer a dual trauma as children and as women because they fight alongside boys or men during the day and are subjected to sexual violence at night. Girls may become the sex slaves of commanders and are often referred to as bush wives. These relationships may provide additional privileges and protection for girls but are generally founded on abuse and subservience; although there have been cases where girls claim to have been voluntary participants. 47

It is not uncommon for girl soldiers to have a child or children while they are in the bush. They often become mothers at a very young age and frequently contract sexually transmitted diseases. Culturally conceived ideas about sexual activity may lead these girls to withdraw from any former community or family for fear of rejection. 48 Wessells, in a U.S. State department report, quotes a girl from the Republic of Congo, as she describes her ordeal after joining a rebel group at 12 years of age:

One day rebels attacked my village where I lived. I hid and watched as they killed my relatives and raped my mother and sisters. I thought if I joined I would be safe...I was trained to use a gun and I performed guard duty. I was often beaten and raped by the other soldiers. One day the commander wanted me to become

46 Wessells, 86,
47 Sarah Dye, "Child Soldiers: New Evidence, New Advocacy Approaches" (United States Institute of Peace, August 2007): 3-5. http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/usip/usip10161.html (accessed October 20, 2007). Although there is no consensus about whether girls choose freely to become soldiers, humanitarian organizations support the belief that this is a 'choice' only in the sense that it may be the least detrimental option available to a girl in their current circumstances.
his wife so I tried to escape. They caught me, whipped me, and raped me every night for many days. When I was just 14, I had a baby. I don’t even know who his father is. I ran away again but I have nowhere to go and no food for the baby. I am afraid to go home.  

Ethnographic interviews reveal multiple reasons girls may join military groups. Girls and women are often relegated to the position of a second-class citizen in their respective cultures, and the opportunity to escape into the life of soldiering appears to be the better of the options available. They have often been victims of abuse in their civilian life. Although most accounts portray the life of girl soldiers as filled with sexual and physical abuse, premature motherhood, sexually transmitted diseases and ostracism from their communities of origin, there are also credible accounts of girls who claimed that their life was comparatively improved. For example, Wessells quotes an Ethiopian girl soldier describes her experience:

It was a cooperative life. The male does not behave like the others do in the civil society. They respect us. Even they advise those males who do not respect females. There was no forced sexual relationship with males. The male fighters did not force us to do anything without our interest. The male had no feeling of superiority over the female.  

The potential for autonomy, coupled with an alternative to a traditional or sub-class role in their civilian culture, appears to impact girls’ decisions to join the military. Wessells affirms that it is incomplete to view all girl soldiers as strictly passive victims. They are just as likely to embrace revolutionary ideologies as their male counterparts.  

Gislesen cites a consensus among experts that girls and women are the least likely to participate in post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration programs, known as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). Although girls represented 30 to 35 percent of combatants in Sierra Leone and Liberia, their estimated participation level in DDR programs was approximately eight percent. Some of the reasons for lack of participation are due to the structure of the

---

49 Wessells, 94.
50 Sprecht and Attree, 221-23; Wessells, 99-106.
51 Wessells, 99.
52 Ibid.
program in defining eligibility of age at time of demobilization and the degree to which the female soldier engaged in combat.  

Girls often develop a connection with their captors, which lead to a lack of participation in DDR programs. Those who bore children with commanders often see these men as their “de-facto” husbands and they opt to stay connected. These girls fear stigmatization and rejection from their families and former communities, yet needing to care for their children, they often remain with their “bush husband” after the conflict ends.  

Dye and Gislesen also propose that the lack of participation by girls in DDR programs indicates that some girls believe that demobilization is only available for those who carried—and surrendered—a weapon, or those who are still children. Being a child does not align with the image of reality for these girls, who are already mothers with adult responsibilities to care for their own children. The children of former girl soldiers may be at an even higher risk for new recruitment. Branded “rebel children”, they are often the result of rape and are likely to suffer the stigmatization and rejection by the community.  

Issues Affecting Child Soldiering in Chad

Chad is not unique in its use of child soldiers but the particularities of this case, because they appear less extreme than experiences of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, Uganda, or Liberia are effectively driving this practice into a normative realm; the treatment of child soldiers in Chad does not appear to involve atrocities, and the recruitment—and re-recruitment—of children has become very commonplace. Child soldiers in Chad may not have suffered from the most serious brutality and manipulation when compared with their counterparts in Sierra Leone or Uganda, however, the situation in Chad may create problems of a different complexity. The continual and long-term use of

---

54 Dye, 3; Gislesen, 15-16; Sprecht and Attree, 222-24.
55 Some early DDR programs were set up with these types of guidelines, but improvements are being supported to enact change that specifically targets cultural and gender-sensitive issues (Dye 16-17).
56 Dye, 3; Gislesen, 16-17. Gislesen states that girl ex-combatants in Sierra Leone and Liberia feared that “they would be labeled as ‘used goods’ with no prospects of getting married. Their children, usually conceived as the result of rape, have often been branded as ‘rebel children’ and have been likely to suffer from stigmatization and rejection similar to that experienced by their teenage mothers” (17).
57 This research did not uncover evidence of severe atrocities being committed by children that emerged from field studies in Chad by human rights organizations, but this does not reduce the detrimental effect on these children.
child soldiers in Chad, by conventional standards in a sensationalistic context, paradoxically helps to make child soldiering more difficult to eradicate. The sensibilities of civil societies are outraged when children are perceived as being drugged, coerced and brainwashed into terrorizing war-torn civilian populations. The revelation of these acts has served to desensitize civil society when comparing this to the treatment of child soldiers in Chad. When children are recruited as foot soldiers and employed in the services of the military sans the sensational atrocities, it may be seen as not only more palatable, but even defensible in the minds of some critics. These factors contribute to driving child soldiering into a normative practice, and the danger—especially in Western perception—is that when the use of child soldiers loses its most glaring offensiveness, it will be perceived as acceptable.

The accountability of children in war crimes is an important part of the current discussion in Chad, and will be highly relevant in the post conflict period. It is impossible to predict the impact in Chad if children are segregated into age-related levels of accountability, but this could potentially further jeopardize the human rights of child soldiers. The Sierra Leone Special Court (SLSC) set a precedent in the prosecutorial considerations of 15 to 18 year old ex-combatants. Although criminal accountability must focus on war crimes and atrocities, youth may be encouraged to operate underground if they perceive themselves as criminalized or fear prosecution of any kind. If 15 to 18 year olds are culpable for crimes committed as combatants, they will be highly unlikely to expose themselves to prosecution by laying down weapons and participating in government or U.N. sponsored rehabilitation. Gislesen observed in studies of West Africa that participation in effective Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs has been key to the cessation of hostilities, the recovery of ex-combatants, and the return to normalcy—not only in local communities—but also in the greater region.  

The typical DDR process involves the surrendering of children by armed forces to a humanitarian agency or non-governmental organization, the collection of weapons, and relocation of children away from war zones and into self-contained programs. In these programs, children receive psychosocial counseling rehabilitation, medical assistance, skills training, education and reintegration with their communities. Gislesen states that the ultimate goal of DDR is to reunite former child soldiers with their community of origin, and move them

---

58 Gislesen, 3-6; 40.
59 UNICEF and World Vision are the primary agencies to demobilize child soldiers.
into a productive and healthy adult life.\textsuperscript{60} Many children who enter into, and even complete DDR programs, do not achieve this goal and find themselves back in the ranks of the military either by opportunity or force. In Chad many ex-combatants have no safe community to which they can return.

Regional dynamics, political instability and continued war in Chad make it easy for the re-recruitment of children who are demobilized. The infusion of re-recruited child soldiers into a conflict can have the effect of prolonging fighting as trained forces rejoin ranks, which helps to perpetuate both the conflict itself and child soldiering. Gislesen reports that in 2002 and 2003, when fighting in Liberia escalated into full-blown war, it was not uncommon to find demobilized Sierra Leonean child soldiers in their forces. “Successful reintegration of combatants is essential—not only to ensure national stability and security, but also to ensure regional stability.”\textsuperscript{61} If child soldiers in Chad do not participate in DDR, for any number of reasons, it not only jeopardizes their future, but also that of their local and regional community.\textsuperscript{62}

Chad is at high risk for the re-recruitment of child soldiers threatening to perpetuate the conflict indefinitely. The regional instability created by the proximity of Darfur to the east and Central African Republic to the south provides not only a plentiful supply of former child soldiers, but there is no safe way for demobilized child soldiers to be reintegrated into the communities that are still suffering from constant attacks. Reunification with community and family is unlikely in Chad because so many communities have disintegrated into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and refugee camps. Without a safe place to return for reintegration the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process cannot be effective, and this is possibly worse than no process at all. If the end goal of DDR is forgiveness from, and reunification with, their community of origin, and this cannot be achieved due to continuing warfare—ex-combatants have no closure, no home and are highly vulnerable to becoming re-engaged in conflict and falling deeper into a cycle of hopelessness.\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{IDP and Refugee Camps as Sources for Child Soldiers}

\textsuperscript{60} Gislesen, 3-7. Gislesen believes that the child’s reintegration must occur in the community of origin because one the most critical elements of reintegration is reconciliation with former victims, which often include culturally based cleansing and forgiveness ceremonies (33).

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 20.

\textsuperscript{62} Girls are particularly vulnerable to re-recruitment since they participate in DDR in such low numbers.

\textsuperscript{63} Dodge and Ranudalen, quoted in Gislesen, state that there is “a belief that re-attachment to families will assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration of a child into civil society. After all, it is believed that the initial separation from family at the inception of violence is at the heart of the ‘trauma’ suffered by a child soldier” (33).
The study by Achvarina and Reich reveals a direct correlation between child participation rates in soldiering and proximity of access for combat forces to IDP and refugee camps. This becomes one of the most important considerations for Chad. Recent events have escalated the number of IDPs and refugees in Chad, and although peacekeeping forces had been initially cleared to enter Chad in early 2008, there are no signs that this will bring immediate relief for those displaced and living in camps. The potential exists for the number of child combatants to rise in proportion to the increase in population of IDPs and refugees. Achvarina and Reich conclude that:

Our principal finding is that access to these camps (and the level of their protection) is the greatest determinant of child soldier rates, and if those rates are to fall, then children need to be both fed and protected. How to do so effectively therefore becomes a central logistical and military conundrum.  

If proximity is a key factor, as it appears to be, then focused efforts must be made to mitigate the root causes for these growing sources of recruitment of child soldiers.

Policy recommendations for the U.S. Government

I recommend that the United States establish and jointly fund a multi-national Regional Peace and Human Rights Education Program in Central and Western Africa. Grassroots organizations such as Tostan, have been successful in Africa in promoting education which led to voluntary abandonment of Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and provide a model for success. When people are provided with education and empowerment to resolve their own issues, it allows for sustainable solutions to emerge from within the community. The greatest challenge with this proposal will be to find a receptive host country, but economic and development incentives for host countries, supported by the U.S. and Western governments could be a strong incentive.

---

64 Achvarina and Reich, 164
66 Tostan is an NGO currently working in nine African countries whose mission is to empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights” (http://www.tostan.org).
The U.S. should strengthen current policies and increase funding of multi-lateral voluntary refugee relocation programs. The U.S. needs to take a leadership role in establishing long and short-term solutions to the explosive population growth of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and refugee camps in Chad. Short term, immediate relief could be provided by a multi-lateral effort to fast-track the voluntarily relocation of refugees. This would not only provide some relief to individual refugees and IDPs, but it would lighten the burden for Chad as well. Also, the U.S. must loosen its restrictions on immigration from Chad. Additionally, the U.S. should provide support for referrals of war crimes to the ICC. Those adults most responsible for war crimes must be held accountable. Although the U.S. does not currently support the ICC, it must, at the very least, support referrals to this body. Without an international mechanism for justice and accountability, any peace that is achieved may be undermined without a shared perception of enforcement of the rule of law.

Further, the U.S. needs to provide economic and limited military assistance if Chad demonstrates and sustains progress toward child soldier demobilization and recruitment prevention and agrees to the monitoring of these issues by outside agencies. A self-sustaining economy is fundamental to long lasting peace. Chadians must be the participants who drive their country’s resource development plans with comprehensive and robust support from Western countries. In the past, management of African natural resources by outside powers has left significant scars throughout the continent from decades of colonial rule. Self-management of resources will lead to economic success and peace. Chad has requested military assistance, and this would clearly be a leverage point to help promote human rights and discontinue the recruitment of child soldiers.

In October 2008, President Bush signed into law the Child Soldiers Accountability Act, making it a felony offense to recruit children under 15 years of age into military service. This will allow persons to be prosecuted while on U.S. soil, regardless of the citizenship status.67 Finally, I recommend that the United States adopt two recommendations of Human Rights Watch to pass and enforce additional legislation to discontinue military aid to countries using child soldiers, and appoint a special envoy to monitor and ensure that aid to Darfur

neither ignores nor contributes to violations in Chad. By failing to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the U.S. has given the perception to most of the world that it is not fully supportive of the human rights of children. The U.S. has an opportunity to show its support of the rights of children worldwide by passing the Child Soldiers Prevention Act into law. Heightened awareness of the plight of children in war-torn developing countries has created public support for additional legislation and provides an opportunity to change negative perceptions and gives meaningful support to children. As the crisis in Darfur continues without any signs of abatement, coordinated efforts in Darfur, with the appointment of a special envoy will ensure that no unintended negative consequences occur in Chad as war rages on in Darfur.

Conclusions

Ultimately, all issues concerning human rights focus on the alleviation of human suffering. Stakes are high for child soldiers in Chad, and for the victims of violence in warfare, especially as the number of intrastate conflicts increase. Gislesen articulates the potential for the legacy of child soldiering to produce “a scarred generation among those who would be expected to become the leaders [and] drivers of economic well-being and the future of the continent [of Africa].” Wessells, however, cautions against such a sweeping view of child soldiers, and Dye states that the “majority of child soldiers are not ‘damaged goods’. They are not a lost generation.” Paradoxically, these two positions exist in tension with one another.

Strategic planning must drive the solutions. We are currently overlooking the “bigger picture” in Chad. As the factionalized fighting worsens, the IDP and refugee camps swell daily, and, in turn, produce a continual source of child soldiers. If this cycle is not broken, there is a high risk of increased instability and potential collapse of Chad’s government and economy, as well as that of numerous other countries in the region. A strategy for peace building is needed. Heightened security in the United States creates an opportunity for the argument to be made toward reducing security risks abroad by providing support in building long-term peaceful stability in volatile countries such as Chad and in the greater region. These actions would have a positive effect on global terrorism.

---


69 Gislesen, 28-29.

70 Wessells in Dye, 4.
concerns, but they must be undertaken with a high sense of urgency. According to the U.S. State Department Country Report, Chad has been a “valuable partner in the war on terror.” Present opportunities may not last if instability reaches a critical mass in Chad and in the neighboring countries. The recent escalation of violence in February 2008 was a case-in-point that action must be taken quickly.

To date, peace in any single country has not been sustainable. Broader regional peace is the viable long-term solution. Imposition of peace from external forces has not been sustainable. Peace treaties legislated from outside—particularly from Western countries—have had a dismal history of failure in this region. The best hope for eradicating war is a grassroots peace building and human rights education program, and the best policy to protect child soldiers in Chad is to eliminate the need for them.

intersections
# TABLE OF CONTENTS • PART 2

Examination of US Cities as Forces in Environmental Policy  
By Phaedra W. Boyle — University of Washington, Seattle  
325

Killing to Create: Gloria Anzaldúa’s Artistic Solution to “Cervicide”  
By Temperance K. David — State University of New York, New Palz  
349

Past, Present, and Politics: A Look at the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement  
By Amanda Mae Kāhealani Pacheco — University of San Francisco School of Law  
359

“We are the Tiniest Particle”: Authorial Agency and the Body  
By Kanna Hudson — University of Washington, Seattle  
407

The Freedom to Achieve Freedom: Negotiating the Anglo-Irish Treaty  
By Matthew Heintz — University of Washington, Seattle  
448

Situating Feminist Epistemology in a Global Frame  
By David Rubin — University of Washington, Seattle  
468

Genesis and Order in the Chaosmos: Will to Power as Creative Cosmology  
By Luke Caldwell — University of Washington, Seattle  
508

I Was Dead and Behold, I am Alive Forevermore: Responses to Nietzsche in the 20th Century Christian Theology  
By Craig Wiley — University of Washington, Seattle  
518

Religious Transformations: The Protestant Movement in the Dominican Republic  
By Daniel F. Escher — Princeton Theological Seminary  
547

Traces of Identity: Myth and Monument in the new South Africa  
By Steven C. Myers — University of Washington, Seattle  
602

Instructions for Destruction: Yoko Ono’s Performance Art  
By Whitney Frank — University of Washington, Seattle  
635

The End of (the Other Side of) the World: Apocalyptic Belief in the Australian Political Structure  
By Keith Gordon — University of Puget Sound  
671

ABSTRACT

Much of contemporary theory presents the human subject as deprived of agency, a mere “product” of converging biological, social, political, semiotic and/or linguistic forces. This essay examines Gloria Anzaldúa’s allegorical poem “Cervicide,” about Self-murder or suicide, to argue that, indeed, the Subject—especially the border-dwelling, rejected Other—is often positioned by culture to resist, reinterpret, and recombine those same constitutive influences to, in effect, remake the Self. Louis Althusser’s theories on ideology and art, Sigmund Freud’s speculations on the mind of the creative writer, and Virginia Woolf’s descriptions of her own creative process are brought to bear upon Anzaldúa’s discussion of the artist-as-shaman and the role of art in the quest for a “complete” Self. I argue that “good art,” in both the Althusserian and Anzaldúan senses, arises from the artist’s (often psychologically painful) engagement with the ideology that shapes her; in addition, beyond the artist’s personal creative process, art must, to be successful or “good,” transform the ideology that constructs the consciousness of the viewer/participant, thereby, changing the larger culture and its influences upon the Subject.


© 2009 intersections, Temperance K. David. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of intersections and the author
Killing to Create
Gloria Anzaldúa’s Artistic Solution to “Cervicide”

By Temperance K. David
State University of New York, New Paltz

In Gloria Anzaldúa’s poem “Cervicide,” a young girl, named Prieta, unwillingly murders the family pet, a fawn, to prevent her father’s imprisonment. The author’s footnote to the title recommends reading the poem as allegory: “In archetypal symbology the Self appears as a deer for women”; by extension, the “cervicide” or killing of a deer is also a “suicide” or Self-murder. Although Prieta’s hands wield the fatal hammer, circumstances undermine her culpability; she knows la guardia, the game warden, and his hounds are patrolling her home territory, and the “penalty for being caught in possession of a deer [is] $250 or jail.” The threat of the warden’s arrival is enough to send Prieta’s family into a panic; to avoid the severely destabilizing influence of the Repressive State Apparatus (to borrow an Althusserian term) upon their economy and social unit, the family is compelled to kill their beloved la venadita.

The fawn’s murder seems tragically inevitable: the family cannot set Venadita free because, domesticated, she will only “seconds later return”; they also cannot hide her because “la guardia’s hounds would sniff Venadita out.” Even the instrument and manner of her death are, in part, determined by the State; because the warden is close enough to hear gunfire, the family must choose between a knife or hammer—relatively unwieldy and likely more painful means. In a similarly reductive manner, Anzaldúa illustrates how it is, specifically, Prieta who must kill Venadita, the Self. Prieta’s father is absent and her “mother couldn’t do it. She, Prieta, would have to be the one.” While conveying the mother’s deep attachment, her matter-of-factly stated inability to kill Venadita also narrows the logical scope of the fawn’s signification: if Venadita is the Self who must be killed, and if Prieta is the only one who can kill her, then Venadita is also Prieta—the two are one. Only the Self can kill the Self, therefore, the one who kills the fawn is the fawn, i.e., Prieta.

---

1 Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands: the new mestiza = La frontera. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999), 127.
2 Ibid., 126.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Color specifies both identity and association: “Prieta” is a nickname for “one who is dark skinned”5 while Venadita’s fur is “tawny” and “spotted,” “the most beautiful thing Prieta had ever seen”6—no other characters in the poem have color. Additionally, an ambiguity produced by the close alternation of sentence subjects further aligns these figures: “The weight folded her body backwards. A thud reverberated on Venadita’s skull, a wave undulated down her back. Again, a blow behind the ear. Though Venadita’s long lashes quivered, her eyes never left Prieta’s face.”7 The arching of Prieta’s back as she lifts the hammer, and the undulation of Venadita’s back as she experiences the first blow, suggest a shared physicality; here, Venadita gazes at and with the eyes of her killer.

The female gender also marks the Self’s powerlessness. Anzaldúa describes both Prieta and the fawn as daughters of, essentially, ineffectual mothers: Prieta’s mother “couldn’t do it”—could neither protect nor kill the Self for Prieta—while a “hunter had shot [Venadita’s] mother,” greatly decreasing the fawn’s chances for survival.8 To live, these daughters must rely upon a patriarchal economy: while Prieta’s father is too financially important to be sent to jail for the sake of the fawn/girl, Venadita is “bottle-fed,” that is, made physically dependent upon a culture that both creates and prohibits her dependency. Here, culture constructs the individual “first as kin—as sister, as father, as padrino—and last as self”—the family unit is more important than the female child.9 Circumstances call for Prieta’s suicide, she “would have to be the one”10 to kill the fawn; interpellated by ideology, Prieta recognizes and performs her clear function or role, within this situation, to kill her Self:

It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are ‘obviousnesses’) obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot fail to recognize and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying (aloud or in the ‘still, small voice of conscience’): ‘That’s obvious! That’s right! That’s true!’11

---

5 Ibid., 127.
6 Ibid., 126.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 40.
10 Ibid., 126. Emphasis mine.
In “Cervicide,” the Self belongs to the State. The family, particularly Prieta, is not permitted to nurture or possess a Self that is not “always-already” owned by the State. Although the domesticated fawn, when released back into the wild, returns to the family, the fawn’s “choice” is irrelevant—its presence constructs the family as thieves of State property. Although they possess firearms, a .22 and 40-40, there is no discussion of using these to defend Venadita against the unquestionably more powerful State. State violence and ideology (evident in familial relations and priorities), then, move the Subject to self-destruct: “Prieta found the hammer. She had to grasp it with both hands”; it is always-already “obvious” that a Self cannot be permitted to live and develop outside the domain of the State. The State’s authority is so perfectly absolute that, not only does the situation demand Venadita’s murder, it also becomes necessary to hide and bury any sign of her former existence.

In its particular relation to Prieta, the fawn’s narrower scope of signification describes the “intimate terrorism” experienced by the woman of color living in a borderland culture. Prieta, as also-Venadita, is given no choice but to be motherless, dependent, domesticated, and suicidal: “Alienated from her mother culture, ‘alien’ in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can’t respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits.” Like Althusser’s Subject that is always-already interpellated by ideology, Anzaldúa’s identity is constructed by culture:

Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power—men. Males make the laws; women transmit them.

The dominant culture constructs the border-dweller as a negation, in the author’s case: not-white, but also not-Mexican, not-Indian; not-male, but also not fully-female either. The border-dweller’s several categories of identity are constructed oppositionally, canceling each other out, so she cannot “legitimately” or “authentically” participate in (i.e., share power with) any one identity.

12 Anzaldúa, 126.
13 Ibid., 42.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid. 38.
Anzaldúa suggests that the dominant culture prevents the educated, lesbian woman of mixed ethnicity from being at peace with herself; she is unceasingly harassed and invalidated.

Growing up in a male-dominated, working-class Mexican culture (itself dominated by a male-dominated Anglo culture), Anzaldúa was discouraged from education, reading, and art-making, since these were neither practical nor feminine enough:

I would pass many hours studying, reading, painting, writing. Every bit of self-faith I’d painstakingly gathered took a beating daily. Nothing in my culture approved of me. Había agarrado malos pasos. Something was ‘wrong’ with me. Estaba más alla de la tradición.¹⁶

Educated, nevertheless, at an Anglo school, Anzaldúa similarly learned to deny those ‘psychic experiences’ and ‘spirit world’ beliefs recognized within her Mexican and Indian cultures: “I accepted their [Anglo] reality, the ‘official’ reality of the rational, reasoning mode which is connected with external reality, the upper world, and is considered the most developed consciousness—the consciousness of duality.”¹⁷ As a border-dweller, Anzaldúa’s Subject is doubly-denied her experience of reality by these conflicting, competing, and occasionally overlapping ideologies. When the ideologies overlap, she will be unaware that she is “inside ideology” (Althusser would suggest that we, as subjects, are always inside ideology) until (if ever) that part of her ideologically-constructed identity is denied by an incongruous experience or competing ideology. When the Subject is formed by opposing ideologies, she is a house divided against itself; neither “us” nor “them,” she is in ideology’s border-territory, the dominant culture’s collective unconscious, a “vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.”¹⁸ The Subject cannot develop a locus from which to act, so her subject-formation is in stasis, paralyzed.

Anzaldúa describes this painful paralysis as la Coatlicue: “the symbol of the underground aspects of the psyche. Coatlicue is the mountain, the Earth Mother who conceived all celestial being out of her cavernous womb.”¹⁹ After she is killed, Venadita is buried in the earth, safely (for Prieta and her family) hidden from the awareness of the State in the individual and/or collective unconscious;

---

¹⁶ Ibid., 38.
¹⁷ Ibid., 58.
¹⁸ Ibid., 25.
¹⁹ Ibid., 68.
yet, Venadita’s scent influences the behavior of the hounds, and her absence is present for the mourning Prieta. Through Venadita’s death, then, the State effectively defines Prieta as painfully lacking and incomplete—a border-dweller who fails to be defined by the dominant values. For Prieta, her Venadita-self is repressed in the unconscious, albeit, in Coatlicue, “Frozen in stasis, she perceives a slight / movement—a thousand slithering serpent hairs, / Coatlicue.”

Although Prieta kills and buries Venadita, her sorrow signifies a Self at ideologically odds with the State: “Wailing is the Indian, Mexican and Chicana woman’s feeble protest when she has no other recourse.”

The perceived loss of Venadita causes Prieta to develop la facultad: “anything that takes one from one’s habitual grounding, causes the depths to open up, causes a shift in perception”; this painful shift, Anzaldua explains, “makes us pay attention to the soul, and we are thus carried into an awareness—an experiencing of soul (Self).”

In his essay “Creative Writers and Daydreaming,” Freud suggests that inappropriate wishes become repressed by the conscious mind to avoid violent conflict with the Subject’s environment. The unconscious mind, so theorized, allows these submerged wishes to be acted upon only in dreams and fantasies, that is, in the liminal, border territory between the unconscious and conscious mind. Because the dominant culture constructs Prieta as painfully lacking a Venadita-self, it (presumably) also constructs a desire within the Subject to find a solution to her pain, to act. Until (if ever) full self-expression is possible, Prieta’s Venadita-self will be dreamed or fantasized. As Freud suggests,

Actually, we can never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate. In the same way, the growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects; instead of playing, he now fantasies. He builds castles in the air and creates what are called daydreams.

Prieta does not bury Venadita without burying some aspect of herself; that is, Venadita’s condition is always—also Prieta’s: both are covered in dust. Burying her Venadita-self and all of its attached desires, i.e. her psychological repression, obstructs her from creating a fully-formed identity: “My resistance, my refusal to

---

20 Ibid., 69.
21 Ibid., 55.
22 Ibid., 51.
know some truth about myself brings on that paralysis, depression—brings on the Coatlicue state.”24 When the object of repression is so entirely unacceptable to the ideologically-constructed consciousness of the Subject, when fantasies and daydreams fail to provide a necessary or satisfactory “outlet” for this repressed object to emerge, the Subject is forced to act. As long as the Venadita-self is repressed, Prieta will be in pain; she must find a way to return Venadita to the world:

When I don’t write the images down for several days or weeks or months, I get physically ill. Because writing invokes from my unconscious, and because some of the images are residues of trauma which I then have to reconstruct, I sometimes get sick when I do write. I can’t stomach it, become nauseous, or burn with fever, worsen. But, in reconstructing the traumas behind the images, I make ‘sense’ of them, and once they have ‘meaning’ they are changed, transformed. It is then that writing heals me, brings me great joy.25

Making meaning from trauma, Prieta can change the dominant ideology that constructs her as incomplete and lacking.

“Living in a state of psychic unrest, in a Borderland,” Anzaldúa writes, “is what makes poets write and artists create”;26 la frontera is a state of mind. The writing process, for Anzaldúa, produces an anxiety similar to that experienced by the in-between identity of Chicana or queer: there is “a lot of squirming, coming up against all sorts of walls. Or its opposite: nothing defined or definite, a boundless, floating state of limbo where I kick my heels, brood, percolate, hibernate and wait for something to happen.”27 The anxiety is similar because, for the creative writer, the writing process engages and/or creates a psychological border territory, a liminal space for the passage of repressed or stored images and wishes to present themselves to the conscious mind; inasmuch as the creative process is, in this way, a negotiation of ideology, the writer/artist necessarily must negotiate her identity.

In order to create (to put images and ideas together in new ways, in combinations that would be considered “new” or original in the dominant culture), the writer/artist enters a “trance” state as she engages, sifts, sorts, and permits particular wishes/images to emerge and be manipulated by her conscious

24 Anzaldúa, 70.
25 Ibid., 92.
26 Ibid., 95.
27 Ibid., 94.
mind. Virginia Woolf, in her 1931 speech addressed to The Women’s Service League posthumously titled “Professions for Women,” describes the necessity of killing the ideologically-constructed “selfless” feminine identity, or “Angel of the House,” before a woman can even begin to write: “Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing.”

The Subject who is not fully defined by the dominant culture, whose voice is Other, must confront and invalidate an ideology that denies the full expression of her experience: “you cannot review even a novel without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex.” In the same vein, Anzaldúa writes, “To write, to be a writer, I have to trust and believe in myself as a speaker, as a voice for the images...I cannot separate my writing from any part of my life. It is all one.” To kill her “Angel of the House,” Anzaldúa must “reprogram” her consciousness: “This involves looking my inner demons in the face, then deciding which I want in my psyche. Those I don’t want, I starve...Neglected, they leave. This is harder to do than to merely generate ‘stories’.”

Once the writer overcomes her initial self-doubt, she can begin to engage her unconscious mind; Woolf writes, “a novelist’s chief desire is to be as unconscious as possible.” The writer must make her conscious mind passive, somehow receptive, to allow her unconscious to deliver what it will; the conscious mind cannot know ahead of time what it needs from the unconscious. Woolf uses a fishing metaphor:

I want you to imagine me writing a novel in a state of trance. I want you to figure to yourselves a girl sitting with a pen in her hand, which for minutes, and indeed for hours, she never dips into the inkpot. The image that comes to my mind when I think of this girl is the image of a fisherman lying sunk in dreams on the verge of a deep lake with a rod held out over the water.

Like Woolf, Anzaldúa discusses trance as an essential part of her creative process. If, however, the writer/artist cannot make “sense” of the wishes and images presented by her unconscious, that is, if she cannot find a way to represent and negotiate these repressed ideas with the dominant ideology, she will remain with

29 Ibid.
30 Anzaldúa, 95.
31 Ibid., 92-93.
32 Woolf and Leaska, 280.
33 Ibid.
Coatlicue: “It is her reluctance to cross over, to make a hole in the fence and walk across, to cross the river, to take that flying leap into the dark, that drives her to escape, that forces her into the fecund cave of her imagination where she is cradled in the arms of Coatlicue.” 34 This painful stasis, if allowed to last, can lead to a self-annihilating fragmentation, unless the writer/artist uses the creative process to create a more expansive and resilient identity: “I go on to suppose that the shock-receiving capacity is what makes me a writer,” Woolf writes in “A Sketch of the Past,” “[writing] gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together.” 35 When the writer/artist succeeds, “the repressed energy rises, makes decisions, connects with conscious energy and a new life begins”; 36 not only does negotiation between the conscious and unconscious minds produce images that are “new” within the dominant ideology, but it allows the artist to re-create her Self.

Althusser suggests a special relationship between “real art, not works of an average or mediocre level” and ideology: “What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of ‘seeing,’ ‘perceiving,’ and ‘feeling,’ (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes.” 37 What Althusser describes as the “internal distantiation” produced by “real art” (Balzac and Solzhenitsyn are his examples) may be the result of this intermixing, synthesizing, and juxtaposing of conscious and unconscious elements; in other words, this effect may be a byproduct of the artist’s simultaneous engagement, in “trance,” with both her ideologically-formed consciousness and what is rejected by ideology and repressed in the unconscious. Bad art would merely reproduce ideology; it would be either perfectly acceptable (and, therefore, unremarkable and unmemorable) or wholly rejected (it would fail to be effective in its challenge to ideology).

The Subject’s experience of rejection from the dominant culture, allows (forces) her to perceive, at least unconsciously, those repressive and ideological State apparatuses that create her as Other. Anzaldúa describes la facultad as “the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the

34 Anzaldúa, 71.
36 Anzaldúa, 71.
deep structure below the surface,” suggesting that those who are rejected by the dominant culture can better perceive its multiple faces. 38 As the rejected subject is interfaced by ideology and what ideology rejects, she develops “an instant ‘sensing,’ a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, behind which feelings reside/hide.” 39 The artist’s particular sensitivity to the connection between the repressed, unconscious self and the ideologically-formed conscious self is, perhaps, what allows her work to be aesthetically pleasing to others; that is, the artist communicates what everyone intersected by ideology experiences and, so, her audience recognizes something “true” in her work.

Freud suggests, “our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds”; by negotiating formally repressed images or ideas with the conscious mind, formally re-presenting them in a “disguise” or through symbols, etc., the artist/writer enables “us thenceforward to enjoy our own daydreams without self-reproach or shame.” 40 In order to make sense of and evaluate this imagery, to accept it or reject it, the audience will necessarily engage with the ideology that shapes them. For Anzaldúa, Western European culture produces art “dedicated to the validation of itself,” to reproducing the State; tribal art, she suggests, performs a different cultural function: “The works are treated not just as objects, but also as persons. The ‘witness’ is a participant in the enactment of the work in a ritual, and not a member of the privileged classes.” 41 In this way, the “participant,” it would appear, is encouraged to become co-creator of both Self/ideology/culture through art: “When invoked in rite, the object/event is ‘present’; that is, ‘enacted,’ it is both a physical thing and the power that infuses it.” 42 The ideologically-constructed Self becomes, through ritual, an idea interacting with other ideas, transforming herself on the level of ideas: “The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic. The writer, as shape-changer, is a nahual, a shaman.” 43 The artist’s role is to lead the audience-participant into the dark, forbidden, repressed, rejected, Other, liminal aspects of the Self—into the border-territory—where they can actively contribute to the process of forming a whole Self and borderless culture:

38 Anzaldúa, 60.
39 Ibid.
40 Freud and Gay, 443.
41 Anzaldúa, 90.
42 Ibid., 89.
43 Ibid.
My “awakened dreams” are about shifts. Thought shifts, reality shifts, gender shifts: one person metamorphoses into another in a world where people fly through the air, heal from mortal wounds. I am playing with my Self, I am playing with the world’s soul, I am the dialogue between my Self and el espíritu del mundo. I change myself, I change the world.44

Making meaning from pain, and offering an opportunity, through art, for others to similarly “negotiate” meaning, Anzaldúa’s artist-shaman changes culture and ideology; if she is constructed by ideology, as Althusser would suggest, then, she is also constructed by ideology to change ideology—her pain forces her to act. “My soul makes itself through the creative act,” Anzaldúa writes, “It is constantly remaking and giving birth to itself through my body. It is this learning to live with la Coatlique that transforms living in the Borderlands from a nightmare into a numinous experience. It is always a path/state to something else.”45 As long as there are borders defining a culture, there will be those who are outside, Other, who are positioned by the culture to challenge its definition of itself. Prieta-Venadita is positioned by the dominant culture to mourn her Self and, thereby, to protest or resist the values of the State and family. If the artist/writer is the culture’s mechanism for transforming itself, it appears she also has some say in the ideology that forms her. Venadita’s murder becomes, eventually, the impetus for change, renewal, rebirth.

Temperance David received a Bachelor’s degree in both Creative Writing and Literature from SUNY Purchase College in 2005, and is currently in her final semester of graduate studies in English at SUNY New Paltz. Her literary and scholarly interests include creativity theory, comic books, postcolonial literature, and creative nonfiction.

44 Ibid., 92.
45 Ibid., 95.

ABSTRACT

For many years, Hawai‘i has been a favored destination of vacationers and adventurers, colonizers and usurpers. Its beautiful landscape and strategic placement lend itself for these purposes. However, there is another side of Hawai‘i that many do not see, and even less understand. When the sunscreen, ABC Stores, and hotel lū‘au’s are left behind, one will find that there is a part of Hawai‘i that longs for the return of its independence, its identity, its rights. This Hawai‘i no longer wishes to see its people impoverished or imprisoned. It no longer wishes to be forgotten in history books, and remembered only when it’s time to plan a family trip over the summer. This is the Hawai‘i being fought for by those in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement and is addressed in this article.


© 2009 intersections, Amanda Mae Kāhealani Pacheco. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of intersections and the author
Past, Present, and Politics
A Look at the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement

By Amanda Mae Kāhealani Pacheco
University of San Francisco, School of Law

Introduction

For many years, Hawai‘i has been a favored destination of vacationers and adventurers, colonizers and usurpers. Its’ beautiful landscape and strategic placement lend itself for these purposes. However, there is another side of Hawai‘i that many do not see, and even less understand. When the sunscreen, ABC Stores, and hotel lū‘au’s are left behind, one will find that there is a part of Hawai‘i that longs for the return of its independence, its identity, its rights. This Hawai‘i no longer wishes to see its people impoverished or imprisoned. It no longer wishes to be forgotten in history books, and remembered only when it’s time to plan a family trip over the summer. This is the Hawai‘i being fought for by those in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, and this is the movement to be addressed in this article.

The participants and supporters of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement want some form of independence or self rule; they want native communities to rise up and work towards the common goal of nationhood; and, perhaps most of all, they want to live in a place where native Hawaiians have been given, as much as possible, their way of life back, as it once was before colonization, assimilation, and acculturation took over their identities.

In order to gain a general overview of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, one must first understand who the people are that the movement implicates. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Hawaiian is defined as being “A native or resident of Hawai‘i, especially one of Polynesian ancestry.” The language, “especially,” implies that the term “Hawaiian” cannot only be used to describe those of Polynesian ancestry, but also those who are born in or have become residents of Hawai‘i but are not of Hawaiian Polynesian descent. As such, for the purposes of this article the definition of a native Hawaiian will refer to someone who is specifically of Hawaiian Polynesian ancestry. This definition is chosen because being native Hawaiian, for many in the sovereignty movement, is about blood. Native Hawaiian sovereignty leader, lawyer and scholar Mililani
Trask, writes that “To be Hawaiian (for political and other reasons) you have to have the koko (blood). I don’t agree with, and do not support, the concept of being ‘Hawaiian at heart’...You never hear of someone being ‘Japanese at heart.’ There is a racial connotation to that phrase.”

Haunani-Kay Trask, a Professor of Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa and sovereignty leader, writes that, “there is the claim [by non-natives] that Hawaiians, the Native people of Hawai‘i, are the same as settlers to Hawai‘i. Apart from denying Hawaiians their 2,000-year-old indigenous history, this position also equates a voluntary status (settlers) with involuntary status (a forced change in nationality resulting from colonization). This argument often underlies state and federal policy.” Haunani-Kay Trask emphasizes that the difference between Kanaka Maoli – Native Hawaiians – in Hawai‘i today, and Hawai‘i residents who are not of native Hawaiian blood is simply that residents who settled in Hawai‘i voluntarily gave up their homeland rights; native Hawaiians, on the other hand, have had those rights taken from them.

Therefore native Hawaiian is used in reference to the indigenous peoples of Hawai‘i who existed in the archipelago before Western contact, as well as the people of native Hawaiian blood, whose histories are tied inextricably with the history of that place dating back 2,000 years. The “Hawaiian sovereignty movement” refers to the purposes of the movement itself, since not all those who participate in the movement are native Hawaiians. Though the sovereignty movement is a fight to gain self-determination and self-governance for native Hawaiians, many non-natives are supporters of the cause as well and will most definitely be implicated in any of its results.

Identity, History, and the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement

The issue of being a native Hawaiian, or simply a resident of Hawai‘i, becomes part of the larger discussion of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement when we take into account what the movement hopes to achieve, and why change is

---

1 Ho’oipo Decamba, “An Interview with Mililani Trask,” He alo a he alo: face to face, Hawaiian voices on sovereignty (Honolulu: The Hawai‘i Area Office of the American Friends Service Committee, 1993), 113.
2 Defined as “having originated in and being produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment.”
3 Haunani-Kay Trask, From a native daughter: colonialism and sovereignty in Hawai‘i (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 30.
4 Ibid. Haunani-Kay Trask and Mililani B. Trask are sisters.
desired and/or necessary. To understand this, one must first understand the history of Hawai‘i.

United States interests in Hawai‘i, as more than a friendly neighbor became clear to the Hawaiian monarch, as well as to the people of Hawai‘i, when white settlers began buying up a majority of the Kingdom’s land, as well as asserting themselves in the national government. These strategic moves inevitably made it easier for white landholders, businessmen and other rich plantation owners to usurp power from the already dwindling native population and weakening monarchy. When Queen Lili‘uokalani assumed the throne and attempted to establish a new constitution in 1893 (which was to rectify the dismal situation of native Hawaiians), United States businessmen such as Sanford B. Dole and American Minister to the Islands John L. Stevens took it upon themselves to enlist the help of U.S. troops stationed at Pearl Harbor to protect American lives which they claimed the new constitution purportedly put in jeopardy. In direct violation of Kingdom law as well as international treaty, the troops were marched to ‘Iolani Palace and, under the threat of military power, the Queen was ordered to step down from her throne. She was subsequently imprisoned in her bedroom for eight months before the new Provisional American government in place in Hawai‘i released her and forced her abdication. The Hawaiian Kingdom was illegally annexed in 1898.

Dudley and Agard estimate before contact with the West (1778), 1 million native Hawaiians lived in the Hawaiian archipelago. By 1892 this number had diminished to a mere 40,000. “Today,” Dudley and Agard write, “there are a mere 8,244 [full-blooded native Hawaiians left]. That is 992,000 less people [than before Western contact], a decrease of more than 99%.” This dismal history, coupled with the persistence of Western colonization in the State of Hawai‘i today, has led to the creation of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement in the mid-1970’s that still remains true to its cause in 2009. Thus, it is said that:

---


6 Ibid.


8 According to the 2002 Native Hawaiian Databook, native Hawaiians have the highest percentage of abortions by teens under the age of 17, the highest percentages of drug abuse by teens in the 9th-12th grade level, the highest percentage of State offenders and third highest percentage of murder victims, the highest rate of arrests among youths, and the second highest percentage of homelessness. *Native Hawaiian databook* (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2002), http://www.oha.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=101&Itemid=173 (accessed Jan. 14, 2009)
Deep in the soul of all Hawaiians is a desire to speak our own language, to relate with the natural world publicly and unashamedly as our ancestors did, to think our own thoughts, to pursue our own aspirations, to develop our own arts, to workshop our own goods, to follow our own moral system, to see our own people when we look around us, to be Hawaiians again. We long to make contributions to the world as Hawaiians, to exist as a Hawaiian nation, to add ‘a Hawaiian presence’ to the world community. Establishment of a sovereign Hawaiian nation will give us that chance.  

Natives and non-natives alike have begun fighting for self-governance, for independence, and for justice by both participating in and through the support of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. They are mobilized and educated, and are ready to become players in the political arena that determines the future of Hawai‘i, the unwillingly and illegally colonized playground of the United States. The movement has been building strength, and the voices of its followers are now ready to be heard. What are some of the options that the people of Hawai‘i have regarding sovereignty? Are sovereignty, self-governance, independence, and justice feasible goals? Is the movement for sovereignty a practical and probable enough ambition to be achieved? And what do those who live in Hawai‘i today think of the movement? These are all questions this article hoping to answer.

This is not meant to be a comprehensive critical analysis of the depth and breadth of entire movement. Instead, I develop of general description of three different, representative perspectives of the movement, in the hope of spurring further dialogue and research on the topic as a whole.

The History of the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement

E Kū Kanaka. Stand tall, people of Hawai‘i. This is a call for strength, confidence, and perhaps sovereignty as well. But what is sovereignty? When did it begin? What does it mean for future native Hawaiians? This section will explore those questions in order to better understand what exactly the Hawaiian sovereignty movement is. It will do so by expanding on the brief history of the movement given in the previous section, as well as by investigating

---

9 Dudley and Agard, ix.
the ways that resistance has manifested itself, both historically and contemporarily, in order to offer a field of reference when considering the path sovereignty has taken to get to its current state.

The first step in this discussion, however, is to define in clear terms what the accepted meaning of the word ‘sovereignty’ is. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, ‘sovereignty’ refers to “supreme power especially over a body politics; freedom from external control; autonomy; controlling influence,” and can also be summed up to mean “an autonomous state.” With this in mind, let us begin by discussing what the Hawaiian sovereignty movement is, at its root, and what it hopes to accomplish.

The Birth of a Movement

When I think of sovereignty, sovereignty sounds like there’s a group of people – Hawaiians – who are living in a dominant culture – Western – who feel that some of the policies, attitudes or ways put a halt to some of their own goals. And when this group of people, Hawaiian people, come together and say: “Let’s form this community,” or nation, or whatever you call it; and say: “let’s draw up something that we can have a voice in how we want to govern our lives.” I know that’s a crude definition but that’s the way I look at it, just a group of people who say: “Okay, this is what we want: we don’t want Joe Blow over there telling us what to do, we respect Joe Blow, but we would like that same respect in return.”

This passage above is an excerpt from an interview in which a Wai‘anae man, and sovereignty leader, articulates what many in the movement feel is at the root of sovereignty. Dudley and Agard chronicle the start of the sovereignty movement and offer a key reason for its inception when they state that, “After decades that saw Hawaiians denying and neglecting their cultural heritage, the early 1970’s brought a renewal of interest in traditional Hawaiian music, arts, and crafts…The time was right…It was okay to be Hawaiian again…And Hawaiians began to be proud of being Hawaiian again.” This sense of pride in Hawaiian culture and history is, according to Dudley and Agard, what helped to facilitate the birth of the sovereignty movement. Native Hawaiians are proud to be indigenous to this land; they are proud to have their own language, music, and society; and most of all, they are proud to have had their own government. The

---

11 Ho’oipo Decambra, “An Interview with Lyle Kaloi,” He alo a he alo: face to face, Hawaiian voices on sovereignty (Honolulu: The Hawai‘i Area Office of the American Friends Service Committee, 1993), 94.

12 Dudley and Agard, 107.
sovereignty movement is a fight to regain that government, that source of pride.\textsuperscript{13}

This sense of pride manifested itself in grassroots organizations beginning to protest and rally publicly against further land dispossession suffered by native Hawaiians, and the continuing urbanization of kaikua’ana o nā kanaka.\textsuperscript{14} Haunani-Kay Trask writes that “[The] Hawaiian Movement evolved from a series of protests against land abuses, through various demonstrations and occupations to dramatize the exploitative conditions of Hawaiians, to assertions of Native forms of sovereignty based on indigenous birthrights to land and sea.”\textsuperscript{15} Specifically, the protest movements that began in the 70’s were first known as anti-eviction efforts, or efforts to thwart the continued use of the island of Kaho‘olawe for target practice by the United States military. “The movement [then] evolved both cultural and political demands that focused on the historical injury of the overthrow and annexation. The goals of [the native Hawaiian sovereignty] movement now include some form of self-government, the creation of a public educational system in the Hawaiian language, and legal entitlements to a national land base, including water rights.”\textsuperscript{16}

What sets the Hawaiian sovereignty movement apart from many other movements for indigenous rights is that, although many native and non-native Hawaiians have mobilized as a community in the name of sovereignty, they have taken that mobilization a step farther and organized themselves into more than 300 different factions.\textsuperscript{17} These factions, while in agreement on the need for self-determination in a general sense, are vying for recognition, legitimacy, and in most cases, different forms of sovereignty in the name of Hawai‘i. In a two-day sovereignty convention held in 1988, spokespersons from six of the major pro-sovereignty groups came together to clearly state their stances on a number of positions concerning the native community. What was made clear at this conference was that:

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 107.
\textsuperscript{14} Literally translates to: “the older sibling of the Hawaiian people.” Refers to the historical Kumulipo (the genealogical legend – or creation story – of Hawaii), which names the land as the older sibling of the people. It instills in the people a sense of familial connection with the land, and requires them to care for it, as it cares for them.
\textsuperscript{15} Haunani-Kay Trask, From a native daughter, 66.
\textsuperscript{17} Daniel Wood, “Hawaii’s Search for Sovereignty,” The Christian Science Monitor, October 17, 1994, 10.
it was not yet time [for sovereignty groups] to solidify on one stand. The Hawaiian people as a whole need to be presented with a number of possibilities for future nationhood, and have the time to explore them, so that when they are finally asked to vote, they will make the most enlightened choice.\textsuperscript{18}

In the years since the conference, these different groups have continued to take their views out to the people for consideration. Some groups, like Kōkua Kalama, were formed in direct opposition to the further development of Hawaiian lands, and continue to focus on the dispossession and rights of native Hawaiians. Groups like ‘Ohana o Hawai‘i (The Extended Family of Hawai‘i), which was founded in 1974 and is one of the longest running native Hawaiian sovereignty organizations, focus primarily on the political aspects of sovereignty, “having taken the case of the illegally overthrown Hawaiian nation before the World Court at The Hague, and before a number of other international tribunals, calling for the decolonization of Hawai‘i, and laying the groundwork for recognition of an eventual declaration of actual sovereignty.”\textsuperscript{19} And still other groups, like A.L.O.H.A. focus on reparations for the illegal overthrow and annexation of our monarchy and our kingdom.

But perhaps the clearest and most concise reason for the creation of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement comes from the legal testimony of international scholar, Professor Francis Boyle, who stated that:

\begin{quote}
The State of Hawai‘i, the federal government, are…the civilian arms of the military occupation authority, and…do not have sovereignty powers. The sovereignty resides in the people…An independent sovereign nation is one way a people who are threatened with extermination by means of [cultural] genocide can attempt to protect themselves…What is the best way to protect the existence of your people?…To proclaim your own state, [to restore the inherent sovereignty of the people] and then ultimately seek international recognition and finally United Nations membership…\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

With this in mind, supporters of sovereignty hold to a saying that dates back to the time of Kamehameha I, the first king of Hawai‘i, which translates to: “So many Hawaiians are not surviving in the world of the white man. Give us our

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{18} Dudley and Agard, 125.
\footnote{19} Ibid., 113.
\end{footnotes}
lands and seas, and let us return to the ways of our culture. Hawaiians can survive if they can be Hawaiian and live Hawaiian.²¹

The Tools of Struggle

Since the early days of U.S. occupation in the islands, survival for Hawaiians has been synonymous with resistance to American oppression, and early forms of resistance are what Hawaiians now consider the first indications of the impending push for sovereignty.²² In 1998, a committee wishing to educate the public on the 1897 anti-annexation struggle by native Hawaiians obtained 556 pages – 21,269 signatures – of the official petition opposing annexation.²³ From then on, people would have physical proof that their grandparents or great-grandparents were activists for sovereignty. “The petition, inscribed with the names of everyone’s kūpuna [elders], gave people permission from their ancestors to participate in the quest for national sovereignty. More important, it affirmed for them that their kūpuna had not stood by idly, apathetically, while their nation was taken from them. Instead, contrary to every history book on the shelf, they learned that their ancestors had, as James Kaulia put it, taken up the honorable field of struggle.”²⁴

Contemporary native Hawaiians learned that their ancestors had not willingly allowed their country, their homeland, and their beloved leaders to be taken over. Instead, they had fought in a number of ways to stem off the flow of American colonization. One of the most common ways of proclaiming solidarity, both then and now, was through the use of ‘olelo Hawai‘i, or the Hawaiian language. “Songs, poems, and stories with the potential for kaona, or ‘hidden meanings,’ presented…opportunities to express anticolonial sentiments. People made use of these forms, and they created and maintained their national solidarity through publication of these and more overtly political essays in newspapers.”²⁵

For example, in the days following the overthrow of Queen Lili‘uokalani, and the imprisonment of many of her followers, Hawaiian language newspapers used key phrases and morals in the stories and legends printed on their pages to

²¹ Dudley and Agard, 93.
²³ Ibid., 4.
²⁴ Ibid., 4.
²⁵ Ibid., 5.
encourage those who were fighting for sovereignty, and instill hope in those who felt as if it were a losing battle. The Queen regularly submitted songs and poems to their papers that spoke to her people in ways that she was not allowed to do vocally, reminding them that they were the rightful heirs of the land, that their monarch had not forgotten them, and that justice would prevail. “Four mele [songs] were apparently smuggled out of the queen’s prison room to the newspaper Ka Makaainana, where they were published in weekly installments. Her main message in these mele was that her heart was still with her people and her nation, and that contrary to the representation being made by the [pro-republic] papers she had not abandoned the po‘e aloha ‘aina or the struggle for their nation.”

Today, those mele and stories are used as a source of pride and inspiration for participants in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

As the occupation by America went on, those loyal to the Hawaiian Nation of the time signed petitions calling for the reinstatement of the Queen and the return of the kingdom. The Queen herself, once released from her eight-month imprisonment by the illegal Provisional Government, went to Washington to appeal to American government officials for justice to be done. What is important to note here is that unlike many other struggles for decolonization, such as conflicts like the Northern Ireland Troubles, the native Hawaiian struggle from its outset has been a non-violent one, with supporters of sovereignty choosing to use cultural and international politics as weapons, and trusting that those methods would be enough to restore a kingdom.

Today’s sovereignty activists continue to fight in the same manner that their ancestors did. In Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i’s 1995 Master Plan, the organization includes a section entitled “Commitment to Peace, Disarmament, and Non-Violence” which reads:

The practice of peace requires that we resolve conflict in a non-violent manner. This commitment to non-violence relates not only to our undertakings in the political arena, but involves the seeking of non-violent solutions to family, personal, and community problems. Disarmament means that the Hawaiian Nation shall not engage in acts of militarism, nor shall it endorse military undertakings on its land or territories.

---

26 Ibid., 180-203.
27 Ibid., 5.
28 Haunani-Kay Trask, From a native daughter, 211-212.
This commitment to peace means that native Hawaiians have had to find ways of demonstrating their displeasure with the operating government while still maintaining law-abiding methods.

For example, today’s sovereignty activists often use the hula to increase unity among the people, as well as create a more culturally political stance on which to state their case. This could be seen years ago in the opposition by the community to attempted legislation, such as Senate Bill 8, which would have prohibited kumu hula from gathering the necessary materials needed for dance by making even more land private property in Hawai‘i, and thus unavailable for use. Alone, this may not sound like such a drastic move on the part of the government, but this bill followed nearly a hundred years of land dispossession and privatization suffered by native Hawaiians, and would have been yet another attack against native Hawaiian culture at the hands of the government.

Prior to this, and “although the hula movement embodied practical aspects of native resistance to colonial domination, many kumu hula…did not perceive hula itself as political nor did they see the political resistance of Hawaiians as impacting or influencing hula.” This was all about to change.

In the 25 hours of constant demonstration at the State Building in downtown Honolulu on February 25, 1997, along with sovereignty organizations, activists, and supporters, “Kumu hula throughout the Hawaiian Islands mobilized hundreds of their hula students in an extraordinary feat of grace and power never seen in modern colonial times…[it was] the politicization of hula…Thus, [the Hawaiian community] all agreed to allow the most sacred symbol of hula into a political arena and to use this cultural instrument for a most political purpose.”

As a result of this mass demonstration, the pounding of 100 pahu every hour on the hour, and the power that cultural force can wield, Senate Bill 8 was eventually shot down before the hula practitioners left the State Building. Since then, “Hula kū‘ē is the term now widely used in the hula community. It means a dance performed to resist, protest or oppose the status quo. Hula kū‘ē is

29 Teachers and practitioners of native Hawaiian dance.
31 Kamahele, 52.
32 Sacred drum used exclusively for the hula.
resistance that is equated with endurance and survival.” Hula kūʻē is now the term for the use of hula in the sovereignty movement.

But the question remains as to whether a movement, any movement, can bring about real change and decolonization via cultural politics. It seems difficult to tell. The Hawaiian sovereignty movement is not just cultural politics, however. Couple those politics with educated key players, and organizations that are willing to take their struggle to the international arena in the form of Indigenous Rights Conferences and World Court cases, then yes, the Hawaiian sovereignty movement can bring about real change and decolonization.

The foundation laid in this section in regards to the history of the sovereignty movement, as well as the general sense of what the movement is about and how it operates, will be now be used to begin a much more in-depth examination of the vehicles of the movement. I will discuss three specific organizations, their principles and theories, their methods, and their goals, in the hopes that by doing so, one will gain a deeper understanding of what sovereignty can mean for everyone it would touch.

An Overview of Key Organizations

One of the most famed of all Hawaiian sayings was uttered by one of the Kingdom’s greatest chiefs while embarking on his journey towards building a unified Hawaiian Nation. It is seen as a call for solidarity and courage, and is still repeated by many today:

Imua e nā pōkiʻi Forward my brothers and sisters
A inu i ka wai ‘awa‘awa And drink the bitter water
A‘ohe hope e ho‘i mai ai There is no turning back now.

As previously discussed, and in keeping with this sentiment, the Hawaiian sovereignty movement has chosen to move forward, and since the early 1970’s has begun forming factions within the movement as a whole with varied, and sometimes conflicting, positions on self-governance and self-determination. With so many different organizations fighting for sovereignty, it’s difficult to imagine what independence would look like should pro-sovereignty Hawaiians emerge victorious from the debate over American decolonization. Many

---

33 Kamahele, 56.
questions surface: What sorts of organizations are there? What are the options for sovereignty? What are the differences between these organizations?

Due to the sheer number of Hawaiian sovereignty organizations and the diversity in terms of their goals, theories, and methodologies, it would be impossible to discuss each and every one at length here. Instead, I examine three organizations in the hope of exposing the reader to as much of an in-depth exploration of sovereignty as possible, as well as gaining a thorough understanding as to what some of these groups are trying to achieve and how. Featuring these three organizations over the many others in existence does not indicate that their practices represent the practices of all. Rather, the preference simply indicates that information on these groups was most readily obtainable, and their practices were widely varied enough that it would offer the most diverse cross-section of Hawaiian sovereignty organizations available. These groups are Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, the Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i, and the Hawaiian Kingdom Government.

Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i is arguably one of the most mobilized and public native Hawaiian sovereignty organizations. Some of its key members have also held positions in the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, as well as the Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai‘i.

The Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i has been chosen as a representative group because, while it too is large in number, it can also regarded as an example of the organizations willing to take tangible steps towards proclaiming sovereignty now. This organization features a charismatic leader with a considerable land base among its supporters. Members of the group already consider to be the independent Nation of Hawai‘i.

Finally, the Hawaiian Kingdom Government is discussed because, unlike many other organizations in the movement, this organization is unique in that it operates on the assumption that the Kingdom of Hawai‘i has always been, and is still currently, very much in existence in Hawai‘i today. The Hawaiian Kingdom Government also views itself not as a sovereignty organization, but rather as a stand-in for the official Kingdom government until such a time when the citizens of the Kingdom can elect their own representatives who will assume governing powers.

I shall look at each of these individual organizations, their methods, and their goals, in order to lay the groundwork for a more well-rounded discussion of the practicality and feasibility of each group. Some key concepts to note are: 1) The
mission and purpose of each organization; 2) How the term sovereignty is used and defined; 3) The method of sovereignty proposed, and how the organizations plan to achieve it, and 4); the support each organization has and who is allowed to participate.

Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i

Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i is most simply described as a native initiative for self-government. Founded in 1987 by the organizations’ former Kia‘aina, Mililani Trask, and others as a consolidation of several Hawaiian rights groups, Ka Lāhui’s primary objective is securing recognition of a sovereign government for native Hawaiians. The organization has also been described by Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i’s press secretary Haunani-Kay Trask, as a way to focus discontent felt by native Hawaiians “over continued state abuse of the trust lands and revenues,” and raises an issue that had previously been ignored: “inclusion of Hawaiians in federal Indian policy that recognized over 300 Native nations in the United States while not extending this recognition to Hawaiians.”

Exactly what sovereignty is, and the kind of sovereignty that will be implemented by the organization should it have the opportunity to do so, is an issue very clearly defined by Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i. “Sovereignty is defined...as the ability of a people who share a common culture, religion, language, value system and land base, to exercise control over their lands and lives, independent of other nations,” and furthermore, “an essential part of sovereignty and self-determination is the right of a native people, as a government, to define who they are.”

The five elements of sovereignty now agreed upon within Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i are as follows:

---

34 Haunani-Kay Trask, From a native daughter, 37.
35 Governor, President, Head of the Execute Branch.
37 Haunani-Kay Trask, From a native daughter, 71.
38 Ibid., 71.
39 Decambra, 117.
1) A strong and abiding faith in ke Akua.41
2) A people with a common culture.
3) A land base.
4) A government structure.
5) An economic base.

According to members of the organization, “When you assume responsibility for these elements of sovereignty, change occurs. We are not in a position where we can continue to point a finger at the State because there’s 20,000 people on a list for housing [referring to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands]…Home-rule requires that we fashion the solution and that we demonstrate that we are capable of doing the job…Self-sufficiency is the goal of nationhood.”42

But how exactly does Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, an organization that advocates nation-within-a-nation43 status for Hawai‘i, according to Ka Lāhui Lt. Governor Keali‘i Gora, 44 propose to achieve sovereignty? To put it plainly, Ka Lāhui would like U.S. recognition as an indigenous nation, and from there will begin to seek reparations, as well as native Hawaiian entitlements (such as native lands held in trust by the United States). They propose to go about achieving this by seeking inclusion for native Hawaiians in existing U.S. federal policy, which is the vehicle through which Native Americans have obtained the right to be self-governing. Through this, native Hawaiians will have access to the federal courts for judicial review on the overthrow, illegal annexation, and the current position and plight of the native Hawaiian community.45

However, federal recognition is not the end goal for sovereignty. “As a first step for the Hawaiian nation, Ka Lāhui proposes achieving – through treaty – recognition as a sovereign nation…with ‘nation to nation’ status like that of the

41 God.
42 Decambra, 115-117.
43 According to Mililani B. Trask, ‘Nation to Nation,’ or ‘Nation within a Nation,’ “is a term used to describe how America relates to its Native people. Under the existing U.S. policy, America wants to establish government to government relations with its Native people. This is why over 500 Indian and Native Alaska governments (councils) have been established. When the U.S. gives money, land, or programs to the Sioux or Navaho, federal representatives meet with Indian governments to work out the details. Right now Hawaiians have no such government.” See Mililani B. Trask, “Ka Lāhui Hawaii: A Native Initiative for Sovereignty,” 5-6.
45 Mililani B. Trask, 5-6.
Iroquois…Ka Lāhui would then move to place the Hawaiian land base on the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories.46 This strategic move of placing the Hawaiian land base, made up of trust lands that would have theoretically been returned to the Hawaiian nation as part of a reparations package by the U.S., on to the U.N. list of non-self-governing territories would grant the new government “special guarantees” of security allotted to these types of nations. Furthermore, it would give the new nation the right to decide what type of relationship it wants with the U.S. in future dealings.47

Alongside the organizations’ Lt. Governor, former Kia’aina, and press secretary, are some 23,152 adult members, more than 8,000 of which are native Hawaiians, who are committed to regaining native lands and re-establishing native Hawaiians as a self-governing people.48 With such large numbers, Ka Lāhui is considered by many to be one of the largest and most mobilized of the sovereignty groups,49 with room to spare for anyone who wishes to join. According to Mililani Trask:

[non-native Hawaiians] should not be frightened. My advice to that person is to…work with us. There’s a great deal of work that has [to be done]…I don’t have time to deal with their guilt. [We] need help. I think you might find people who feel that way, but they don’t want to help. They feel that they’re not Hawaiians, they’re not involved in it…To these people, my advice is, better educate yourself about sovereignty, better become involved, because this is not a fencepost you can straddle…Sovereignty is not an issue that just addresses the concerns of 20% of the population of this state. Sovereignty is going to impact everyone.50

However, the requirements of one becoming a citizen in Ka Lāhui’s sovereign Hawaiian nation are slightly more complicated than they are to simply join the organization. While everyone, both native and non-native, is encouraged to be a part of and are welcome in the nation, only those with native Hawaiian blood are allowed to become full citizens. Those who are residents of Hawai‘i but are not of native Hawaiian blood are allowed to become honorary citizens of the Hawaiian nation, and although they are not allowed to vote or to hold elective

46 Dudley and Agard, 135.
47 Ibid., 135.
49 Haunani-Kay Trask, From a native daughter, 74.
50 Decambra, 121-122.
office, they are allowed to be members of island councils and are not excluded in debates and discussions surrounding the government and politics of the nation.\(^{51}\)

In order to make every possible effort to ensure that this form of sovereignty becomes more than just a discussion, in the early 90’s Ka Lāhui began reorganizing itself into a firmly structured government. One of the ways it chose to do so was by drafting an organizational (and hopefully national) Constitution. “In 1994, Ka Lāhui created the most comprehensive plan for the attainment of Hawaiian sovereignty yet devised…The inclusive vision of the Master Plan follows, at one and the same time the language of international law and the cultural precepts of Native Hawaiians.\(^{52}\)

The Ho’okupu a Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i: the master plan 1995 includes eight sections that cover issues that range from an emphatic commitment to peace to plans for economic development and positioning within the international arena.\(^{53}\) The Constitution also sets forth what the organization believes are native Hawaiian traditional and cultural rights, as well as providing that the native Hawaiian people have the right to elect their own government. Such a government will be, according to Ka Lāhui, democratic in nature, with its political process being the elective process, and its cultural process being Lōkahi, or harmony. Under this plan, all residents and citizens in Hawai‘i exist under two Constitutions: The Constitution of the U.S. and the Constitution of the State of Hawai‘i—Ho’okupu a Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i.\(^{54}\)

With the Ho’okupu as a hopeful constitution for a new nation, Haunani-Kay Trask states firmly that, “No other Hawaiian entity…has even approached the level of analysis and practical self-government that Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i has attained.”\(^{55}\) With this level of practicality and structure, Ka Lāhui keeps its main goal clearly in sight: “The primary objective of Ka Lāhui is to secure recognition for a sovereign government for the Hawaiian people…Native Hawaiians are ready and entitled to govern their own lands.”\(^{56}\)

---

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 121.

\(^{52}\) Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a native daughter*, 74.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 211.

\(^{54}\) Mililani B. Trask, “Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i”, 5-6.

\(^{55}\) Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a native daughter*, 78.

\(^{56}\) Mililani B. Trask, “Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i”, 5-6.
The Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i

Formerly known as the Nation of Hawai‘i, then the ‘Ohana Council, the Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i is the third incarnation of one of the most radical sovereignty organizations in today’s current movement.\(^{57}\) Headed by native Hawaiian activist Dennis “Bumpy” Kanahele, founder of Pu‘uhonua o Waimānalo Village,\(^{58}\) and unanimously elected as the Head of State, the Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i have organized themselves, educated the community, and become a powerful force fighting for sovereignty.

Kanahele, who has worked to strengthen the cultural authority of native Hawaiian elders in the community since the 1980’s, and has also served on the Board of Directors for organizations such as the International Indian Treaty Council, envisions the Nation State of Hawai‘i as one day encompassing all of the Hawaiian Islands. The Head of State feels that this Nation, which will prosper on international trade and banking, free of control by the U.S. federal and state governments, will be a place where Native Hawaiians will have far more political and economic clout than they do now.\(^{59}\) The current, comprehensive mission of the Nation State of Hawai‘i is that it:

- will continue to develop...educational programs for the people of Hawai‘i, develop its legislative, executive, and judicial infrastructure,
- begin to implement home rule on each of the islands, engage the illegitimate state of Hawai‘i in a smooth and peaceful transition, and seek formal international recognition to rejoin the world community of nations.\(^{60}\)

This very independent form of sovereignty is founded upon the Black’s Law Dictionary definition of sovereignty, which follows that:

[Sovereignty is:] the supreme, absolute, and uncontrollable power by which any independent state is governed; supreme political authority; the supreme will; paramount control of the constitution and frame of government and its administration; the self-sufficient source of political

\(^{57}\) Wood, 9.

\(^{58}\) Native homesteads in Waimānalo, where residents enjoy a subsistence living much like that of their ancient Hawaiian ancestors.


power, from which all specific political powers are derived; the international independence of a state, combined with the right and power of regulating its internal affairs without foreign dictation…\textsuperscript{61}

The Nation State of Hawai‘i also calls upon the Restatement of the Law Third in the context of Rights and Duties of States, which reads that sovereignty, in plain terms, “implies a state’s lawful control over its territory generally to the exclusion of other states, authority to govern in that territory, and authority to apply law there.”\textsuperscript{62}

According to Kanahele, this independence is of the utmost importance when dealing directly with the unique case of native Hawaiian sovereignty. “'Independence’ means more than just political independence. Right now, Hawai‘i is a very ‘dependent’ society, depending on outside sources, primarily the United States, to meet most of our needs…Therefore we are subject to the control of outside forces. We lack self-reliance and suffer from great vulnerability. Hawai‘i must become more independent in many ways to ensure the future stability of our land and people…The only true sovereignty is independence.”\textsuperscript{63}

Therefore, the “true sovereignty” that the Nation State of Hawai‘i is vying for comes in the form of full independence from the U.S. government. Christine Donnelly, a journalist for The Honolulu Advertiser and project coordinator for olo I Mua, the Hawaiian Roundtable discussion on Hawaiian Sovereignty, describes how “[Supporters of full independence] reason that the 1959 vote for Hawai‘i statehood was invalid and believe the United States should recognize and support reinscription of Hawai‘i on the United Nations List of Non-Self-Governing Territories eligible for decolonization,”\textsuperscript{64} which would in turn open up discussion for the creation of a completely independent Nation.

Kanahele states that, as the Head of State and public representative of the Nation State of Hawai‘i, “I believe in independence, I believe [the U.S.] stole Hawai‘i, and that it is a crime to steal anyplace in the world…We cannot forget the violation they did…because that violation, under international law, allows us

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{64} Donnelly, “Holo I Mua,” Supp1.
restoration of our government.”\textsuperscript{65} Steve Toyama, the Nation State of Hawai‘i’s Head of Security, further explained that “[The U.S.] cannot annex by internal ‘resolution’ nor make a territory or a state from something illegally taken. This is the crux of our argument…[Our organizations has been advised] that under International Law we can restore our independent nation-state in any form we wish and need not ask anybody but ourselves for permission.”\textsuperscript{66}

Those who are in full support of the Nation State of Hawai‘i reach numbers near to 7,000 citizens\textsuperscript{67} and native Hawaiians as well as non-natives are invited to offer support. Kanahele sites one of the most common misconceptions about his pro-independence organization is that non-native Hawaiians would no longer be welcome or offered citizenship in the sovereign nation. “However, this fear is truly unfounded…Those non-Hawaiian residents who wish to become citizens in the nation will share the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, like any other country…There are many innocent people of all nationalities who care deeply about Hawai‘i. It is our responsibility to care for all these people, protect them, and include them as we develop our Country.”\textsuperscript{68}

Like other nations, the Nation State of Hawai‘i makes no blood-quantum requirement for citizenship, and allows full citizenship to those who are not native Hawaiians but who are permanent residents of the Nation.

Development for this Nation has already been underway as the group, under its former name the ‘Ohana Council, publicly announced its Proclamation of Restoration on January 16, 1994, the 99\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the overthrow of Queen Lili‘uokalani. The proclamation, which encompasses the entire Hawaiian archipelago, reclaimed all land, waters, natural resources, and political status that once belonged to the Hawaiian Kingdom.\textsuperscript{69} It also sites, in accordance with both previous Kingdom documentation, and contemporary international laws, that “The Independent and Sovereign Nation of Hawai‘i will establish procedures for according citizenship by means of naturalization to \textit{all people} who are habitual residents of Hawai‘i as of today’s date.” (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{70}

Furthermore, not only was the Proclamation of Restoration drafted and ratified, but the Nation State of Hawai‘i has already ratified a Constitution as well, which

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Steve Toyama, e-mail to Amanda Pacheco, September 30, 2005.
\textsuperscript{67} Matsunaga, A1.
\textsuperscript{68} Kanahele, A12.
\textsuperscript{69} The Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i. “Proclamation”
\textsuperscript{70} Kanahele, A12.
was made public on January 16, 1995, the 100th year anniversary of the overthrow. The Constitution of the Nation State of Hawai‘i lists first the history of subjugation of the native Hawaiian people, and then begins its Chapters and Articles which include, but is not limited to, sections on:71

- Equal Protection of all citizens within the Nation
- The Business of the Nation, both internally and internationally
- Instructions on the formation of a Citizens’ Assembly to represent the people
- The powers of the different bodies of government.

In keeping with native Hawaiian culture and tradition, the Constitution also lays the foundation of Nā Kūpuna Council, a council of elders to help with the affairs of running the government. Nā Kūpuna Council would be the equivalent to, but not in substitution of, advisors to the President of America.72 Furthermore:

While the Constitution is based on the “inherent sovereignty” of Kanaka Maoli people and is designed to protect and perpetuate the culture and rights of the original people of these islands, at the same time it is an inclusive document that recognizes the unique multi-cultural heritage of modern Hawai‘i, and provides for citizenship and participation in government for all the inhabitants of the [Nation State of Hawai‘i].73

Aside from a Proclamation and a Constitution, Kanahele sites ‘patience’ as a fundamental aspect of obtaining sovereignty for the Nation State of Hawai‘i:

[We were] the rowdiest group [in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement], so if anybody would make trouble, it would have been us…but we’ve learned you don’t have to fight [the government]. We just have to have patience, and we have to educate each other, and we have to be concerned about the non-Hawaiians as well as our own people as we develop this process.74

One of current concerns for Kanahele and the organization is getting international acknowledgment by as many nations as possible, as a prerequisite for

71 The Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i. “Nation”.
72 Ibid.
73 Kanahele, A12.
acceptance to the United Nations. In 2005, Kanahele tried to rally his fellow sovereignty movement leaders in endorsing his call to retake ‘Iolani Palace. Unfortunately, no responses were received. However, in an interview with Kanahele by SPASIFIK Magazine, a publication for New Zealand’s Pacific Islander and Maori communities, the Nation State of Hawai‘i leader stated firmly, “It is time...for us to take our seat of government back. Then we can gather there, in the footsteps of our ancestors, to decide on our pathway back to independence.”

The Hawaiian Kingdom Government

It is difficult to determine a specific year that the Hawaiian Kingdom Government began, as this particular organization operates on the premise that the original Hawaiian Kingdom never actually stopped existing and the organization is simply a continuation of that government in exile. What is clear is that it wasn’t until 1995, when Keanu Sai and an associate embarked publicly claimed the Hawaiian Kingdom Government as an organization. Finding its beginnings as a co-partnership firm attempting to register with the proper governmental organization for operation rights, The Perfect Title Company, led by Sai, petitioned for registration under the annexed Hawaiian Kingdom. According to rules set forth by both international law and the Constitution of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, in the absence of a governmental body present for the registration, The Perfect Title Company could serve in the acting position of the Regent or Council of Regency of the Hawaiian Kingdom until a permanent Regent or Council of Regency could be elected by a legally constituted Legislative Assembly.

How this came to be is quite complicated, but in theory, according to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, the organization – the Hawaiian Kingdom Government – was established when the true government officials of the Kingdom were in absentia. By registering the Perfect Title Company as a

75 Wood, 11.
corporation under the Hawaiian Constitution, the Perfect Title Company registered another co-partnership firm which it called the Hawaiian Kingdom Trust Company. This second company then became the acting body for the Hawaiian Government through the process of ascension under Hawaiian Kingdom Law, elected acting officials to the acting Council of Regency, elected Sai, a scholar of international law, as acting Regent, and became the Hawaiian Kingdom Government until such a time as the absent government can reconvene.  

According to Sai, all of this hinges on how one defines the term ‘sovereignty.’ Following Black’s Law Dictionary, Sai cites sovereignty as ‘supreme authority’ over the territory of an independent state. Therefore, sovereignty is a legal construct, while the government of an independent state is the agent that exercises this sovereignty. According to this definition then, governments are not sovereign and, as they are not the sovereign entity, can be legally or illegally overthrown, while the sovereignty of the state can remain.

To put it plainly, the sovereignty of the Hawaiian Kingdom, according to the Hawaiian Kingdom Government, never ended. Governments can be altered through constitutional means, internal revolt or by sanctioned foreign intervention, but the sovereignty of a recognized State, under international law, can only be affected through the consented merger with another sovereign state, political and social dismemberment in accordance with international law, or as the result of internal revolt.

Sai took his case, and the assertion that he was the acting Regent of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government, to the World Court of Arbitration in 1999, by way of a minor dispute which originated on the Big Island of Hawai‘i. Before the Court, he argued that “when a nation, such as the United States, has a treaty with another nation, such as the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, the United States cannot impose its own domestic laws.” Which is to say that it’s illegal (by way of the established treaties) for one country to go to another country and overthrow the

---

79 Ibid.
81 Ibid., 8-10.
government of that country just because it has the military and economic might to do so.

Furthermore, Sai also points out that the United States annexed Hawai‘i through the passage of a joint resolution, which was signed into law by President McKinley in 1898. However, as a general rule in American jurisprudence, the U.S. legislative branch – the Congress – does not have treaty making powers. This power belongs solely to the Senate when in executive session. Congress’s legislative powers are limited to the territory of the United States. In other words, because the joint resolution that purported to annex the Hawaiian Nation was made without proper legal ratification under U.S. law, there could have been no cession of territorial sovereignty recognizable under international law.

Although the World Court refused to rule in the case due to the absence of the United States at the hearings, the Hawaiian Kingdom Government remains convinced of its position that the Hawaiian Kingdom is still very much in existence, particularly since under the laws of occupation, the United States, as the occupier, must administer the laws of the occupied State whether the organization gets diplomatic recognition or not. In the eyes of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government, the lapse of time between the illegal overthrow and the 21st century means nothing more under international law than that the United States has held Hawai‘i under prolonged occupation. “We already have sovereignty…We are working to end the occupation.”

Because the Hawaiian Kingdom Government functions in the absence of the lawful Hawaiian Kingdom government, the form of sovereignty they endorse is full independence from the United States. The difference between this form of absolute independence and other forms supported by sovereignty movement organizations is that the Hawaiian Kingdom Government is not working towards establishing a new nation, but rather is trying to re-establish an already existing nation. With this in mind, the primary objective of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government is cited as exposing the occupation of the rightful Hawaiian Nation, as well as providing a catalyst for the transition and the ultimate end of the occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

85 Kelly, “Kingdom Come”, 11.
After this transition takes place, the Hawaiian Kingdom Government intends to continue overseeing governmental affairs for the nation until such a date as the people of the Hawaiian Kingdom can elect an appropriate leader. For now, the government will continue to be overseen by the acting Regent and Council, as they are under the firm belief that an election of a Monarch is presently premature.  

Aside from leadership roles, the Constitution followed by the Hawaiian Kingdom Government also provides the groundwork for who will be granted citizenship in the Kingdom. The number of citizens currently enrolled in the Hawaiian Kingdom Government comes directly from the government census conducted in the Kingdom in 1890, in addition to anyone born in the Hawaiian Islands prior to August 12, 1898, the date of the second American occupation. Using this information, as well as recent Hawaiian population statistics taken in 1990, calculations can be made which would estimate the number of Hawaiian subjects (both native and non-native) presently existing in the islands as compared to the foreign national population. Thus, the number of subjects the Hawaiian Kingdom Government considers as citizenry is a minimum of 164,225.

The Constitution of the Kingdom, however, also provides the stipulations as to who can become citizens:

States who regained their former independence are called restored States, and as these States are not new there would be no need to redefine a new body of citizens, but rather utilize the laws that existed before the occupation to determine the citizenry...The Hawaiian citizenry of today is comprised of descendants of Hawaiian subjects and those foreigners who were born in the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1898. This exclusion of the Hawaiian citizenry is based upon precedence and law, but a restored Hawaiian government does have the authority to widen the scope of its citizenry and adopt a more inclusive model in the aftermath of prolonged American Occupation.

---

This also allows, therefore, that citizenry be offered to anyone born in Hawai‘i, not just those of native Hawaiian blood. Furthermore, these non-native citizens, much like non-native citizens in the latter part of the 1800’s, are allowed the benefits of full citizenship, including voting rights and the option of running for political office.\footnote{Ibid.}

All legal decisions for the organization are made in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, which is, as stated earlier, still considered the lawful and just Constitution of Hawai‘i. “[The Constitution of 1864] still has legal effect in the Hawaiian Kingdom, due to Article 78, which provides that, “laws now in force in this Kingdom, shall continue and remain in full effect, until altered or repealed by the Legislature; such parts only excepted as are repugnant to this Constitution. All laws heretofore enacted, or that may hereafter be enacted, which are contrary to this Constitution, shall be null and void.”\footnote{The Hawaiian Kingdom Government, “Constitutional History,” http://www.hawaiiankingdom.org/constitutional-history.shtml, (accessed Jan. 14, 2009).}

Aside from their Constitution, the Hawaiian Kingdom Government sites as one of its articles of reference the Strategic Plan of the acting Council of Regency. Made up of three phases, the Strategic Plan serves as a guide for the organization and was developed in order to address the long-term occupation of Hawai‘i, and the effects of that occupation on the politics, economics, and mentalities of the native Hawaiian population and the national population of Hawai‘i as a whole, as well as the international community. The three phases of the Strategic Plan are as follows:\footnote{The Hawaiian Kingdom Government, “Strategic Plan of the acting Council of Regency,” http://hawaiiankingdom.org/pdf/HK_Strategic_Plan.pdf, (accessed Jan. 14, 2009)}

1) Verification of the Hawaiian Kingdom as an independent State and a subject of International Law

2) Exposure of Hawaiian Kingdom Statehood within the framework of international law and the laws of occupation as it affects the realm of politics and economics at both the international and domestic levels

3) Restoration of the Hawaiian Kingdom as an independent State and a subject of International Law

\footnote{Ibid.}
Currently, Sai places the Hawaiian Kingdom Government in phase two. “The exposure phase...is clearly education. And as such, we need to understand the terminology associated with prolonged occupation...Hawai‘i can't be decolonized if it was never colonized, but Hawai‘i can be de-occupied because it is presently occupied. Phase two of the strategic plan will expose the occupation in order for the de-occupation to begin.”

So what exactly are Sai and the Hawaiian Kingdom Government working towards?

Queen Lili‘uokalani protested [annexation] at home and in Washington, D.C., and entered into an estoppel agreement with President Grover Cleveland, wherein the president asked the queen effectively to pardon the traitors who were calling themselves the provisional government. In return for this, the United States would support the reinstatement of the Hawaiian monarchy. She agreed; however, to this day, the United States has not lived up to its end of the agreement.

The Hawaiian Kingdom Government is seeking recognition and the implementation of this agreement, and will continue to function as the true government of the Hawaiian Kingdom until such a time comes to pass.

Putting Theories into Practice

Queen Lili‘uokalani, the last reigning monarch of the Hawaiian Kingdom, was certainly an activist for native Hawaiian sovereignty. As evidenced in many native Hawaiian newspapers of her time, she was naturally one of the first to formally oppose annexation and was an extremely passionate supporter of her people. As shown by the varying theories offered by the organizations presented in the previous section, sovereignty for Hawai‘i in the current day and age can mean many things. Whatever the theory, however, sovereignty clearly would entail continuing the fight of Hawai‘i’s beloved Queen.

---

94 David Keanu Sai, E-mail to Amanda Pacheco, October 12, 2005.
95 Kelly, “Kingdom Come”, 11.
96 Silva, Aloha betrayed, 5.
“‘Onipa’a kākou,’” Lili‘uokalani’s call to both native and non-native Hawaiian residents to remain steadfast in times of struggle, was a sentiment she believed in, and it remains in wide use today by Hawaiian sovereignty activists. 97 Unfortunately, much like Lili‘uokalani a century ago, the current Hawaiian sovereignty movement has come up against many obstacles in its nearly four decades of activism. Some of the obstacles facing the three sovereignty organization in particular will be covered in this section. Specifically, the key concepts under discussion are: 1) The practicality and feasibility of the theories and methods of achieving sovereignty put forth by each organization; and 2) The probability that these proposals for sovereignty would be supported by the Hawaiian public and the U.S. government.

By taking a closer look at three organizations – Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, The Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i, and The Hawaiian Kingdom Government – and by exploring and fleshing out these key ideas, it is the hope that the reader will gain a wider breadth of knowledge as to what the sovereignty movement needs to achieve in order to fully realize its goals and regain what was once taken from the Hawaiian people.

Practicality and Feasibility

I ask here the important question of whether or not the proposals of each organization are in fact proposals which could be successfully implemented to achieve sovereignty. This includes examining whether or not the organization has a cohesive explanation of how a new government and new nation would be created, and if these explanations address issues from realistic political, economic, social perspectives. Is the proposed idea for sovereignty something that the people would theoretically support? Why or why not? And finally, should the organization be successful in achieving sovereignty for Hawai‘i, has it considered where the new nation would go?

Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i

“The drafting of a constitution which incorporates traditional, cultural and spiritual values and practices with current processes and which can be altered to accommodate the need of the indigenous people to change,” 98 is cited as one of

98 Haunani-Kay Trask, From a native daughter, 215.
Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i’s major accomplishments. In terms of practicality, this offers an overview of Ka Lāhui’s Constitution, which states that the organization has successfully bridged native Hawaiian culture with aspects of contemporary practices. In fact, Ka Lāhui’s Constitution is believed by many, including one of the organizations founding members Haunani-Kay Trask, to be the most comprehensive plan for the attainment of Hawaiian sovereignty that any organization has yet devised. This plan and Constitution, named Ho‘okupu a ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, was purportedly the first step an organization had ever taken to pro-actively tackle both questions of feasibility and practicality, and bring those two concepts together coherently in one document that laid the foundation for the creation of a new Hawaiian nation. Broken down, what Ka Lāhui has done is to create somewhat of a blueprint, both clear and public, for what they propose for sovereignty.  

For example, Section III of Ho‘okupu a ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, entitled “Dealing with the United States” highlights its main points as being:

- **The Evolution of the United States Policy Relating to Hawai‘i and its Indigenous People**: Here, Ka Lāhui lays out the basis for their argument for sovereignty, citing treaties and international policies that the United States had with the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, and has violated by continued colonization.

- **The Current Policy of the United States Towards Hawaiians: The Policy of Non-Recognition, Denial, and State Wardship**: Ka Lāhui provides evidence for the claim that continued colonization of Hawai‘i has been detrimental to native Hawaiians.

- **Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i’s Position Regarding United States Policy**: The organization rejects the illegal and continued actions of United States policies regarding native Hawaiians, accepts the Apology Bill offered by the United States, and begins a proposal for reconciliation.

This third notation regarding reconciliation is where Ka Lāhui will have to argue their case of practicality and feasibility. According to this section, reconciliation for Ka Lāhui will bring about final resolutions to the overthrow, misuse of native

---

99 Ibid., 74.
100 Ibid., 216-221.
land trusts, violations of human and civil rights of Hawai‘i residents, and will require the U.S. to recognize Ka Lāhui as the legal and governmental representative for the Hawaiian people.¹⁰¹ “Probably the most controversial point in Ka Lāhui’s bill is a commitment from the United States to decolonize Hawai‘i through the United Nations process for non-self-governing territories…Decolonization is seen by many as an extreme move that will receive little federal support.”¹⁰² However, Mililani Trask has stated that she thinks achieving sovereignty is “very feasible, and I think the appropriate way to pursue it is through…a multifaceted approach and strategic plan for moving the issue of federal recognition and status through the U.S. Congress.”¹⁰³

By endorsing federal recognition, Ka Lāhui takes a position that perhaps offers the most practical avenue for achieving sovereignty: engaging the United States as well as international bodies in the discussion, and allowing the colonizing power to be included in debates that will eventually result in a decision made by that power. Ka Lāhui has also stated that, after the initial phase in which the organization will assume leadership of the new nation, the new government will hold a democratic election in which citizens of the nation will be able to elect their own representatives to serve in office.¹⁰⁴

Aside from actions outlining what sovereignty would mean for Hawai‘i, Ka Lāhui’s Constitution also offers suggestions for economic and educational development programs that would form the support system of the new nation brought about by decolonization by the United States.¹⁰⁵ Both feasible and practical, Ka Lāhui proposes that, once the United States honors the reparations package and native land trusts are once again under native Hawaiian control, the nation will have sole jurisdiction over revenues received from those land trusts, and will use such revenues (such as taxes from lands leased to the United States) “in order to support economic initiatives for housing, employment, education, and the development of [the nations] own businesses and those of its citizens.”¹⁰⁶

So, while Ka Lāhui may seemingly be asking the United States for a lot, the avenues that the organization is taking in order to bring about sovereignty and

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 222-223.
¹⁰⁴ Mililani B. Trask, “Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i”, 5-6.
¹⁰⁵ Haunani-Kay Trask, From a native daughter, 232.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 233.
change in Hawai‘i are arguable very practical and feasible. Boasting upwards of 23,000 adult members, one could infer that more than 23,000 people agree.

The Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i

It is time…for us to take our seat of government back. Then we can gather there, in the footsteps of our ancestors, to decide on our pathway back to independence.

For Kanahele and other members of The Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i, native Hawaiians are justified in their desire to take their government back from the United States. Still, other members of the sovereignty movement are skeptical about the practicality, feasibility, and perhaps reasonability of the practices the Nation State of Hawai‘i has, and therefore, “[Kanahele’s] call for a recapture of [‘Iolani Palace] has not yet been endorsed by the entire coalition.”

However, regaining this political seat isn’t the only plan Kanahele’s group has for beginning to pro-actively seek nationhood. In fact, Kanahele may be a perfect example of proof that independence is within the grasp of all native Hawaiians. In a place called Pu‘uhonua o Waimānalo, on the island of O‘ahu, Kanahele and other sovereignty supporters have planted the seeds of the self-proclaimed Nation of Hawai‘i. In this village, there are more than two-dozen dwellings occupying the sloping foot of the Koʻolau Mountains, where villagers work in restored taro paddies and drive cars that carry Nation of Hawai‘i license plates. An estimated 60 to 80 citizens populate Pu‘uhonua, where children are educated on-site, and much of what is used on the premises is either produced there or donated, making it an almost completely self-sustaining township. The land itself is leased from the state as part of an 55-year agreement between the two organizations to “get rid of a 200-resident tent city” the group had used to occupy beachfront, as well as to put an end to members passing out leaflets on the beaches of Waikīkī asking non-native Hawaiian tourists to leave the islands.

“Kanahele’s nation [numbering around 7,000 citizens, both within Puʻuhonua and elsewhere] has adopted a constitution, claimed the right to try a federal fugitive, and embarked on an education campaign that blends radical politics,

---

108 Kelly, “Hui Pu”, [page number unavailable, ed.].
109 Ibid.
right-wing economics, and Hawaiian [culture].”\textsuperscript{111} Through this the Nation State of Hawai‘i has at least begun to show that independence is possible through their organization, arguably much more convincingly than other organizations have at this time.

Unfortunately, some sovereignty activists and leaders are convinced Kanahele and the somewhat radical nature of his organization are less practical than they may seem. Mililani Trask has previously stated that, “Everything [Kanahele’s] done has been detrimental to sovereignty. His approach has been to basically tap into the [U.S. State] system by using sovereignty as an excuse to avoid responsibility.”\textsuperscript{112} Others, such as pro-sovereignty leader Kekuni Blaisdell, worry that the groups’ previous “tourists-go-home” tactics could discredit the sovereignty movement as a whole, as well as cause those who are on the fence to shy away from supporting native Hawaiian causes.\textsuperscript{113}

The Nation State of Hawai‘i, unlike Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, has not offered a comprehensive and detailed public plan for actually going about achieving sovereignty. The organization gained control of Pu‘uhonua o Waimānalo Village through an agreement with the State for the lease of that land, but the organization has not yet breached the subject of attempting an agreement with the United States for control over Hawai‘i as a whole. While the organization offers validation that its methods have worked in the past, it has not offered a plan of what those methods are and how it will play out on a federal and international level.

Yet the Nation State of Hawai‘i remains convinced of its ability to achieve sovereignty, and has continued to discuss several practical provisions for the success of a sovereign nation in educational lectures given by Kanahele throughout the State of Hawai‘i. Kanahele is also CEO of Aloha First, a native Hawaiian owned and operated non-profit organization whose purpose is “to facility the development of a comprehensive blueprint and roadmap for Native Hawaiian reconciliation and restitution, and to provide support, guidance, programs, services, for the business and asset formations required to make it all happen and keep it all moving forward.”\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{111} Matsunaga, “The Birth of a Nation in Pu‘uhonua”, A1.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., A1.
\textsuperscript{113} Wood, “Hawaii’s Search for Sovereignty”, 10.
In addition to the group declaring independence from the United States in 1994, and continuing to live as an independent nation in Pu‘uhonua, Kanahele and other members of the group have devised an economic plan for the Nation State of Hawai‘i. “We could take advantage of our unique global position in the center of the Pacific Rim, controlling our 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone, and becoming a center for international trade and development of global ethical banking, while...investing in the diversification of our local economy with innovative community based projects for meaningful employment and self-sufficiency.” This plan, however, seems almost theoretically impossible, and the Nation State of Hawai‘i has yet to put into practice, support by way of action, or explain the position of the United States in this proposal for partial Pacific Rim control.

A much more viable option for an economic base, however, can be found in Kanahele’s support for the creation of a Native Hawaiian Bank, owned and operated by native Hawaiians, which will initially provide the majority of, if not all, financial and economic support for native Hawaiian programs that are currently poorly funded by the federal government. This practical, and arguably feasible plan will eventually provide the initial economic base for the new nation, should the group achieve the form of sovereignty they propose.

The Hawaiian Kingdom Government

The Hawaiian Kingdom Government tackles the idea of practicality through their Strategic Plan, as previously discussed in the last section. The first phase of the Strategic Plan states that the Hawaiian Kingdom Government’s role is to achieve “[v]erification of the Hawaiian Kingdom as an independent State and a subject of international law.” The use of the term “verification” implies that it is the position of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government that, under international law, Hawai‘i remains a kingdom still, and is therefore already sovereign. This is unique in that it’s the major basis for the entire organization; sovereignty isn’t simply a theoretical and idealistic goal, but it’s the practical solution to an issue within the international arena.

---

115 Kanahele, “Voices on Sovereignty”, A12.
The second phase of the Strategic Plan is the "[e]xposure of Hawaiian Kingdom Statehood within the framework of international law and the laws of occupation as it affects the realm of politics and economics at both the international and domestic levels." As a continuation of phase one, phase two speaks to the education and public involvement required if the Hawaiian Kingdom Government wishes to succeed. Rather than simply publicly protesting U.S. occupation, the Hawaiian Kingdom Government is using education to make the general public, much of whom aren’t well-informed on the subject, more aware of the international violations the U.S. has committed against the Nation of Hawai‘i, and more importantly, what can and should be done about those violations.

To prove the feasibility of sovereignty, the Hawaiian Kingdom Government has gone as far as to file a complaint with the United Nations Security Council in 2001. The complaint was a request from the Hawaiian Kingdom Government to the Security Council to “investigate the Hawaiian Kingdom question, in particular, the merits of the complaint, and to recommend appropriate procedure or methods of adjustment.” The complaint also gained media coverage for, and called international attention to, the illegality of continued U.S. occupation within the rightful Hawaiian Kingdom.

Phase three of the organizations plan to achieve sovereignty in a straightforward, practical sense is akin to its end goal: “The restoration of the Hawaiian Kingdom as an Independent State and a subject of International Law.” From this phase onward, the newly reinstated Government would take its place as a restored State among the Nations, reactivate the Hawaiian Constitution as the operating constitution, and continue to decide Hawai‘i’s position in the international arena and its relationships with other Nations through the de jure government already operating as the Hawaiian Kingdom Government.

Chair of the Council of Regency and acting Minister of the Interior of the Nation of Hawai‘i according to the Hawaiian Kingdom Government, Keanu Sai, has shown how practical and feasible it is for the organization to attempt achieving sovereignty by continuously engaging in the international arena. In 1997, Sai and his organization sued President Clinton in the Supreme Court, “asking the justices to compel Clinton to honor the 1850 treaty between the Hawaiian

---

118 Ibid., 6.
119 Ibid., 9.
120 Ibid., 6.
Kingdom and the United States,” which, had he succeeded, would have set a precedent for the people of Hawai‘i to operate under a Kingdom Government once more. Then, in 1999, a citizen who claimed that the Hawaiian Kingdom Government failed to protect him against legal action taken by Hawai‘i State police took the Hawaiian Kingdom Government before the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The Kingdom took the position that they were unable to protect him due to United States law.

However, the practicality of The Hawaiian Kingdom Government has been challenged, specifically by anti-sovereignty scholar and former Office of Hawaiian Affairs trustee candidate, Kenneth Conklin. Conklin has stated that the case taken to the Court of Arbitration was a “fraudulent…use of the international court at The Hague for a propaganda circus.” Furthermore, although Sai has succeeded in taking cases regarding the Hawaiian Kingdom to international courts, he has yet to win a case, or gain substantial support from international bodies that will force the United States into discussions about sovereignty.

Realistically speaking, while the law may be on the side of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the United States is the most powerful government in the international arena, and as such, has decisive power on any debates surrounding the sovereignty of Hawai‘i. If the Hawaiian Kingdom Government is adamant about achieving sovereignty, perhaps there needs to be a greater effort at engaging the United States itself in these debates, instead of relying on international law to force the U.S. into compliance.

However, although there are obviously some, like Conklin, who disagree emphatically with the reasonableness of the politics of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government, the international arena has in fact taken notice and has listened to several of these cases. Sai considers this proof that sovereignty is possible.

---

124 Perez, “Perfect Title”, A1.
Now consider the issue of probability within each of the three organizations, focusing on the methods used by the organizations to gain public support. What are the organizations doing to rally more support for their particular model of sovereignty? What are they doing to discourage support? What is the United States position regarding the form of sovereignty proposed by each organization? Now that we have examined the practicality and feasibility of each organization, what is the probably that it will create a sustainable government?

Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i

As previously noted, Ka Lāhui numbers more than 23,000 members, and is the consolidation of several grassroots sovereignty organizations which have joined forces to create a strong, coherent option of government for Hawai‘i. Two key figures and founding members in the movement are sisters Mililani and Haunani-Kay Trask. Under their leadership, Ka Lāhui has become a faction of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement much like a political party. They have represented native Hawaiians in the World Council of Indigenous People’s at the United Nations, given lectures at universities around the country educating people on Hawaiian affairs, and have also assisted in the organization of the initial native Hawaiian vote for or against sovereignty.\(^\text{125}\)

But high media coverage and an organization base within the University of Hawai‘i system has lead Ka Lāhui members to suffer accusations of blatant racism and discrimination in the past,\(^\text{126}\) which in turn may reflect unkindly on Ka Lāhui by association. In fact, several news articles have been published which clearly connect politically and culturally charged statements made by Haunani-Kay Trask as being directly linked to the ideology of the sovereignty movement as a whole, a mentality that, if strengthened, could lessen the probability of sovereignty for the organization.

One of the strongest, and perhaps most far-fetched criticisms made concerning Haunani-Kay Trask, Ka Lāhui, and the sovereignty movement (by association) was leveled by conservative columnist Ryan O’Donnell:

Even more chilling than Professor Trask and her movement’s vision of an independent and racially segregated Hawai‘i, is their open sympathy for the terrorists who murdered thousands on September 11th. Speaking to crowds after the 9/11 attacks, Trask proclaimed, ‘Chickens have come home to roost. . . . What it means is that those who have suffered under the imperialism and militarism of the United States have come back to haunt in the 21st century that same government…Why should we support the United States, whose hands are soaked with blood?127

Almost in direct contrast to the complaints of racism against Ka Lāhui, by those who do not support sovereignty in any form, are complaints and skepticism from fellow sovereignty activists regarding the level of nationhood Ka Lāhui endorses. According to Keali‘i Gora, Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i endorses a nation-within-a-nation status much like Native Americans for the native Hawaiian nation. Activists like Bumpy Kanahele and other native Hawaiian factions, however, find nation-within-a-nation status an unsatisfactory solution to a larger problem. According to Kanahele:

[Agreeing to federal recognition] could be a trap…You know, that sticky trap they catch all the rats inside?…That’s what we feel we’re walking into. Now unless somebody can convince me that we will never lose the right to independence, because there’s no other example out there that has gone into a nation-within-a-nation that came out an independent country [I won’t endorse federal recognition].129

If recent polling on the Akaka Bill, legislation currently under debate in the Senate which would grant native Hawaiians a status much like Native Americans, is any indication, federal recognition still remains widely unpopular among Hawaiian residents, both native Hawaiian and non-native. According to a statewide survey taken by the Grassroots Institute of Hawai‘i in 2005, there is a 2 to 1 ratio of opposition for federal recognition of a native Hawaiian nation, with more than 60% of those polled disagreeing with the Bill.130 Unless the organization can continue to distinguish its model of sovereignty form the one proposed by the Akaka Bill, this mentality among Hawai‘i residents could prove to lower the probability that Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i and their nation-within-a-nation form of sovereignty has of succeeding.

127 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
Kanahele’s group was at one point commonly thought to be one of the most radical organizations in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, particularly after the groups’ occupation of a beachfront on O‘ahu before moving to Pu‘u honua o Waimānalo Village. However, Kanahele’s organization sought out to achieve a land base to begin a Hawaiian Nation, and as a result Pu‘u honua o Waimānalo was formed. Whether or not this alludes to sovereignty being within reach for Kanahele’s group is anyone’s guess.

Unfortunately, other well-known sovereignty activists such as Mililani Trask distrust Kanahele’s work, and have claimed that Kanahele and his organization do not represent the majority of Hawaiians (though, to be fair, with 300 factions operating in the sovereignty movement, it would be difficult to argue that any one organization represents a majority of Hawaiians). Furthermore, in regards to the Nation State of Hawai‘i fighting for full independence, Mililani Trask states that, “If we woke up tomorrow in an independent Hawai‘i, none of our problems would have gone away… [Most Hawaiians] are not worried about independence. They’re worried about paying their bills.”

The former leader of Ka Lāhui has also said that the declaration Kanahele’s group made asserting their independence from the United States was “merely a statement, not a form of government. At least three similar declarations have been issued [by other groups] during the past 20 years, none of them resulting in any substantial change for native Hawaiians.” And although these statements may infer that Kanahele’s group will not gain the needed support by “most Hawaiians,” such an attack against the politics of the organization could also infer that the Nation State of Hawai‘i has become a strong alternative to Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i in the struggle over a form of sovereignty to represent a Hawaiian nation.

Aside from the criticisms of rival groups on the probabilities of the Nation State of Hawai‘i gaining sovereignty, one must examine the actions such a group has or has not taken, and what these could mean for the future of the organization. Of the three organization included in this article, the Nation State of Hawai‘i has arguably done the least to engage in the international arena, participating less

---

often in indigenous affairs in the United Nations, as well as gaining little publicity for Hawaiian affairs in international law. One of Mililani Trask’s main critiques of Kanahele’s group is that it uses the state to further internal matters, while ignoring what will gain sovereignty for the Hawaiian people: international agencies.\(^\text{135}\)

However, Kanahele has managed to create the foundation for an independent Hawai‘i in Pu‘uhonua, and with it has begun to tackle the next step, what many believe to be the crucial step, in maintaining a successful nation: the formation of an economic base in the form of his proposal for the Native Hawaiian Bank.\(^\text{136}\)

Unfortunately, according to federal officials, when it comes to the official U.S. position on Hawai‘i becoming the independent nation Kanahele claims it will:

> There is nothing the president, Congress or any federal agency can do to allow Hawai‘i to secede from the union and be led by a native Hawaiian government…The only way that could occur is if two-thirds of the 50 states voted to amend the U.S. Constitution to allow the secession…But that’s an unlikely scenario at best…\(^\text{137}\)

Although the Nation State of Hawai‘i may have a proposal for an economic base of a Hawaiian Nation, they have yet to make public the initial step of a comprehensive plan for achieving that Nation.

The Hawaiian Kingdom Government

If the Nation State of Hawai‘i avoids the international arena to a point where it could harm their politics, the Hawaiian Kingdom Government may do the exact opposite. The organization, which operates in an official capacity as though the Hawaiian Kingdom were still in effect, fights its battle for independence completely in the international arena, using international law as its biggest supporter.

*Acting* Minister of the Interior, Keanu Sai, has stated that, “the important issue between the Hawaiian Kingdom and the United States is really that of an


\(^{136}\) Kanahele, “Follow the Money”.

international dispute, dealing with treaties. We’re talking [about the recognition] of these treaty violations [to begin] working towards reconciliation and possible reparations.”\textsuperscript{138} Because the Kingdom operates at a completely international level, it is Sai’s position that “Laws passed by Congress affect the other 49 states but not Hawai‘i, because Hawai‘i remains a nation with standing among other nations and was never part of the U.S….In pleadings and oral arguments before the international court, the United States, in its occupation of Hawai‘i, has violated international law by administering its laws instead of kingdom laws.”\textsuperscript{139} Sai remains convinced of the probable success of reclaiming the Hawaiian Kingdom with the law on his side.

An interesting note of support for his claim is the award issued by the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, at which Sai represented and defended the Hawaiian Kingdom Government against legal action taken by a self-proclaimed “Hawaiian Kingdom citizen.” The courts went so far in their award as to acknowledge the continued existence of the Hawaiian Kingdom, under international law, regardless of a century of U.S. occupation.\textsuperscript{140}

Unfortunately for the organization, however, due to the United States’ refusal to recognize the Hawaiian Kingdom Government as a legal body to which the lawsuit was applicable, and because it was not a party to the immediate lawsuit, the Court of Arbitration could not conduct a hearing on the matter of Hawaiian national independence.\textsuperscript{141} This brings to the foreground the reality that the United States has the power to decide the fate of Hawai‘i, and therefore must be addressed as the political entity in control of the State of Hawai‘i rather than simply an obstacle taking illegal actions against a sovereign kingdom.

The probability of the organizations’ success may also prove doubtful when it one considers that the Hawaiian Kingdom Government has brought several claims before U.S. and World Courts in previous years, and each case has been overturned, denied, or ruled in favor of the opposing argument. For example, when on behalf of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government Sai attempted to sue

former President Bill Clinton, the Supreme Court’s action came in a one-line order stating that Sai’s petition for a writ of mandamus was denied, due to the inability of the courts to recognize the Hawaiian Kingdom Government as a nation, as it still existed within the United States.\textsuperscript{142}

The question remains as to whether engaging in the international arena is enough to ensure the realization of sovereignty. The Hawaiian Kingdom Government has shown by example that, as legal scholarship follows that Hawai‘i has never relinquished control over its sovereignty to the United States, there can be no legal justification for the century that the United States has remained in power in Hawai‘i. In light of this, one can propose that what first must happen, before an organization such as this can gain its full momentum in order to actively and successful achieve sovereignty, is that it must deal with the legal issues of nationhood and self-determination within the boundaries of the United States and their occupation. Although Sai may be of the impression that Hawai‘i can’t be decolonized because it was never actually colonized (though it is currently occupied) one arguably cannot simply bypass state and federal laws and deal directly with international laws. Perhaps the United States is simply too powerful for that in this day and age.

The Obstacle Facing Sovereignty Initiatives

Aside from the challenges each organization faces on an individual level – be it debates over principles, issues of representations, conflict over methods, etc. – there is one challenge that most movement activists and participants can agree on: the need for more support and unity.\textsuperscript{143} According to Keali‘i Gora, “Ka Lāhui and [other sovereignty organizations] are really calling upon all Hawaiians to unite. And we really believe that it’s time for us to put down our spears and come together, stand in solidarity, and seize this tremendous opportunity. This is a once in a lifetime chance for us to build this nation by uniting our people.”\textsuperscript{144}

The people of Hawai‘i, however, have concerns of their own that call into question the practicality, feasibility and probability of the sovereignty movement

\begin{footnotes}
\item[143] Donnelly, “Holo I Mua”, Supp1.
\item[144] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
becoming a success. I include below some of the voices of the people of Hawai‘i as they shuffle through the ideologies and theories, much like this article did, that make up the Hawaiian sovereignty movement:145

“I support recognition, but not all of the movements’ politics. It’s calling for self-governance and I don’t agree with that. I also don’t agree with native Hawaiians trying to get the [U.S.] military out of Hawai‘i. I absolutely support OHA and I know a lot of organizations don’t. Ka Lāhui hasn’t done anything great really except unite Hawaiians and make them aware of sovereignty issues. The Nation of Hawai‘i began as one of the most radical groups. They abandoned their cause to occupy ceded lands, refused to pay rent and taxes, gave sanctuary to some other people that refused to pay taxes, and [Kanahele] ultimately ended up in jail! This organizations…methods were not justified and resulted in nothing.”
— native Hawaiian, 27

“There are too many organizations to choose from. And I don’t particularly feel like now is the time during which change can be effected—the world isn’t ready to accept and recognize us as an independent nation, and our people are not ready or able to govern ourselves. I fully support the movement, though I agree that it is not one movement, but rather separate entities pushing for variations of one goal in different ways. It must become a unified fight if anything is to be accomplished, and the movement itself lacks direction and people aren’t sure what they would be getting themselves into if they were involved.”
— native Hawaiian, 24

“I don’t support the movement because it is too far to the [left], in most parts. I feel Hawaiians should have some form of sovereignty though, maybe some sort of government within a government. I feel they should have some compensation for the land that was taken, be it financial or re-instatement of the land. I also feel that Hawaiians should have some form of recognition from the U.S. But I think the movement has too many groups though, and they are unable to agree on one

145 These interviews were conducted by the author, either by phone or email, between the months of July and October, 2005. All participants are, or have been, residents of the state of Hawaii for a majority of their lives, although some have recently moved out of the state. They are both native Hawaiians, and non-native, as cited below their answers. All participants are the friends, family members, colleagues or acquaintances of the author, and have given their permission to be included in this article. This limited number of opinions is not meant to be representative of all members of the Hawaiian community, but rather, simply offer a tiny glimpse into some of the attitudes present in Hawaii today as regards the sovereignty movement.
The concept. The groups are pushing their own agendas instead of the agenda which is best for all the Hawaiian people.”
- native Hawaiian, 50

“I don’t [support the movement] because I’m not convinced of its efficacy. I think the feelings behind it are justified, but the organizations are too divided to bring about constructive change. Radical groups that want complete independence from the U.S. and banning of all foreigners do not have my support. I will support groups that are not purely racist and have a comprehensible idea of how to restore rights to Hawaiians and incorporate old ideals and ways to improve general economic strife resulting from the capitalistic nature of the U.S.”
- non-native Hawaiian, 24

“I support sovereignty. I am a representative of my people. However, I’m not entirely supportive of the facilitators of the movement and their methods. Currently, a lot of people running the show are misinforming those who are/should be eligible to participate in a sovereign entity. I don’t feel that a race-based nation will benefit anyone. But I’m all for an independent nation…I don’t think it’s fitting for the people of Hawai‘i to be governed by individuals halfway around the world who can’t even pronounce our name correctly.”
- native Hawaiian, 22

“I feel that sovereignty is a fight only for native Hawaiians. It’s their right to fight for what they think is right, and what they deserve. Other people can empathize with them, but you have to be Hawaiian in order to fully understand what it’s like to lose something and then fight for it. That’s a problem with the movement, I think. Non-native Hawaiians don’t feel they have the right to fight with and for the cause.”
- non-native Hawaiian, 47

“I think sovereignty is a scary concept. Some people may feel that it’s not needed, but others may also feel that they’ll lose everything once sovereignty happens. I think the main thing is that people end up happy, and I’m not sure sovereignty can do that for everyone.”
- native Hawaiian, 24

“I think the struggle for sovereignty is futile. I think it’s not a possibility, but an ideal, and not much of an ideal at that, because no matter how much I agree with the historic facts…I know that not only would any attempt to achieve our
past government system be chaotic and dangerous, but the U.S. would simply never let it happen. Sovereignty is impractical and unfeasible.”

– native Hawaiian, 24

“I believe the struggle for sovereignty is headed in the right direction, but have witnessed too many instances of race discrimination between the native Hawaiians and the 'haoles' [non-natives]...I disagree with the kind of hatred portrayed by the natives towards the whites in [sovereignty] meetings. I believe compromise is the only answer. The movement is justified and long overdue, but I question the qualifications of the native people that will run the new Republic. Also, there is not enough support...most people feel it's a losing battle.”

– native Hawaiian, 47

“I find the idea of sovereignty frightening, and I don’t feel it’s wise to try and ‘undo’ Hawaiian history. But I believe my ideal outcome for sovereignty would be a compromise between the Hawaiian people and the U.S. government that would ensure both parties having a fairly equal share in the decision making for the islands. Also for native Hawaiians to have a louder voice in socio-political happenings in the islands. But I'm not sure about the forms of sovereignty that are our options right now.”

– native Hawaiian, 24

“I support sovereignty. And I think the organizations need to motivate these natives so that they play a more active role in the movement and it can be more effective. Until then we’re just going to be going in circles and it’s just going to seem like a bunch of complaining. Plus, I don’t think anything is really going to change. I feel we’re going to be fighting this for decades to come. There needs to be more support. There isn’t enough because we’re lazy and some people don’t want change. We need 100% from our natives, and even non-natives have shown more support at times.”

– native Hawaiian, 24

“I support the movement to a point. There are a lot of issues I don’t agree with. But I think the Hawaiian people need to be recognized as the indigenous natives of Hawai‘i and receive compensation for what the Americans have done throughout Hawaiian history. I feel that the U.S. government should be recognized for the faults that they have done to Hawai‘i and its people.”

– native Hawaiian, 47
“I am all for sovereignty, but not cutting off all connections with the U.S. Hawai‘i as a whole would not be able to handle it. I’d like to gain sovereignty but still have the protection of the U.S. Sort of like Puerto Rico, I guess. But I think more native Hawaiians aren’t involved in the movement because they don’t know the facts of the sovereignty movement. Knowing there is a movement isn’t enough, people need to be more educated regarding what it’s about.”

– native Hawaiian, 23

Conclusion

The term Kāna‘e translates to “stand firmly and unyielding against opposition.” Many people, Kanaka Maoli and those from other ethnic and racial backgrounds alike, have answered the call to stand firmly and unyielding, and indeed, as discussed in previous sections, pro-sovereignty organizations number into the hundreds. This sheer number, however, has often been a point of contention many have with the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Indeed, the few opinions offered in the last section show that many of those who are not part of the movement choose not to become members not because of the movement’s lack of strength or persistence, but rather, because of a lack of unity.

Growing up as a native Hawaiian, I have always been exposed to the truth about my history and people, though I did not learn it in any textbook: we were illegally occupied by the United States; our Queen was illegally dethroned; native Hawaiians, like every other group of peoples in the world, deserve to have our rights recognized and respected. And there has always been a plethora of choices as to the form the resolutions to these issues would take, almost to a fault.

The three organization discussed here represent the diversity of theories and methodologies present within the sovereignty movement. While these groups in no way represent all of the different viewpoints that the movement puts forth, I had hoped that, given their public involvement and the media attention they draw to themselves and one another, this choice would allow me to firmly grasp some of the theories, principles, and problems behind the movement today.

In summary then, Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, one of the largest and most comprehensive of the organizations, engages both the U.S. government and the international arena in issues concerning native Hawaiians as an indigenous group. Ka Lāhui is constantly lobbying and educating the public, and the organization has also proposed one of the more detailed and thorough Master Plans within sovereignty movement as a whole.

However, in some circles the group has gained the reputation of being discriminatory, and key members of Ka Lāhui have been accused in the media as using sovereignty to create a race-based nation, despite their commitment to allowing non-native Hawaiians to become honorary citizens of Ka Lāhui and their proposed nation. The organization has also been challenged by rival sovereignty factions which claim that the nation-within-a-nation status that Ka Lāhui endorses is necessary, but not enough of a resolution to satisfy native Hawaiians.

On the other hand, The Provisional Government of the Independent Nation State of Hawai‘i, which proposes a completely independent Nation of Hawai‘i, has been criticized by sovereignty activists as being too radical. Our interview answers also show us that previous actions taken by the organization may have damaged their reputation permanently in the eyes of the general public. Furthermore, many activists also feel that some level of engagement within the international legal system is key to achieving sovereignty, and while the Nation of Hawai‘i agrees, they have yet to engage themselves in internationally in a formal manner.

This organization, however, is the only organization to successfully implement an actual “nation” within the current state of Hawai‘i. Pu‘uhonua o Waimānalo Village serves as evidence that the proposals of the organization, at least on a smaller scale, are practical, feasible, and possible. The organization is also currently involved in perfecting a plan for an economic base of the Nation, with their proposal of the Native Hawaiian Bank.

Finally, the Hawaiian Kingdom Government continues to function and operate as the acting government of the Hawaiian Kingdom, despite U.S. annexation. If nothing more, this particular organization has shown how difficult the fight for sovereignty is when one considers the political power wielded by the United States. Though the Hawaiian Kingdom Government has engaged the U.S. in several legal battles, the organization has yet to gain significant headway in the international or national level.
However, one of the significant accomplishments of the organization to date is that, through rallies and lectures, members of this organization, far more than others, have begun spreading the word throughout the State of Hawai‘i about the legal basis for the restoration of the Hawaiian Kingdom. The Hawaiian Kingdom Government has both domestic and international law on its side, and has even succeeded in gaining an award from the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, which acknowledged the continued existence of the Hawaiian Kingdom, under international law, in spite of the century-long U.S. occupation.

In light of these factors, it is clear that though the fight for sovereignty is alive and well within the Hawaiian community, there is much debate about what an “ideal” plan for achieving sovereignty would entail. Perhaps it is a nation-within-a-nation form of federal recognition. Perhaps it is complete independence from the United States. Or perhaps it needs to be a completely new form of sovereignty, unique to the history and culture of Hawai‘i itself. Whatever the decision, and whenever that decision needs to be made, it is my hope that this article contributes to the work currently being done by Hawaiian activists within the movement to achieve what many consider their most important goal for the time being: educating the general public, and offering the people of Hawai‘i enough options and information so that they are better equipped to make a sound decision once the time arrives.

Amanda Mae Kāhealani Pacheco, a native Hawaiian, is a 2005 graduate of the Comparative History of Ideas program at the University of Washington. Originally from Honomu, on the Big Island of Hawai‘i, she now resides in the Bay Area where she expects to graduate from the University of San Francisco School of Law with a J.D. in May 2009. She is currently pursuing a career in federal Indian law and policy.
Kanna Hudson, “‘We are the Tiniest Particle’: Authorial Agency and the Body,” *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009): 389-430.

**ABSTRACT**

I attempt here a clarification of some of the theoretical work on the relationships among and between authorship, text, and meaning. I am particularly concerned with the more problematic aspects of language: the perils of translating between any combination of languages and of transcribing speech into writing; the universal inability to describe experiences of wonder and trauma; the existence of infinite possible interpretations of poetry and everyday miscommunications. Building upon the work of Barthes and Blanchot, I first establish the author’s lack of agency over language — in that the author lacks control over the path of intended and interpreted meanings as they travel from the author to the text to the reader. I further contend that words exist as bodies; moving, growing, and procreating as such. Finally, I propose a possible solution to the lack of authorial agency by framing the embodied act of authorship as a productive act. The act of writing entails the interactions between embodied words and embodied authors, and this embodied experience inscribes itself on the world as agency. The work of Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector, and in particular her novel *The hour of the star*, provides a case study for this project, while the work of Cixous serves as a theoretical ground.

http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Winter_2009/Kanna_Hudson_Authorial_Agency_and_the_Body.pdf

© 2009 *intersections*, Kanna Hudson. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author
“We Are the Tiniest Particle”
Authorial Agency and the Body

By Kanna Hüdson
University of Washington, Seattle

Introduction

“Don’t forget, in the meantime, that this is the season for strawberries. Yes.”
Clarice Lispector

I grew up saying “ichigo” (Japanese for “strawberry”) and “strawberry” (English) at the same time. In my infancy I knew that these were two things. Honestly, I knew that they were thousands and thousands of things – perhaps children can appreciate the singularity of each individual strawberry better than adults. Anyway, when I grew up, I learned that these ichigo and strawberries were one thing. With each repetition, those thousands and thousands of strawberries are slammed into two tiny syllabic morsels.

This is how I first came to distrust language. Words always seem to confine things, suppress things. Here’s a common example. A person’s identity – strong, wide, vast, and effervescent – is confined to a few words or phrases on official forms that request “name,” “occupation,” and “race.” Those moments in life that plumb all human experience and capacity, those spectacular sights in nature that can break the very brain down: these things always seem to die when spoken. Sometimes, something beautiful emerges out of the words (therein lies good authorship), but the thing itself always dies. This is why, I think, there’s a tendency among inexperienced writers (myself included) to string together ill-assorted words. There’s a tendency to be imprecise. The young author wants something else (something other than the words’ usual and inadequate meanings) to erupt out of the incompatible coupling of words.

---

1 “We are the tiniest particle” is a quotation from the personal notebooks of Clarice Lispector, cited in Hélène Cixous’ Three steps on the ladder of writing, (New York: Columbia University, 1993), 33. I would like express my gratitude to my thesis-writing companions and fellow graduates in the Comparative History of Ideas program, particularly Vincent Gonzalez, Matthew Allen, Hannah Janeway, and especially Sarah Maria. Thanks beyond measure to my mentor and adviser, Professor Phillip Thurtle.

I became intellectually convinced of my distrust of words during a summer of intensive humanistic research in the study of trauma, time, memory, and embodiment. My research revealed that trauma often renders people silent. Trauma is defined as an experience that shatters one’s cognitive frames of reference. Since language is, perhaps, our most primary system of reference, any experience that profoundly affects our referential system is bound to defy our use of language.³ Susan J. Brison, for example, a scholar of philosophy and trauma studies, writes that “the challenge of finding language that is true to traumatic experience is, however, a daunting one. How can we speak about the unspeakable without attempting to render it intelligible and sayable? Our ordinary concepts of time and identity cease to apply.”⁴ Language fails trauma, writes Brison, as do time, identity, and all other conceptual references we have.

I first approached this project hoping for nothing more than to expound on the distress and injustice words cause us, in the everyday, the extraordinary, and authorial realms. I wanted to rage, rage, rage, and hoped to finish with the simple satisfaction of having proved words’ meanness. In even a relatively short academic paper such as this, though, there is little choice than to succumb to words. A rare creative trope might ease the conscious a little; it also might cause even more agitation. At some point, it came to me that I would be happier to seek a truce with words. I erased the rage I had thus far written, rewrote it as a preface to a love that had yet to manifest, and began looking for a way to ease the pain of words.

Many had already found a way, it turned out. I looked to great authors who had mastered words – or if not mastered, then befriended. Clarice Lispector and her The hour of the star lay a path leading to this friendship. I tried my best to walk the path, and met a remarkable girl named Macabéa of whom the whole world is made, and in her I found both love and satisfaction.

Here are a few technical notes before I outline, and then begin, this project. I will occasionally interchange the word “language” with “word” or “words.” While I understand that the concept of language can encompass many more modes of communication than that which words comprise, in the context of this paper, “language” refers to the entire mass of and system of words (including syntax, diction, phonetics, morphology, pragmatics, stylistics, and poetics, though I


won’t address all these components). Secondly, as this project is heavy with discussions of the individual author, I’m regrettably obliged to use pronouns, and gendered ones at that. Alas, the English language fails me. I have usually chosen the feminine pronoun because Clarice Lispector, the central literary author in this project, is female. (I am also female.) (I also think that masculine pronouns have their fair share.) Thirdly, nearly all the authors quoted in this text wrote in languages other than English, in which I am writing this paper. This is significant. In the full translated texts of these works, some sort of apology from the translator usually prefaces the main text; so I feel compelled to apologize, too, for contributing to the mutation of the original work even further, by slicing bits out of already sliced texts, which emerged from the sliced meanings of their respective sliced authors.

I’ll start this project by walking down a path we all walk down, all the time. This is the path of everyday violence and it is fraught with violence. Maybe you’ve grinned and shrugged along your way. This is while you are being sliced and hacked at. Me, too. Grinning and shrugging is better than being miserable. But sometimes it is good to look this violence in the eye. (Maybe there is a way to stop it.) Next in this project will be the question of the author. (I’ve decided to save the second question of language, that of the extraordinary and language, for another project.) The author’s daily work is to take the word and turn something out of it. What does she do when words are pummeling her left and right? Does she even know that this is happening? Well, how can the author have any agency in her work? Then, frustrated, I’ll turn from the distress, determined to find a solution. There’s no use just standing here, dopey and helpless. This means that we must think of words as something altogether different than what we’ve thought of them before. I’ll start to think of words as living beings. They’ll be our equals. We must collaborate. There are three questions about words, then, if they’re living beings: what are they made of? Where do they live? And finally, what does it mean to be what they are? I’ll explore these three questions respectively. Finally, the last two sections of this project will be a hopeful look into what authorial agency might be and what it might provide us, given that traditional conceptions of authorial agency have often left authors speechless and mutilated. These will be based on the success and gorgeousness of the work of several authors, especially Hélène Cixous, Maurice Blanchot, and Clarice Lispector.
Words and Everyday Violence: A Survey

There is a universal inability to use words to describe experiences of trauma and wonder. Profound spiritual experiences and the Romantic “sublime” are like this, too. I contend that these experiences are not the anomaly of unspeakability. I contend that we simply notice that words are failing us at these times because of the relative significance of the experiences to us. The most mundane experiences are unspeakable, too. This postulate is a bit tired, I know, but I want to remind you of the singularity of your own experiences compared to those of anyone else. Take your most recent walk. It is simply not possible to match every nuance of your thoughts and emotions, each of your bodily affects, and all of your sensory perceptions, with anyone else’s walk. And that leaves out the context of your walk, which is of course not fundamentally different from your walk itself: the livelihood of the trees along the path, the thoughts of the woman walking not far in front of you, the whole of your life which led to and which will follow this walk. Since words are a system of categorization, of fitting-in, singularity must lead to unspeakability. Perhaps, for practical purposes, we could use words to represent this walk to some small degree. But, to say this shows our willingness let words destroy our experiences and even ourselves. In actuality, you cannot speak your walk in justice: you only have some-thousand words to describe your walk to me. And some-thousand words will never be enough for all the thinking and emoting, the affects and the contexts, of your walk. What, were you “contemplative” on your walk? Were you, in simile, “as contemplative as someone in her dying hour”? There you are, killing your walk with words. You will take ages, and they will always fail you.

More of words’ failures: there are the perils of translating between virtually any combination of languages, and of transcribing speech into writing. There are the infinite possible interpretations of word-made poetry and literature. Really, there are the infinite possible interpretations of any set of words at all. Every day that we vibrate our larynxes or squiggle our pens on paper, we are swarmed by a billion perceived and unperceived miscommunications.

The implications of this, of course, are devastating. It’s a little bit futile, too. In this very project, I am succumbing to words. These words I’m choosing – these words right here – are expository and conventional. I wish I could tell you everything I want to say without using a single word (words who destroy us so profoundly), but let me humble myself. Words are so powerful and mysterious that I can hardly contain myself! They are so enormous! And I have no choice but to humble myself.
Wait, I need to return to the devastation; the humility will have to wait. If I cannot use words to accurately communicate any of my meaning or being, words will fail my experiences, my ideas, and even my identity. My meaning is always killed by the unruliness of the word. We usually don’t recognize this—we assume we are receiving messages via the word-medium. In fact, we feel that words serve to allow us to understand others. This is the sneaky, the vicious violence of words; they destroy meaning and being while we believe that we are all whole and well.

Author and theorist Maurice Blanchot addresses the violence of words. He writes, “I say ‘This woman.’ . . . A word may give me its meaning, but first it suppresses it. For me to be able to say, ‘This woman,’ I must somehow take her flesh-and-blood reality away from her, cause her to be absent, annihilate her.”

By this, Blanchot means (How violent! But we must succumb!) that a word is so detached from its particular referent that it erases the particularity of the referent. The word “woman” is detached from the particular woman to whom Blanchot refers, partly because the word “woman” is so laden with its own historical and social contexts. Meanwhile, it knows nothing or little of the historical and social contexts of the particular woman. So the word “woman” erases the particular woman. In sum, when we speak a word, it can do a person great violence in return.

There are two questions of language here. The first one is of our general habit of words, of the annihilated woman and incommunicable after-dinner walks, and of asking for the ketchup, please. The second question is that of authors, whose livelihood rests on a sturdy command of words. If words are so very awful to those of us who need them mainly to ask for the ketchup, what about those who need them mainly to express every nuance and vigor of human existence (I am speaking of authors)? I want to talk specifically now about everyday language and its distinction from authorial language.

Blanchot tends to forgive the everyday ketchup violence. He was concerned in part with this distinction between ordinary and literary language. In The space of literature, he comments on the distinction between the “crude word” and the “essential word,” phrases coined by French poet Stéphane Mallarmé. The key to both terms, Blanchot writes, is silence. The crude word, which we use to communicate the immediate world to one another, is totally empty and silent.

---

6 Maurice Blanchot, The space of literature (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 39
“Nothing is more foreign to the tree than the word *tree,*” writes Blanchot, “as it is used nonetheless by everyday language. A word which does not name anything, which does not represent anything, which does not outlast itself in any way, a word which is not even a word and which disappears marvelously altogether and at once in its usage: what could be more worthy of the essential and closer to silence?” There is the clear and endless gap between the word and the referent (the tree and the word *tree*), and there is the fact that words like tree disappear the moment we speak them, because we are so concerned with what the word *tree* is supposed to represent (the tall, woody, leaved thing), and so unconcerned with the actual word.

To clarify, Mallarmé likens the everyday exchange of language (speaking of trees or ketchup, for example) to the exchange of money. The words or the money disappear upon their exchange, because their sole purpose is to represent something in the world. So, this is a fairly contented turn on words’ total lack of reference to our world. In fact, Blanchot seems to frame this silence as a kind of necessary opiate for all of us. Given the unspeakable weight of the complexity and enormity of the world (those are the simplest terms I could muster), the crude word actually silences this world for us so that we can live in calm. “Thanks to this silence, beings speak, and in it they also find oblivion and rest.” In the silence of the words themselves (the actual words – not what they purport to represent), we beings speak with our actions. Furthermore, we can rest as the great world that lay on the other side of the words is silenced.

Blanchot continues to discuss the way that words disappear in our everyday exchanges of language, in order to give us peace. “. . . the immediacy which common language communicates to us is only veiled distance, the absolutely foreign passing for the habitual, the unfamiliar which we take for customary, thanks to the veil which is language and because we have grown accustomed to words’ illusion.” Language seems as if it’s communicating the immediate, which I might also define as our immediate surrounding reality. Two issues arise here. The first is that the immediate, or reality, is far too complex for us to perceive or discuss with any sense of calm. I mentioned earlier that sublime and traumatic experiences often render individuals speechless. As these experiences are, by definition, outside of our existing cognitive categories, they aren’t compatible with language, nor are they compatible with any other mental reference. Without a frame of reference to mediate (and thereby dim or alter) these

---

7 Ibid., 30-40.
8 Ibid., 41.
9 Ibid., 40.
experiences, they are likely our only contact with unmediated reality, and this unmediated reality is far too enormous for language. The second issue is that language and the idea of the “immediate” are inherently disparate. Words, by their very nature and function, carry the past with them. I’ll elaborate on this in a later section. For now, let it be said that if I invent a word right now and speak it to you, it will carry no meaning at all to you. Likewise, the word “woman” (recall the earlier quotation) annihilates a specific woman because it is so heavy with its own history. Words are too tied to the non-immediate (the past) and too untied to the immediate (or immediate reality) to meaningfully or veritably function as a communicatory medium between human beings.

I’ll return now to Mallarmé’s money analogy. We seem to be okay, generally, with representing goods with cash. We are not so offended if a strawberry goes for a number of dollars per pound. Likewise for words, we are not so offended at representing a tree, under most conditions, with the word “tree.” I can tell you that I intend to go sit next to said tree, simply and monosyllabically, without being thrown into a helpless state of wonder of the immensity of the tree and life itself. And it helps us get through life.

Sometimes we are offended, though. We are often offended at the idea of representing back-breaking, hateful labor with a number of dollars per hour (each hour which might have been instead spent loving something). Likewise, we’re offended if a “priceless” work of art is bought for some-odd millions of dollars; it can’t be far too much or far too little, it simply should not be represented with dollars. It irks us, at least. Nonetheless, as Mallarmé said, the money itself disappears in the exchange. We faithfully think that we are trading whatever work we do for what it represents: groceries, prestige, the promise of a lazy future (it’s never a stack of green paper). In those everyday exchanges of words, the same goes. The words disappear, and we seek out word-exchanges not for the words themselves, but for what they represent. Sometimes, it would help for us to recognize that in our exchange of words, the word should offend us. A particular word may not be enough to represent something. Or, something should simply not be represented with a word.

I think there is incredible violence in these everyday exchanges of language. But sometimes – maybe – it just doesn’t matter; and plus – maybe – this very violence assures us a little bit of peace. We suppress the world with words so that it does not destroy us with its enormity.
I’d like to clarify that this violence is not a question of the incommensurability of two consciousnesses. I expect (and would not hesitate to posit) that your consciousness and mine are respectively decisively singular, but let’s not blame the thrashing-slashing-killing of words on that. Yes, words will fail if we conceive of them as mediators between our two consciousnesses, but they will also fail if we conceive of them as representatives of our own consciousnesses even to our selves. This is all about the violence of representation, which means that if you use a word to represent anything, anything at all, to anyone (yourself or me or no one), the word will kill it. Maybe this is useful for us as we pass through the everyday, as Blanchot posited. But there is no question that it is words that are doing the violence.

(While I am clarifying, I’ll say that this violence is also different from Reception Theory, which is a literary theory that emphasizes the reader’s role in the production of meaning in a text. Reception theorists would contend that there is no ultimate meaning in any particular text, but that the meaning would change as the text passed through different eras, cultures, and communities. I am more concerned with two things, the first being the question of authorship itself, which has little or nothing to do with the text, and the second being the activity of the words themselves, rather than the activity of the reader.)

The reason we should care about the everyday violence of words is that it leads to other types of violence, outside of words. A very real political and social danger arises when we use too few or too small words to represent something large, thus suppressing some sort of enormity or diversity. A second danger arises when we use an enormous word, like “woman,” to represent a very particular and nuanced individual person. All this is to say that almost all situations in which we use words are accompanied by at least one of these two dangers.

I have not figured out how to exist without being constantly subject to these dangers, but it’s probably helpful to be aware of them at all times. After you ask for the ketchup, both you and the ketchup will most likely surface unscathed, but sometimes that won’t be the case. The poor folks who are more likely not unscathed from their liaisons with words are the authors themselves. Let us wonder, next, how some of them do.
As for Authorial Agency

In literary language things are more complicated than in the everyday. I’ll use as a case-study The hour of the star, a novel by Clarice Lispector. Clarice Lispector is a Brazilian author (December 10, 1920 to December 9, 1977). She was born in a small town in Ukraine and moved to impoverished Northeastern Brazil at two months of age. She wrote and published a great deal during her life, and often wrote with a stream-of-consciousness style that seems to mimic Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, though she had read neither when she began writing as such. She also wrote a great number of short stories. The hour of the star is a novel, and a very short one (about eighty sparse pages in English). I’ll synopsise the book a little later, but first I’d like to present to you a stunning and explicit example of how words have misbehaved in this book.

Translation among languages, as I mentioned, is one of many instances in which words trouble us, and it’s a fairly straightforward one to grasp. The hour of the star, having been written in Portuguese by Lispector (may the Portuguese language have had mercy on Lispector), has been translated the world over. This particular project is founded on translated texts, and it turns out that most of these texts have jetted around the world and transformed and procreated into such unrecognizable mutations of each other that, honestly, this project is probably founded on nothing human at all. The hour of the star is no exception; neither are any of the other texts referenced in this paper. In The hour of the star, this line appears: “More actor than writer, for with only one system of punctuation at my disposal, I juggle with intonation and force another’s breathing to accompany my text.”

This is a character speaking, but here, Clarice Lispector is clearly fighting through into the text to recognize the presence of another being: the translator. Let it be known.

The hour of the star starts with a dedication, which is part of the text itself (unlike a traditional dedication which tends to precede the text, like an author’s last gasp as herself before she is overtaken by another character). In the English translation of the book, translated by Giovanni Pontiero, the title of the dedication looks like this, loosely formatted:

The Author’s Dedication

(alias Clarice Lispector)

---

10 Lispector, The hour of the star, 22-23.
11 Ibid., 7.
Then there is the original Portuguese version, translated by perhaps no one:

Dedicatória Do Autor

(Na verdade Clarice Lispector)

*Na verdade* means, honestly, “in truth.” This is not a particularly disputable translation. The dispute here is between “alias” and “in truth,” which are opposites in English.

Here is an example of the use of the “in truth” translation in a critical essay, the more “accurate” to the original Portuguese. French philosopher and author Hélène Cixous wrote an essay called “The hour of the star: How Does One Desire Wealth or Poverty?” a piece about Lispector’s novel. Cixous wrote this essay in French. Verena Andermatt Conley translated this into English, and I read Conley’s translation. In the Conley translation, Cixous and/or Conley use the “in truth” translation – accurate to Lispector’s original Portuguese. But, the bibliography of Conley’s translation of Cixous’ essay indicates that Cixous and/or Conley used the Pontiero translation of *The hour of the star* (that’s the “alias” translation). The Cixous/Conley essay/translation also indicates that any modifications to cited quotations have been indicated in the text of the essay, and yet there is no indication of modification, even though the passage appears in the text as “in truth,” which has clearly been modified from the Pontiero “alias” translation, which appears in the Cixous/Conley bibliography, which is in fact resting upon my knee at this instant.

With a deep breath, don’t worry if you didn’t follow this dedication’s dizzying mutation. The point is that you cannot trust the text any longer to do what you think it’s doing, at least when it comes to translations and excerpted quotations and citations. You probably already know this, but maybe you don’t pay attention. The point is deception. Maybe it’s Cixous or Conley or Pontiero or I who are secretly slicing up words. Maybe we are hysterical with power over you, reader, as long as you assume that words are doing their duty. Or maybe we are absentmindedly listening to the radio as we toss significant passages into the paper shredder and tape them back together for publication. This is a warning; be wary of the humans. And also, this is not meant to be a critique of translator Pontiero. I’m positive that he had good reason for each of his decisions. Maybe, it’s the word itself that is being so mischievous. As for Clarice Lispector: it seems

---

that as *The hour of the star* was moving through the world during the past few decades after its publication in 1977, it has grown into something altogether different than Lispector’s book. Lispector, who died shortly after writing *The hour of the star*, had her authorship torn from her at every turn of this text. So who did this? Authors? Words?

Rodrigo is a character in *The hour of the star*, an author by profession. He says, “No, it is not easy to write. It is as hard a breaking rocks. Sparks and splinters fly like shattered steel.”

13 To write is often to shatter worldly things, like rocks, with words. It is often to shatter ourselves, too. But maybe this has been enough pouting. Words are terrible to us, et cetera. Stand tall, you and me both; we are going to stride forward and find a solution.

The question is really about agency. If words fail to convey the author’s intended meanings, does the author have any agency over words? Meaning most certainly moves among us (look here, at these words; now look there, in your brain). Did we not invent words? What moves meaning, then? Not the author? As in many other arenas, the question of agency has become frightening and baffling in the arena of words (and words’ conglomerates, texts). The question is, do authors not have any agency over words, and why is this? Since the question of agency is at stake in so many discourses at the moment, I’d like to offer a preliminary definition of common-sense agency.

I define common-sense agency as taking an action with the certainty that the intended result will ensue. I visualize it as the agent picking up an object in one location and moving it to another location. The agent has control and power over that object. If we disregard negligible possibilities that some more powerful and unexpected agent will interfere, most of us have agency over some situations. I, for example, have enough agency to remove my own shoe. I am satisfied to call this agency for all practical purposes. My body might cease to have the ability to untie my shoelaces, an earthquake might impel me to protect my body rather than remove my shoe, a psychological state might impair me from wanting to remove my shoe, someone might race in and move my shoe before I get the chance, or perhaps hold me at gunpoint and forbid me from removing my shoe.

I have common-sense agency over my shoes and their removal, but my agency over words is quite different. If an author thinks of agency over words as the ability to move meaning from herself to the text in a word-container without

---

interference, she will be disappointed. The shoe-situation is a shocking comparison, because while I can probably remove my own shoe, it is one-hundred-percent inevitable that words will rush in and prevent me from communicating my intended meaning.

Clearly, the author needs a new conception of agency over words. This agency must either find some way to thwart words as they impede the movement of meaning, or else find a conception of authorial agency that is not based on moving meaning around in containers (words). As I think it’s impossible as well as cruel to thwart words, this project is aimed at finding a new conception of authorial agency which emphasizes neither thwarting nor containing.

Blanchot writes in *The writing of the disaster*: “Reading is anguish, and this is because any text, however important, or amusing, or interesting it may be (and the more engaging it seems to be), is empty – at the bottom it doesn’t exist; you have to cross an abyss, and if you do not jump, you do not comprehend.”\(^\text{14}\) Blanchot’s metaphor-paradox deliberately tells the reader that words are empty of meaning at their core, and one can only claim to comprehend by independently (maybe artificially) filling in pits of emptiness between those words and their intended meanings. Yet strangely, Blanchot’s words embed profound meaning in his reader, by proclaiming the absence of such a possibility.

And what of this abyss which one must jump? Rodrigo, an author-character in Clarice Lispector’s *The hour of the star*, feels horrified at the ease with which he is filling in the abyss between the word and reality. He writes, “I am exploiting the written word with the utmost ease. This alarms me, for I am afraid of losing my sense of order and of plunging into an abyss resounding with cries and shrieks: the Hell of human freedom.”\(^\text{15}\) I think this is the same abyss. Here Rodrigo is “exploiting the written word”: this means that he is not respecting the written word as an entity unto itself. He is, rather, trying to write over language to access some reality or imagination. He has no regard for the word itself. This is something like Mallarmé’s words-like-money analogy. While it’s one thing for an everyday user of language to disregard words, it seems quite another for an author to do so. Here, Rodrigo, the author, is wielding his notion of human agency over words, and I think he’ll find that meanwhile, words are wielding their own agency over his intended meaning. I’ll continue to elaborate later on passing over words to try to attain something other than words with writing.

\(^{14}\) Maurice Blanchot, *The writing of the disaster*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 10.

\(^{15}\) Lispector, *The hour of the star*, 36.
Back to Blanchot’s aphorisms: they demonstrate the eerie dynamic of words. They are able to shift and grow, and deposit meaning in their readers even while purporting to do the opposite. Words reach within themselves, revealing their absence and presence at the same time. Blanchot describes this particular phenomenon in *The space of literature*: “Words, we know, have the power to make things disappear. But words, having the power to make things ‘arise’ at the heart of their absence – words which are masters of absence – also have the power to disappear in themselves, to absent themselves marvelously in the midst of the totality which they realize, which they proclaim as they annihilate themselves therein, which they accomplish eternally by destroying themselves endlessly.”

These words, which disappear under their own weight, evoke an entire universe’s worth of meaning, which is (so twistingly) that those words themselves vanish in the presence of their manifestation.

This must be why we began thinking of words as media, as containers for our meaning. They disappear so effectively that we cease to see them, and meanwhile they are scrambling our meanings with their own volition. It dismays me to even try to unwrap Blanchot’s aphorism, because it undoes its point (it undoes the power of the words).

To add more paradox, those words – which Blanchot claims are actively vanishing and realizing totalities on their own – are clearly written by Blanchot, the author. While we observe as Blanchot alternately faces words with humility and rage (perhaps), his own authorial skill (agency, even) is at work. He seems to have reclaimed bits of agency over language by using strange and delicious tropes: metaphor, paradox, and poetics, for example. Is he diverting his loss of agency over words, as an author? There is something going on, clearly, between the word and him. Is he, maybe, finding a new approach to authorial agency?

At this point, I’ve tended to frame words as a medium to communicate meaning, rather than as an entity unto themselves. This sentence marks the point at which I am shifting my conception of words from media to entities. More specifically, I will begin approaching words as bodies, just as I approach human authors as bodies. The interaction between these bodies may be where the author can hope to find authorial agency.

---

16 Blanchot, *The space of literature*, 43.
In *The hour of the star*, bodies emerge everywhere. Bodies, in fact, begin to pervade the writing. I’ll now study the bodies of *The hour of the star*: those of the author, the characters, and the text. First, I’ll offer context and synopsis. *The hour of the star* is about an author, Rodrigo S. M., who is writing a story about a poor, ugly girl in Rio de Janeiro. Her name is Macabéa and she is a typist by profession, and a bad one moreover. She is from a generally impoverished region of Northeastern Brazil. An orphan, she was raised by an abusive aunt and has a general feeling that she deserves nothing, while she never recognizes the injustice in her life nor does she ever seem to feel malcontented. In Macabéa’s story, she likes a certain famous brand of soda, wants to look like Marilyn Monroe, and has a persistent cough. Eventually she obtains a verbally abusive boyfriend named Olímpico, who then dumps her for her co-worker.

There are many possible readings of *The hour of the star*, as is true with great texts. I’ve read *The hour of the star* peering straight at issues of authorship and of the body. In my reading, there are three key attributes to this text. The first is that the story of Macabéa does not start until about one-third of the way through the text. The first third consists of Rodrigo (the author in the book) discussing writing and the prospect of writing Macabéa’s story. The second key attribute is that Macabéa goes to see a fortune-teller in the last third of the text, who tells her that she will have a happy future. The third attribute is that Macabéa dies right after she leaves the fortune-teller, when a yellow Mercedes hits and kills her as she crosses the street.

As for context, Clarice Lispector had a few works published posthumously, but this was the last book published during her life, in the year of her death by cancer, in 1977. This section of this paper is about bodies, and Lispector’s body is significant because it was fleshy and mortal, and it was soon to die after writing *The hour of the star*. I’ll continue to discuss the death of Lispector’s body in a later section, however, and in this section I’ll focus on the bodies of those who we tend to think of as bodiless: words, characters, and texts; as well as Lispector’s body’s relationship to those.

Recall my discussion of “The Author’s Dedication” which begins the book (which is written by either “(alias Clarice Lispector)” or “na verdade Clarice Lispector”). The dedication beautifully predicts how you, the reader, will feel the bodily affect of the text. It begins, “I dedicate this narrative to dear old Schumann and
his beloved Clara who are now, alas, nothing but dust and ashes.”

Here, Lispector introduces the theme of music, which will permeate the text thereafter. Music and sound become the bodily venue of the text. One should hear the text speak rather than claiming to forego the sound of the words for the story purportedly beyond them. (As I’ll elaborate later, words not only speak and make sound, they listen, too!) Moreover, Lispector acknowledges the very bodies of the composers. Not an entity touches this text without having a body. Lispector continues, “I dedicate it to the deep crimson of my blood as someone in his prime.”

To digress, here Lispector calls herself “he,” so this must be Rodrigo, “alias” or “in truth” Clarice Lispector: we don’t know which it is, but clearly the two are both present. Remember this: Lispector is present in the text as is Rodrigo. (I am trying to make these words bulge; I feel their truth in my lungs; all words offer in the way of artificial emphasis is to slant forwards.) Anyway, in the quotation, here emerges the very blood of the author’s body, and an acknowledgment of the aging of the author’s body (“in his prime”). The dedication continues as such, making further dedication to many composers and the affect they induce (“to all those musicians who have touched within me the most alarming and unsuspected regions”).

Lispector is not the only one whose ears recognize music in her writing. Hélène Cixous, much of whose work is about Lispector’s work, brings her ears to text, too. Cixous writes: “You may already know the ones whose music I hear. I have brought them with me, I will make them resound. There is Clarice Lispector, whose music is dry, and severe, like Bernhard’s.”

Cixous then remarks on her other favorites and the music she hears in them. Just as Lispector hears music in words, Cixous hears distinct music in her favorite purveyors of words.

What does this music mean? Is it really sound, rather than deliberate music, that produces bodily affect? Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari address the presence of music in Franz Kafka’s literature as such:

> It is certainly not a systemized music, a musical form, that interests Kafka (in his letters and in his diary, one finds nothing more than insignificant anecdotes about a few musicians). It isn’t a composed and semiotically shaped music that interests Kafka, but rather a pure sonorous material.

---

17 Lispector, *The hour of the star*, 7.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 8.
This pure sonorous material — *material* — is what likely interests Cixous and Lispector, too. Any semiotic value of the music shrinks before what may be felt by the body. Rodrigo writes of the story of Macabéa, “The facts are sonorous but among the facts there is a murmuring. It is the murmuring that frightens me.”²² I think the murmuring consists of the details and ambiguities of Macabéa’s life. Here Rodrigo hears Macabéa’s life, sounds and murmurs. Even further, a surreal moment overtakes as Rodrigo describes Macabéa’s affinity for obscurity: “She lived in slo-o-o-ow motion, a hare le-e-e-aping through the a-a-air over hi-i-ill and da-a-a-ale.”²³ This is the most explicit instance of sound brought to words. We are forced to pause and hear the vowels, which we nearly always ignore in words.

Now I turn to the body of author Rodrigo, who is made of words. Recall that Rodrigo is the author in the book who is writing the story of Macabéa. He most definitely has a body, and repeatedly speaks of his body. He says in the first few pages, “The toothache that passes through this narrative has given me a sharp twinge right in the mouth.”²⁴ The toothache appears to have little literal relevance to the narrative, though it comes up twice; and yet, the toothache is a type of ache which inevitably rouses sympathetic pain in the reader. Rodrigo’s body is so fleshy and nervy I can feel it myself. While one would think an entity made of words must be made of thought, Rodrigo writes, “In no sense an intellectual, I write with my body.”²⁵ Sometimes it seems Lispector is seeping through here. She is able to talk about her own authorship through Rodrigo. Whoever it is, to write with the body is to forego power over words, and instead to approach the word, body to body. Our claim and desire to have agency over words, I think, comes from a sense of intellectual ingenuity in which we own words and their function. To be a body is to approach another body as an equal, and whether to fight, love, or collaborate may be a question of power inherent to one body, but it is also a question of mutual participation by both bodies.

Rodrigo also writes, “Unlike the reader, I reserve the right to be devastatingly cold, for this is not simply a narrative, but above all primary life that breathes, breathes, breathes. Made of porous material, I shall one day assume the form of a molecule with its potential explosion of atoms.”²⁶ He wants not to create a story, but to actually relate and introduce a true living being to the world.

---

²³ Ibid., 34.
²⁴ Ibid., 12.
²⁵ Ibid., 16.
²⁶ Ibid., 13.
wants to be objective in order to reveal her thoroughly, and in fact, to reveal herself to her.

If someone made of words can have a body (like Rodrigo), words themselves must have bodies. And moreover, someone created by someone made of words (words are now actually creating!) has a body, too. Rodrigo (na verdade Clarice Lispector), before the story of Macabéa begins, writes the following:

Remember that, no matter what I write, my basic material is the word. So this story will consist of words that form phrases from which there emanates a secret meaning that exceeds both words and phrases. Like every writer, I am clearly tempted to use succulent terms: I have at my command magnificent adjectives, robust nouns, and verbs so agile that they glide through the atmosphere as they move into action. For surely words are actions? Yet I have no intention of adorning the word, for were I to touch the girl’s bread, that bread would turn to gold – and the girl (she is nineteen years old) the girl would be unable to bite into it, and consequently die of hunger.27

Lispector repeatedly acknowledges the materiality of the word, as she does here. She also emphasizes the materiality of Macabéa herself: Macabéa clearly has a body which needs bread. As Mallarmé says that the word disappears in our everyday exchanges, Blanchot also says that in the poetic word (or the language of literature), “It seems rather that the word alone declares itself. Then languages takes on all of its importance.”28 Here Lispector and Blanchot both give the word its own life. Lispector gives Macabéa (made of words) a body, and Blanchot gives the word its own creative power.

This is where the word startles me. The word is now fleshy. The word now needs bread. And this word is not some vegetable; the word is not just a pile of cells and organs. This body is alive: life is breathed into this body. And the body breathes out. This body now has a mouth to speak. This body has a will! To create and to move. Blanchot says further (I read this inter-substituting “poetry” and “literature”):

In poetry we are no longer referred back to the world, neither to the world as shelter nor to the world as goals. In this language the world recedes and goals cease; the world falls silent; beings with their preoccupations, their projects, their activity are no longer ultimately what speaks. Poetry expresses the fact that beings are quiet. But how does this happen? Beings fall silent, but then it is being that

27 Ibid., 15.
28 Blanchot, The space of literature, 41.
tends to speak and speech that wants to be. The poetic word is no longer someone’s word. In it no one speaks, and what speaks is not anyone. It seems rather that the word alone declares itself. Then language takes on all of its importance . . . This means primarily that words, having the initiative, are not obliged to serve to designate or give voice to anyone, but that they have their ends in themselves. From here on, it is not Mallarmé who speaks, but language which speaks itself: language as the work and the work as language.29

It’s important to recognize the first lines, first of all, where it’s clear that these word-bodies are not existing in our world but someplace else, and this is what I will discuss in the next section. By operating elsewhere (allowing the world to fall silent and to recede), the word is autonomous. It speaks itself. It has initiative, it will not designate nor serve; it speaks. It lives. The final line, “language as the work and the work as language,” becomes the very embodiment of text. The work (Blanchot’s term for an artistic work) gives the word life, and the work is nothing but language.

Rodrigo affirms, “the word is the fruit of the word. The word must resemble the word. To attain the word is my first duty to myself. The word must not be adorned and become aesthetically worthless; it must be simply itself…At the same time, I have attempted to imitate the deep, raw, dense sound of the trombone, for no good reason except that I feel so nervous about writing that I might explode into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.”30 Rodrigo now seems to be moving to a place where he recognizes that the word should be allowed to be, and discards any desire to manipulate the word’s existence. To the contrary, he has also attempted to manipulate words into a sound: something heard by the body. He appears to have a sense that the word does have a bodily existence, and that he is approaching some relationship with that body, though he is both hesitant and terrified about it.

To return to Macabéa, Rodrigo says the following: “Of one thing I am certain: this narrative will combine with something delicate: the creation of an entire human being who is as much alive as I am.”31 He then says that he wants you to “recognize her on the street, moving ever so cautiously because of her quivering frailty.”32 Here is Macabéa’s body to the full, quivering and frail, and Rodrigo

29 Ibid.
30 Lispector, The hour of the star, 20.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
(the word himself) declares that he will create an entire human being, and entire living body of his own volition.

I have mentioned earlier that Macabéa is a typist by profession. This is extraordinary, because typing is very most bodily act of writing; it is writing with everything cerebral and emotional removed. It is fingers and plastic or metal. What does this mean? Does Macabéa have anything but a body? She is the very body of the act of writing. She is the body that emerges from the author and words.

This could all easily sound like a lie, because we tend to think that an author has the power to manipulate words to spring forth a “body.” The strawberry, an author might write, is flecked with pale dirt. It is full of sweet pink water that drips. This sounds like the body of a strawberry. But this is something else. When I write this, as I’ve established, the words intervene and create something else. The words will never effectively represent whatever strawberry the author has in front of her. The body of Macabéa is remarkable because she was created by someone made of words: she made of the organs and bodies of words, which have history and creative power all their own.

The Habitat (Where Words Live)

Knowing that words are not representational (“Nothing is more foreign to the tree than the word tree”33), where do words live? Furthermore, knowing that they are living bodies, where do they live? (Living bodies must have space to occupy.) How it ever was that words emerged in the first place, we tend to think now that we invented them intending for them to live in our world. We intended for each single word to sit obediently on a single word’s lap. Plump and red and sweet, or freckled and green on a vine, we demand: go sit still in these flat black curls and lines: s t r a w b e r r y. But, they’ve escaped, or never sat still, I suppose. As we saw in the translations of The hour of the star, they are born from an author (e.g. Clarice Lispector), but, clearly, those words have created and grown very apart from the author, and without any reference to the world, either.

“The word is my fourth dimension,” Lispector allegedly said.34 Is this the place where words live? In The hour of the star, Rodrigo says something peculiar: “Is it

33 Blanchot, The space of literature, 39.
possible that actions exceed words? As I write – let things be known by their real names. Each thing is a word. And when there is no word, it must be invented. This God of yours who commanded us to invent.”\textsuperscript{35} Is this a moment of cynicism or sarcasm? It declares the human-made quality of the word. It is as if Rodrigo is just now noticing that “actions,” or movement in the world, might be detached from words. This is a mystery; maybe it is Rodrigo’s burgeoning awareness of the life of the word, or maybe it is a moment of cynicism.

I contend that words are alive, in the most essential sense of the word. They can move, grow, and produce by some force unseen and unto themselves. The next step is to recognize that words are alive outside of our world. We authors often try to force the word to touch the world, we grab it by the wrists and drag it towards the world, but it never touches it, but rather by way of our dragging them there is a spectacular explosion by which the world is destroyed. Or, as Blanchot says, the world recedes and falls silent in the face of the word.

An image comes to mind. As words move around the world, perhaps they wriggle through a single author, creating a habitat. Here they flourish – they grow and change and writhe in heat and die – and perhaps here they exit on to the page. And then maybe they keep moving around the world, amassing nests and producing new pages. As they move around, they acquire creative power (based on Juarrero’s context-sensitive constraints; see the next section). Wherever the creative conception occurs, it must be in the words’ own space, in a space that we cannot know or see or touch. Texts might be born of our pens and such technologies, but they are certainly conceived elsewhere, in language’s own space.

Blanchot said the following of words’ habitat in \textit{The space of literature}: “…we discover poetry as a powerful universe of words where relations, configurations, forces are affirmed through sound, figure, rhythmic mobility, in a unified and sovereignly autonomous space…[The poet] creates an object made of language just as the painter, rather than using colors to reproduce what is, seeks the point at which his colors produce being.”\textsuperscript{36} Blanchot is speaking here of a single text (not of the entire universe of language), but allows this single conglomerate of words – the text – its own space where many complex factors coexist to actually produce being.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{35} Lispector, \textit{The hour of the star}, 17.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{36} Blanchot, \textit{The space of literature}, 42. Emphasis added.}
I apply Blanchot’s view of the work (i.e., the poem) as a universe to a view of all language as a universe in which mysterious and complex forces produce texts and, ultimately, being. Hélène Cixous analogized writing to H. In this most gorgeous introduction to her book *Three steps on the ladder of writing*, the H is the ladder. It’s a meditation and a thanks to language, I think. To discuss it, I will return to my own seed of distrust of language (which has now bloomed into something altogether different).

As I stated in the introduction of this paper, I knew more than one language as a child. The discrepancy between the two or more words I knew for each thing, as well as the millions of things I was forced to cram into two words, made me believe there was something between and beyond words, that words were either playing tricks or failing us entirely. Cixous addresses bilingualism as such: “I have thought certain mysteries in the French language that I cannot think in English.”

And why the H? The H is an I (one language) and I (another language), and there is “between the two, the line that makes them vibrate; writing forms a passageway between two shores.” I and I with a line between make an H. This vibration is the words’ space, the words’ sovereign universe, which I’m addressing now.

I want to tell you, too, that just as Cixous knows more than one language, Clarice Lispector’s infancy in the Ukraine may be significant, too, as her native language was Portuguese. Maybe those sounds, rhythms, and relations she heard in her first two months of life made her forever aware – suspicious, sometimes? – of the materiality of language, of the discrepancies they bear to our world if we look closely. She recognized, perhaps, the vibration between the I and the I (there are infinite I’s as well)? We cannot know, but it may be significant; Lispector may have been to the words’ universe.

Back to the H, Cixous remarks, “Perhaps you were going to tell me this H is an H. I mean the letter H [formatting edited].” She writes, then, that in French, H is pronounced *hache* (pronounced “ash”), meaning axe in English. She comments on its variable/multiple gender in French. She also gives it a body, and this body remembers:

> In addition, in French, H is a letter out of breath. Before it was reduced to silence during the French Empire, it was breathed out, aspirated. And it remembers this, even

---

37 Cixous, *Three steps on the ladder of writing*, 3.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 4.
if we forget [emphasis added]. It protects le héro, la hardiesse, la harpe, l’harmonie, le hasard, la hauteur, l’heure from any excessive hurt. / I can only tell you these mysteries in French. But in English, there’s breath; let’s keep it.40

Cixous feels not only words but letters — the organs of words — with her body. The tongue knows the breath of H, the ear hears the axe. Likewise, the body of the H remembers, feels, and bears its own history in its organs. I’d add in English, the “hour” remembers its own H, which we forget but which forebears the word all the more.

The question of where words live is mostly unanswered, then, except to know they do not live in the world of things. Nor do they live in a specific place in any brain: because they exit and flourish outside of the brain, too, in text. Words outlive us, remembering history that we’ve all forgotten. They live somewhere, and not with us.

What Does It Mean To Have A Body? Companions, Constraints, and Creative Power

See the shape of this word: I. “I” is a pronoun in the English language. Whoever writes this word changes it entirely. “I” is unbounded to the severest degree. When I write “I,” what do you read? It is much different than what I read, and different from what any other reader will read. In conceiving of words as bodies, an important condition is that a single word is much bigger than a page of words. A single word is so desperately full of potential that it blushes to be spoken, it sits quivering, quietly, waiting for another to ease its swollenness. One single word is endowed with the potential of infinite time, infinite space, infinite knowledge and experience and movement. It is not simply bigger than the world; it is so big that it makes the world disappear. Think of the possibilities of a single word, in addition to the word “I”:

Yes.,
Don’t., or
Strawberry.

Of course, words rarely operate as singles. They are most always surrounded by other words, and they are accompanied by humans. The most amazing thing is that bodies can listen to one another! You have always assumed that you could hear or read a word, but what if the word can also hear or read you? This raises the question of what it means to have a body. Alicia Juarrero approaches this in her book Dynamics in ation. She describes context-sensitive constraints, where

40 Ibid.
each component of a system – such as a language system – emerges under certain historical and spatial conditions within the system and its larger environment. These conditions (or context) constrain each component in some way. She writes:

> Without contextual constraints on sounds and scribbles, communication would be limited to a few grunts, shouts, wails, and so forth that would be severely restricted in what and how much they could express. Language’s increased capacity to express ideas rests not on newly invented grunts and shouts but on the relationships and interconnections established by making interdependent the sounds in a sequence of grunts or shouts, that is, by making the probability of their occurrence context-dependent.41

So, to be a part of a dynamic system, then, for a word or for an author, means to be constrained by context. These constraints allow for new, complex, completely unpredictable meanings to emerge. Language is so heavy with historical and spatial constraints that the author cannot expect to control how words will operate.

This also means that language’s very nature and function is hinged on its own history. In the first section, I noted that if I independently invented a word right now and spoke/wrote it to you, it could not mean anything at all, because it has neither context nor history. So, a word’s memory of space and time determine what it might do, leaving little or nothing to us humans. This, in other words, is a characterization of what it means to have a body. Definitively, a component has a body. A body is what separates something from other bodies as well as from the environment, so a recognizable unit in any system must have its own body. The key is that a body is constrained by itself, in that it has limited ability to be and move, and that the body is constrained by its companions and its environment.

Words, therefore, have bodies. They are constrained by themselves, others, and their environment, in other words, by context. Because of this, words actually have creative power. As I summarized Juarrero earlier, constraints allow for new, complex, completely unpredictable meanings to emerge. The abundance of context-sensitive constraints in language offers words their own creative power (not mine, not yours, but their own). And where did words get these constraints? It got them by listening – including listening to you – and what it heard is now forever incorporated – incorporated! – into its body. With these constraints, the

word can move and flex in many directions, and you cannot predict these directions. This is because it is too complex, which in turn, makes it too autonomous. You or I may not predict what may arise out of the word’s creative power. We may know that a particular word’s constraints make it tend towards preceding verbs, or that a particular organ (such as the letter ‘q’ or the small intestine) is dynamically connected to another (such as the letter ‘u’ or the gallbladder). However, we cannot predict what new and dynamic meanings will emerge from these recognizable (and often not recognizable) constraints.

Juarrero uses an example of these context-sensitive constraints in nature, which is useful, because it allows us to see how words and texts operate not only like but as living material (living bodies). She writes that a complex dynamical system emerges when each molecule depends on what its neighboring molecules are doing, as well as on the past. The molecules are then context-dependent, in other words.\(^4\) What makes these systems dynamic (molecule systems, word systems) is that they are sensitive to and constrained by their own past. According to Juarrero, molecules or other tiny things (such as Macabéa) gain tremendous creative and productive ability by being part of such systems. Macabéa (made only of words; don’t forget) could never acquire all her unique characteristics if she existed all by herself. But, in the context of other words (other bodies), she becomes able to both become and create.\(^4\)

Likewise, a molecule that is helpless and virtually identity-less on its own becomes limitlessly productive and individuated when it becomes part of its system. A clear example would be an embryonic cell which has not yet determined its place in a mammal’s body. Like Juarrero would say, this cell is impossibly limited and basically dead or irrelevant (for all practical purposes) if it’s alone. On the other hand, we can reverse this. Rather than framing this cell’s lack of direction as a negativity (dead, irrelevant, limited), we can also endow it with infinite possibility. I am referring back now to the infinite potential of the word “I,” at the beginning of this section. Likewise, the words or cells or systems that surround it give it the ability to actively move and produce; but meanwhile, it has lost its infinite potential.

I highlight this potential because I feel this incessant need to do justice to the single word. As Lispector writes, “And we must never forget that if the atom’s structure is invisible, it is none the less real.”\(^4\) The single molecule is real and

\(^4\) Juarrero, 139.
\(^4\) Blid., 259.
\(^4\) Lispector, *The hour of the star*, 8.
not to be disregarded, even though it tends to lack the creative power of one surrounded by companions. Moreover (I’m speaking directly to the word now): language could not exist without your contribution, little tiny word, you and your sometimes-companions.

While Juarrero’s work is both gorgeous and life-giving, I am inclined to avoid any explicitly representational models of my own making, i.e. the component-system model. She also denies that her theories apply an élan vital, or a vital force (a term proposed first as the cause for evolution by French philosopher Henri Bergson).\(^\text{45}\) Juarrero does provide a beautiful possibility of a kind of equity among various systems (the human neurological system; the Roman alphabet system). With this equity in mind, but moving ahead from the word “system,” I’d like to affirm the word’s élan vital. In my heart I feel the same brio and soulfulness as when I might affirm our own.

So now I again look at the word as totally and wonderfully alive. To reiterate, the word’s body listens, and it has a memory. For this, I’ll repeat a Cixous quotation from the previous section:

> In addition, in French, \(H\) is a letter out of breath. Before it was reduced to silence during the French Empire, it was breathed out, aspirated. And it remembers this, even if we forget [emphasis added]. It protects \(le \ héro\), \(la \ hardsse, \ la \ harpe, \ l'harmonie, \ le \ hasard, \ la \ hauteur, \ l'heure\) from any excessive hurt.\(^\text{46}\)

These words remember their past. Though the \(H\), like an organ deemed unnecessary, sits untouched by the human tongue, the words remember their own history. Supposedly unnecessary organs, even if they ever are truly unnecessary (I happen to believe in the appendix), always tell a story, or give a warning about lessons learned in the past, about growings-up and changings. Blanchot, too, recognizes the word’s memory: “[The crude word] is extremely reflective; it is laden with history.”\(^\text{47}\) In his discussion, the word serves to numb our world in our habit of it, in its usualness. If we repeat the word “woman” one-hundred times in reference to one-hundred women, “woman” erases their particularity for us; it erases the enormity and complexity of the world. The reason is akin to the comparison/contrast I detailed above. An individual word (or molecule) is unable to really do anything in the world without its companions, but by itself, it is infused with – literally – an infinite memory that

\(^{45}\) Juarrero, 131.

\(^{46}\) Cixous, *Three steps on the ladder of writing*, 3.

\(^{47}\) Blanchot, *The space of literature*, 40.
could allow it to manifest any one of infinite possibilities. Ultimately, it’s a paradox: “woman” potentially means more than a trillion things, but left on its own, it can’t really mean anything at all. I’ve slipped now (whoops) into suggesting a word has some representational value. To offset my blunder, I’ll briefly mention the most bizarre proof of the nonrepresentational value of words, the metaphor. The metaphor is the best testimony to both the vast memory of a word, as well as its own volition. The metaphor is what makes a piece of poetry ceaselessly interpretable, full of vigor that seeps out with each new reading. Metaphors are so strange; reading a certain word can evoke the same idea in many readers, though that word is totally unrelated to the idea. It’s a subject for another project, a large project, but one not to be ignored.

Based on the words of Juarrero, companionship is what endows creative power. In *The hour of the star*, Macabéa is just barely (but still definitely) accompanied by other human beings in her world. Rodrigo repeatedly observes this. She is orphaned, abused by her guardian aunt, disdained by her boss, and dumped by her boyfriend. She is scarcely connected to a half-mean coworker and her only friend, Gloria (who is now seeing Macabéa’s boyfriend). These threadbare connections, though, are what make Macabéa tumble through time and space. This is despite her inclination to be perfectly still and tiny when alone. “She liked to feel the passage of time,” says Rodrigo. Also, “she relished the infinity of time.” He describes her propensity for being overwhelmed by the grace and enormity of the world. She stands in the washroom alone, smiling until the grace passes. This is the life of a lone Macabéa, perfectly quiet and ecstatic. This is Macabéa in her infinite potential. Her proximity and connection to other people, though, is what allows her to leave a mark on the world, briefly touching the consciousnesses of others and eventually leaving her own organic mass on the street in her death, ready to be reconstituted as other life.

The reader must be complicit in the suffering of Macabéa. Early in the book, Rodrigo says that the author of Macabéa’s story must be a man, because a woman would be too sympathetic and cry too much. When reading *The hour of the star*, does one feel helpless? Does the urge to save Macabéa ever even occur? I think generally not, because most people fail to see that a literary character could have a real body. But Macabéa does, and it is both our place and our duty to recognize her as a real, living being.

---

48 Lispector, *The hour of the star*, 62.
49 Ibid.
The Dance and Its Excess

When two humans interact with one another, the two mutually affect one another. Additionally, something emerges during this interaction. Maybe it’s a conversation (sounds budding in the air), or maybe it’s a bodily embrace (cells touching). A lovely literary proof of this is in Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-five*, where of the alien Tralfamadorian race, the following is said: “When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in bad condition in the particular moment, but that the same person is just fine in plenty of other moments.” I think this is a lovely and comforting philosophy in general, but also exemplifies our Western (and Earthian) conception of time as moving and perpetually lost. So, if we view time as an always-existent dimension, like the Tralfamadorians, what happens to those moments we thought were lost? Maybe, if we think of them as having made a permanent mark on the world, we can approach them to examine, recall, and – even – revisit. Sometimes, there are residues of human interaction – like a wound or a pregnancy – but often, our conception of time obliterates our ability to perceive human interaction in the past. And, the residues we do perceive always move and grow. Pregnancies turn into new moving bodies in the world, turn into more pregnancies. Wounds turn into scars turn into just one part of a decaying dead body, turns into soil.

Interactions between the author and the word are not so different from human-human interactions. In author-word interactions, though, a tangible residue more often stays in the world: a text. As we saw with the movements of *The hour of the star*, in the various translations and such, texts grow and change and procreate, just like humans. In the study of literature, it tends to be that the entity with all the star power is the text itself. I think, however, that the most interesting and important phenomenon is the act of authorship: the collaboration between the word and the human. I want to conceive of authorship not as simply the means to producing a text. I want authorship to be itself, alone, without regard to the text.

Though the life of the text is extraordinary, authorship itself strikes a chord which rings through every place in the world. It allows the human body to touch the nonhuman body and vice versa with love, and for the two to create together. It allows the world of the word and our own world to touch for a moment as their respective inhabitants meet to dance. Indeed, I have come to think of this

50 Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Slaughterhouse-five* (New York: Dell, 1971), 27.
collaboration as a dance. The dance requires this couple of the word and the human; and both contributing their bodies’ creative power, they interact.

Why the dance? I have considered other terms. I have thought that the interaction is perhaps more like sex, particularly procreation and its definite and tangible product. But the partnered dance is a peculiarly apt blend of intellectual endeavor, collaborative art, and physical effort and pleasure. More importantly, there is no emphasis on the physical residue of dance. Dancing is done purely for the dance itself; the emphasis is not on the product, as it is in other creative activity. In painting, for example, the emphasis is put on the painting itself, rather than the act of painting. The dance is in a specific place in time. In dance, we do not attempt to manipulate our linear conception of time by leaving a clear trace behind: we simply dance and let the dance sit forever in its own particular moment of existence.

Perhaps the word used in the metaphor isn’t that important, and perhaps nothing is comparable to authorship (metaphors are bizarre, as I’ve said). The crucial thing is to recognize that authorship is a creative act between two bodies, human and word, and that the act of authorship is something altogether different from the text, which is a residue but a separate entity altogether.

_The hour of the star_’s first lines are, “Everything in the world began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born.” Then, the first twenty-four pages are a narrative of Rodrigo (the word-made author) as he prepares to write the story of Macabéa. This first third of the book is like a long affirmation, a long “yes,” between Lispector and Rodrigo, before Macabéa can be born. It is the introduction to the dance, perhaps even a courtship. Rodrigo writes:

My strength undoubtedly resides in solitude. I am not afraid of tempestuous storms or violent gales for I am also the night’s darkness. Even though I cannot bear to hear whistling or footsteps in the dark. Darkness? It reminds me of a former girl friend. She was sexually experienced and there was such darkness inside her body. I have never forgotten her: one never forgets a person with whom one has slept. The event remains branded on one’s living flesh like a tattoo and all who witness the stigma take flight in horror.\(^{52}\)

---

\(^{51}\) Lispector, _The hour of the star_, 11.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 18.
Two things in this quotation reveal the word’s participation in this dance, and the word is Rodrigo (the word-made author). The first is the stream of consciousness style of writing in this paragraph. It is as if Rodrigo is writing in time, writing time itself, and only something with a body can exist in time. (The body is the only record of time; the only thing that can move and bear the scars of time.) The stream-of-consciousness style also reveals Rodrigo’s participation in some immediate action; rather than acting as a medium, he is participating in the dance with the author. The second thing is the startling presence of Rodrigo’s body in this quotation. Rodrigo makes generalized statements about the body (one never forgets), and he recognizes others’ reactions to the history of his own “living flesh.”

There is a third thing, too: the imperative of solitude. Blanchot’s addresses solitude in *The space of literature*, in part of a larger question of from where literature emerges. Rodrigo must be the place from which literature emerges – Lispector and Rodrigo together. Rodrigo is the night’s darkness; this implies the greatest solitude. Night, and with it sleep and dreams, is the epitome of solitude. In an appendix, Blanchot writes that the world’s solitude is “…the absoluteness of an ‘I am’ that wants to affirm itself without reference to others.” This is night, and sleep. But in authorship, there is a solitude that is not quite solitude, because the author is accompanied by the word and vice versa. There, the infinite potential of each body wanes as it touches another body, and together they produce something. Rodrigo is not afraid of natural, inhuman terrors (storms and gales), but is terrified of another body’s presence (whistling or footsteps). Therein lies his own potential and power – in solitude. Maybe this is a testament to the infinite potential of the single body, or maybe it’s an affirmation of the necessity of human solitude to produce writing.

At another instance, Rodrigo refers to himself as “someone who is typing at this very moment.” This brings me to the idea of “writing the now,” which is different from stream-of-consciousness, in my opinion. “Writing the now” gives room for another participant, another consciousness: this time, it’s that of the word. Lispector is famous for writing the now, as Cixous details in an essay on *The hour of the star*.

---

53 Blanchot, *The space of literature*, 252.
54 Lispector, *The hour of the star*, 19.
55 Hélène Cixous, Clarice Lispector, and Verena Andermatt Conley, *Reading with Clarice Lispector* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1990), 162.
Is *The hour of the star* a story? A story implies a set of events that occurred in our world. Whether they were real or imaginary, they happened with our flesh and our possessions. Stories imply that we gathered up these occurrences and folded them neatly into pretty word-boxes, to be unpacked and admired at our leisure. Stories imply that we have power over words; they imply a nonexistence of words. They imply that the events at hand moved either from reality or imagination and into the reader, without regard for the words. The words might sound nice, but we think that’s the author’s doing. So, is *The hour of the star* a story? Cixous, in “How Does One Desire Wealth or Poverty?” writes:

> [Clarice Lispector] tells something that in any case cannot be captured in the frame of a story and that is reality. . . . Clarice tells what is happening now. . . . Nobody in the world can write and live at the same time; there is always a discrepancy. But what can write as closely as possible to the living.\(^{56}\)

If Lispector is telling “what is happening now,” it is because she is writing in collaboration with words. *The hour of the star* is not a story: it is the residue of a dance in 1977. Rodrigo, the word-made man, danced with Lispector, the flesh-made woman. Lispector writes the now. How can one not right the now? The truth is that to write about something is to lunge at it with a sack of words and smother it; meanwhile neither the words nor the something are themselves in the result. To dance, though, is to make life come out of writing and vice versa.

In *Three steps on the ladder of writing*, Cixous speculates on the book about act of writing. It “takes life and language by the roots,” she writes. “It’s the book stronger than the author: the apocalyptic text, whose brilliance upsets the scribe. How can it be written? With the hand running.”\(^{57}\) This is the clearest testament I know of the dance of authorship, allowing the body to do the writing, and to have something else present: the book stronger than the author.

Now that I’ve introduced the dance, I want to talk about what comes out the dance: the excess. I believe the most significant moment in *The hour of the star* is in the dedication. I hate to be bossy but I’d suggest you take a moment to clear the noise around this before you read:

> And we must never forget that if the atom’s structure is invisible, it is none the less real. I am aware of the existence of many things I have never seen. And you too. One cannot prove the existence of what is most real but the essential thing is to

---

\(^{56}\) Ibid.

\(^{57}\) Cixous, *Three steps on the ladder of writing*, 156.
believe. To weep and believe. This story unfolds in a state of emergency and public calamity. It is an unfinished book because it offers no answer. An answer I hope someone somewhere in the world may be able to provide. You perhaps? It is a story in technicolour to add a touch of luxury, for heaven knows, I need that too. Amen for all of us.\footnote{Lispector, \textit{The hour of the star}, 8.}

There is much here, and much I will address as I find moments of relation throughout the text. There are questions here about the word, about the world and God, about death and meaning, and the touch of another body. It’s also about poverty.

The atom’s structure is invisible. As Lispector begins this book, the world began with a yes between two molecules. Though their substructure is invisible, they alone started the whole wide world. I will draw three things out of this sentence. The first is the question of faith. With allusions to faith throughout the paragraph, perhaps this is a plea to the faith that must accompany imminent death, specifically that of Lispector. Secondly is the question of the medium. Whatever allows the atom to exist is nonetheless invisible; and such is whatever allows the text to exist. As Mallarmé and Blanchot said, language disappears as we exchange it; its body and its structures vanish in the face of what we purport them to represent. Finally, and I don’t even believe the first two questions matter in the face of this one, this line is about the infinitely small. It is about how the tiniest things exist no matter their tininess, and — according to the first line of the text which follows shortly after — they are responsible for the creation of the entire world. Here appears Macabéa, the tiniest of the tiniest beings, a tiny life approaching nothing, whom could very well be responsible for creating the entire world.

I want to note here that in Lispector’s Portuguese, she starts this same paragraph as such: “E – e não esquecer que a estrutura do átomo não é vista mas sabe-se dela.”\footnote{Lispector, \textit{A hora da estrela}, 10.} This means, roughly, and I’m only concerned with the first few words here: “And — and not to forget that if the atom’s structure is invisible, it is nonetheless real.” I turned to Connelly and Cixous to verify, and found the same stutter.\footnote{Cixous, Lispector, and Conley, 158.} “And — and not to forget.” Where does this stutter come from? I wonder why Pontiero omitted it. Maybe it is a spotlight on the body, the orality of this narrative. The mouth stutters. Or maybe it is a spotlight on the now-ness.
of this narrative. The unrehearsed tend to stutter. This is an unrehearsed dance. Rodrigo says of “girls who sell their bodies, their only real possession,”\textsuperscript{61} that “[t]hey aren’t even aware of the fact that they are superfluous and that nobody cares a damn about their existence.”\textsuperscript{62} This harks to the true superfluity of Macabéa, and how she is the excess that emerges from the exchange between word and author. That nobody cares, however, somehow emphasizes their very existence based on the other quotation which affirms the existence of the tiny and the invisible (the atom does exist).

Later in that crucial quotation above: “This story unfolds in a state of emergency and public calamity. It is an unfinished book because it offers no answer. . . . Amen for all of us.”\textsuperscript{63} Lispector is writing this just a short while before her death. The emergency is a reference maybe to The hour of the star’s bent towards social commentary, and maybe to the imminent death of Lispector herself and others all around. She invites others to participate, and amen for all of us, because she knows that each of us is subject to death. We are all tiny little Macabéas, with each of our deaths near, inevitable, and small. And nonetheless, we each exist, just as Macabéa does. We comprise the world; atoms do. I’ll go back, now, to Mallarmé’s conception of language-exchanges as currency-exchanges. In everyday exchanges, the medium (language, cash, whatever) disappear behind whatever they purport to represent (ketchup, an hour of work). In literary exchanges of language (versus everyday exchanges), there is an excess. This excess is the text. Now I’ll return to the term agency, which earlier I defined as the ability to move something from one place to another. In a world based on exchange, there is scarce ability to do any true moving: it’s typically just a swap of one thing here to another thing there, back and forth. In other words, there is some ability to rearrange things (I’ll put my cash in your wallet if you’ll put that food in my mouth) but no ability to actually make or change anything. If the author approaches the word as a bodied partner, there can emerge a tiny excess: the text. Macabéa here is the excess, the mark left on the world. This excess is where we can find a way to authorial agency.

The thing about this excess is that it has volition and life. As I’ve detailed, the text – the word – is a living being-body who has the creative ability as well as the will to do and make in the world, and it has the ability to do this on its own. So this new authorial agency is quite secondary. It require that the author agree to act as an equal participant in a dance with the word, and the excess of this dance

\textsuperscript{61} Lispector, The hour of the star, 14.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 8.
intersections  Winter 2009

(the dance requires both parties), the text, will give both of them agency in the world. Where does this excess come from? The question brings to mind Juarrero’s systems, in which the system provides its own context, and thus retains autonomous creative power. In authorship, though, two bodies (units from altogether separate systems) collaborate: author and word. So, this is a different situation where something emerges as something greater than the context of either one, and something greater than the context of the two put together, but a living being unto itself which now serves as a liaison between words and humans everywhere.

Maybe it doesn’t seem as if Macabéa, tiny as tiny can be, can constitute any sort of agency in the world. The keys are to remember that the world (the entire world) began with a yes between just two molecules, and that the even smaller structures of the even smaller atom do exist, whether our eyes can see them or not. The molecule, though not infinitely small, is one of our smaller units in the world. Macabéa is so, too. Molecules, for most purposes, make up everything of which our bodies are aware. They are the units of our bodies’ world. Might I say that they are everything? Well, Macabéa may be everything. She is the residue, the little bit leftover, the evidence that the dance between the word and author ever occurred. She is the only mark that humans can ever hope to make on the world with words, and only insofar as they will give half of the credit to the word, just as Lispector gives credit to Rodrigo. Perhaps, then, our worldly world is made only of these residues: the bits leftover from interactions past. Perhaps our entire world is made of Macabéa.

The Body’s Death and Authorship: “The Hour of the Star”

I move now to recognize the hope that lies within this new conception of authorial agency. It has been said over and over in history that authorship does promise life to writers. Now, authorship can also promise agency, the life of which will extend beyond the author’s bodily death.

Many, many authors and artists have said that through the eternal life of their work, they can deny death’s finality, much as a hero is immortal in cultural memory. Blanchot dismisses this as “not only small-minded but mistaken,” as well as self-glorifying and vain. I agree, and I certainly hope that if my favorite authors wrote for these reasons, they were polite enough to keep it quiet. Once, in a letter, Kafka had written that he would die content. Blanchot initially asserts

---

64 Blanchot, The space of literature, 94.
that this was a lie on Kafka’s part. Blanchot finally arrives to say that to die content means not to be content in death, but to be content with a lack of life, and to be separated from other people and life itself. This reflects, for Blanchot, the solitude necessary for writing that I discussed above. Ultimately, he arrives at a paradox. One writes in order to die content, and one must be able to die content to write. Of the two types of authors described (those who seek eternal heroism and those who write to die content), Blanchot says the following: “They are set in one perspective, which is the determination to establish with death a relation of freedom.”

The hour of the star is very much about death, and perhaps about finding a relation of freedom to death. This section will be about death.

Much has been made about the content of the form (as is titled historian Hayden White’s recent book, The content of the form). Rodrigo writes, “[I]t is the form that constitutes the content.” It means that the way and shape of a conglomerate of words determines the meaning of the text. The form, I think, is just one aspect of the use of language which does the world violence. The narrative form does history violence, for example, because it imposes a meaning on an event by giving the narrative a decisive beginning and end, and most typically a climactic moment in the middle. The actual history, to the contrary, clearly does not bear these decisive beginnings and ends: history does not begin or end or change pace. It moves, unpunctuated, and it is our imposed narrative that does it violence.

Rodrigo writes, “A traditional tale for I have no desire to be modish and invent colloquialisms under the guise of originality. So I shall attempt, contrary to my normal method, to write a story with a beginning, a middle, and a ‘grand finale’ followed by silence and falling rain.” I bring this up because of the almost incredible parallel to another contemporary piece of literature about tiny yet monumental women, Beloved by Toni Morrison. The final chapter is a very brief kind of epilogue, punctuated thrice by “It was not a story to pass on” or “This is not a story to pass on.” It’s after the death or disappearance of a tiny girl to whom the world had done unfathomable injustice, much as the world did to Macabéa. Among the last lines are as follows: “By and by all trace is gone, and what is forgotten is not only the footprints but the water too and what is down there. The rest is weather. Not the breath of the disremembered and

---

65 Ibid., 91.
66 Ibid., 95.
67 Lispector, The hour of the star, 18.
68 Ibid.
unaccounted for, but wind in the eaves, or spring ice thawing too quickly. Just weather. Certainly no clamor for a kiss.”

This is one of those things that make me fall to my knees. But isn’t it remarkable how closely the stories of Macabéa and Beloved (the other tiny girl) align? And after it all, what is there? In Beloved, there is just weather, just seasons and wind and ice. And in The hour of the star, there is just “silence and falling rain.” And what’s more, the last line of The hour of the star, “this is the season for strawberries. Yes.”

What is there to make of this? Both of these stories are monuments to the way that tiny, suffering women push through the weather and constitute the whole world, to the point where what remains after their death are the seasons and weather: time and life itself. This is a digression. It’s a remark. But, as Morrison writes, “this is not a story to pass on.” I could not pass by.

The hour of the star begins, on the page after the infamous dedication, with a strange title page. “THE HOUR OF THE STAR,” it starts. (In the original Portuguese, this title page occurs before the dedication.) Then there is a list of thirteen subtitles, including: “The Blame is Mine / or / The Hour of the Star / or / Let Her Fend For Herself / or /.” Then there are ten more. One of these subtitles is “As for the Future.,” with a period on either side. The periods imply that nothing lies beyond this subtitle on either side. Everything is contained in the narrative to follow, which is all about the future, and yet loops around and around contained within itself, so its own future would be itself. This is how the world “began with a yes,” and the last word of the text is “Yes.” Over and over, The hour of the star circles around, made of nothing but Macabéa. “As for the future” are Macabéa’s last words, too, marking the phrase with a special significance as well as completing one cycle through. I can’t help but think of the weather, of the seasons, that both Morrison and Lispector allude to in the final lines of their respective great works. The lives of these atoms, these tiny girls, circle around and around, comprising life itself. Birth, death, birth, death, and what is more but the seasons? It evokes perpetuity, something that perhaps Lispector is considering in her last year in her body. “[Macabéa] was nourished by her own entity, as if she were feeding off her own entrails,” writes Rodrigo.

Here, again, the entire world could be made of Macabéa, circling around and around, feeding only on itself and procreating on its own: a whole world made of atoms, eating atoms.

70 Ibid., 275.
71 Lispector, The hour of the star, 86.
72 Ibid., 9.
73 Ibid., 84.
74 Ibid., 37.
The beginning-middle-end narrative form, with the weather following, most obviously mimics human life: birth-life-death. The title of The hour of the star, in fact, alludes to the moment of death, when every human masters the drama of her death (without learning how, without rehearsal, but simply knowing) to become the star of the hour. And this is the hour of the star. Even the tiniest of the tiny, Macabéa, is a veritable movie star as she lay dying in the street. From the text:

Suddenly it’s all over. / Macabéa is dead. The bells were ringing without making any sound. I now understand this story. She is the imminence in those bells, pealing so softly. / The greatness of every human being. / / / / Silence 75

being. As she dies, a cinematic image takes over: bells pealing silently. Profoundly cinematic images appear moments before this, too: “suddenly the anguished cry of a seagull, suddenly the voracious eagle soaring on high with the tender lamb in its beak, the sleek cat mangling vermin.” 76 These images, almost clichéd, evoke the satisfying drama and distress of cinema. Macabéa, the poor little lamb or the vermin, the tiny helpless being, is nonetheless the ultimate and celebrated movie star in this hour of her death. Much earlier, just as Macabéa’s story was being born, Rodrigo wrote: “No one would teach [Macabéa] how to die one day: yet one day she would surely die as if she had already learned by heart how to play the starring role. For at the hour of death you become a celebrated film star, it is a moment of glory for everyone, when the choral music scales the top notes.” 77 And indeed, Macabéa does so, sprawled on the street and doused in melodrama, surrounded by onlookers (they’re just passersby) – a fascinated audience for the only time in her life.

But what caused Macabéa’s death? I believe it’s the fault of the author. Authorship is an immediate act, a dance, a productive enterprise in which one dare not predict the creative path of another body. Macabéa went to see a fortune-teller, or perhaps Rodrigo/Lispector pushed her to do so, and we all heard her future. The author gave the reader Macabéa’s future, which – unfairly and truly unfathomably – can only – only – be death. Whatever the fortune-teller said, the future must be death. Nevertheless, to predict the outcome of authorship is to destroy the dance, because the creative, collaborative process of the dance has now been destroyed. To predict the future is for the author to purport to have power over the word, to have the power to push it in whatever

---

75 Ibid., 85.  
76 Ibid., 84.  
77 Ibid., 28.
direction she pleases. So both author and word die along with the story. Rodrigo writes moments before Macabéa’s death:

Alas, all is lost, and the greatest guilt would appear to be mine... I try forcing myself to burst out laughing. But somehow I cannot laugh. Death is an encounter with self. Laid out and dead, Macabéa looked as imposing as a dead stallion... / Macabéa has murdered me. / She is finally free of herself and of me. Do not be frightened. Death is instantaneous and passes in a flash. I know, for I have just died with the girl. Forgive my dying. It was unavoidable.\textsuperscript{78}

They die because they dared predict the future. Much earlier, Rodrigo had, in fact, promised not to make predictions. He writes in the first pages, “I ask myself if I should jump ahead in time and sketch out an ending immediately... I also realize that I must proceed step by step in accordance with a period of time measured in hours... This, too, is my first condition; to proceed slowly notwithstanding my impatience to tell you about this girl.”\textsuperscript{79} And when he broke this promise, this requisite condition, he and she died. Macabéa died in a fit of deceit by the author and the word, whereby they deceived one another as well. They forewent the dance in favor of impatience and death.

Back in the introductory pages of the book, Rodrigo is introducing Macabéa’s habitat. “Those polluted docks made the girl yearn for some future. (What’s happening? It’s as if I were listening to a lively tune being played on the piano – a sign perhaps that the girl will have a brilliant future? I am consoled by this possibility and will do everything in my power to make it come to pass.)”\textsuperscript{80} The cinematic premonition of the allegro con brio piano tune makes Rodrigo vow to give Macabéa a good future; but of course, any vow at all feels bound to fail. Besides, if Rodrigo claims this power, he is absolutely bound to fail; it’s necessary.

I return now to the “Alas, all is lost” quotation. Despite the deceit that occurred, how wonderful that in life, Macabéa was tiny as a germ; but in death, she is immense and powerful even in her prostration: a dead stallion. It’s – of course – a lie that she’s dead at all. She’s continued to move and grow on her own, per the aforementioned translations (just one example) and the thousands of readings and analyses and essays (More texts! New beings!) that was conceived in her. But

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{78}{Ibid., 85.}
\footnote{79}{Ibid., 16.}
\footnote{80}{Ibid., 29.}
\end{footnotes}
of the deaths in *The hour of the star*: if Rodrigo is dead now, who continues to write? Lispector, maybe? And maybe she is living her death, too, in this passage?

I do not know when Clarice Lispector learned of the cancer that caused her death on December 9, 1977. I do not know whether it was before or after she wrote *The hour of the star*. All I know is that this book was published the same year as her death, and I can do nothing but assume that she either had enough diagnosis or premonition or maybe just natural human foresight to address her own approaching death with this text. We do all die. *The hour of the star* is a book about death, and ultimately perhaps only about death. The questions of authorship, of the body, of tininess, are there to provide hope in death.

Writing and death tend to collide often. Blanchot drew a strange correlation between suicide and art, and a beautiful one. He acknowledges that the comparison is “shocking,” perhaps for the trembling reader’s sake. Following a lengthy discussion of various author’s relationships to suicide, Blanchot says the following of suicide:

> Suicide is an absolute right, the only one which is not the corollary of a duty, and yet it is a right which now real power reinforces. It would seem to arch like a delicate and endless bridge which at the decisive moment is cut and becomes as unreal as a dream, over which nevertheless it is necessary really to pass.

I recognize Rodrigo standing on this delicate and endless bridge. “To be frank,” writes Rodrigo, “I am holding her destiny in my hands and yet I am powerless to invent with any freedom: I follow a secret, fatal line. I am forced to seek a truth that transcends me.” I see the bridge in Rodrigo’s secret, fatal line. And as I discussed earlier, Rodrigo died most probably because he wanted to jump ahead to the end of the bridge, after the cut. Blanchot, accordingly, writes that “all these traits [of suicide] can be applied equally well to another experience, one that is apparently less dangerous but perhaps no less mad: the artist’s.” Art and suicide here make a shocking (as Blanchot acknowledged) but most apt comparison.

A question then arises, of whether or not Rodrigo did commit suicide by Macabéa’s death. Blanchot, referencing Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy and

---

81 Blanchot, *The space of literature*, 106.
82 Ibid., 105.
83 Lispector, *The hour of the star*, 20.
84 Blanchot, *The space of literature*, 105.
Fyodor Dostoevsky’s fiction, surveys the humanity as well as the security to be found in suicide. “Natural death is death ‘in the most contemptible conditions, a death which is not free,’” writes Nietzsche.\(^{85}\) Blanchot remarks, also, that in considering the possibility of human immortality in the future, “suicide would constitute perhaps the only chance to remain human, the only way out toward a human future.”\(^{86}\) I think that Lispector must have been disinclined to suicide, but she may have wanted to die.

In the early pages of *The hour of the star*, Rodrigo writes that the person who would write this story “would have to be a man for a woman would weep her heart out.”\(^{87}\) Of course, the truth is that Lispector is writing the story, so this does not offend. It does feel like Macabéa’s death is all Rodrigo’s fault. Who killed whom? I want to give Lispector the greatest deal of dignity possible in her death, with none of the gorgeous melodrama that emerges in Macabéa’s death. Of course I have no idea about the conditions of neither her death nor what she wanted out of it. I am simply struck by the corollaries between this work of authorship and suicide, and know little of what to do with it.

Rodrigo, perhaps a word-embodiment of Lispector here, seems inclined to the kind of despair that accompanies imminent death. He writes, “I write because I have nothing better to do in this world: I am superfluous and last in the world of men. I write because I am desperate and weary. I can no longer bear the routine of my existence and, were it not for the constant novelty of writing, I should die symbolically each day. Yet I am prepared to leave quietly by the back door. I have experienced almost everything, even passion and despair. Now I only wish to possess what might have been but never was.”\(^{88}\) What might have been but never was can only be death, the end of that bridge that one cannot see and never reaches, but the crossing must be done, anyway. Cixous, too, writes that for something to be written, for something to happen, something must die. “We Need a Dead(wo)man to Begin,” she titles a section of her book. Based on a passage from Rilke’s *Malte*, Blanchot writes, “In order to write a single line, one must have exhausted life.”\(^{89}\) The consensus seems to be that to write, one must be content to leave life (recall Blanchot’s discussion of Kafka, earlier). Of course, we do all die, and shortly, too. This is where Macabéa can provide us hope.

---

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 97.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., 99.

\(^{87}\) Lispector, *The hour of the star*, 14.

\(^{88}\) Ibid., 21.

\(^{89}\) Blanchot, *The space of literature*, 89.
This is an excerpt from Lispector’s notebooks from the time that she was writing *The hour of the star*, cited in Cixous’ work:

The only way to know if life exists after death is to believe while still being alive. I wanted to die once and come back to life—simply in order to know the juice of life that is death. . . . God acted on a large scale. To do this he wasn’t concerned with individual or even collective death. . . . And we—we have a little flame of life that lights up and dies out. We must grow up counting on the fact that we are the tiniest particle of Great Time That Does Not End.90

Here is the differentiation between the desire to die and the temptation of suicide.91 Lispector wants to die (she says it more explicitly at another time) because it defines life.92 Lispector’s deeper discourse about death happens through Macabéa, so Macabéa and the above quotation from her notebooks must be read in conjunction. Knowing that Lispector did have a desire to die, and that she was aware of her own death and her own tininess, I think I can ascertain that *The hour of the star* is an exercise in Lispector’s own death. It’s an affirmation, too, of her own tininess as well as her own brief spark of life. Even in her death, and her death by words in *The hour of the star*, there lies hope in her tininess (the same tininess we all have). I turn now to Blanchot to further affirm tininess.

For one to endure in history, one must become minimal (like a molecule). Rather than subsisting “in the leisurely eternity of idols,” one should want “to change, to disappear in order to cooperate in the universal transformation: to act anonymously and not to be a pure, idle name.”93 Who is more anonymous than Macabéa? With grace, Lispector has turned to the word as her partner in order to leave behind a tiny, anonymous body as her own fleshy body dies. And even more so, Lispector has let her writing be written by another author, Rodrigo. As *The hour of the star*’s authors write, “The action of this story will result in my transfiguration into someone else and in my ultimate materialization into an object. Perhaps I might even acquire the sweet tones of the flute and become entwined in a creeper vine.”94 What she leaves behind is a body, material life, sounds and plants. She leaves behind a tiny atom, which alone comprises the whole word.

90 Cixous, *Three steps on the ladder of writing*, 33-34.
91 Ibid., 33.
92 Ibid.
93 Blanchot, *The space of literature*, 94.
94 Lispector, *The hour of the star*, 20.
“We Are the Tiniest Particle”

The violence of words slicing at humans seems nothing compared to the real bloodletting in this world, and the peace we might sign with them seems useless, at best. But then I remember that if Clarice Lispector and Rodrigo had never met, if they had never done the authorship dance, I never would have encountered the tiny and ugly and so profoundly beautiful Macabéa. The violence words do us is true, and real, and the power their world has over ours can heal beyond anything else. Macabéa is a real person. Rodrigo said, “In a street in Rio de Janeiro I caught a glimpse of perdition on the face of a girl from the North-east,” and this Macabéa is a body who needs bread like you and me. This is about how the tiny and the invisible nonetheless exist and they are responsible for creating the whole wide world.95

Last of all, in all of this, there is so much joy and life and sweetness – plants, light, strawberries – in the way that molecules can make the whole world. A tiny poor girl is what makes our world live and breathe! And each of us is just the same as that tiny poor girl; we are all the tiniest particle. We flare up and die like minute sparks.

I will say that I am happy and hopeful, even having learned that I, too, am a molecule. There is hope, now. The human body is small, but in its smallness lays infinite potential. A word’s body is small, too. Together, the author and the word, two bodies, have the ability to leave everlasting life and – even – agency in the world long after their tiny sparks flare up and die. In the words of Rodrigo, “Dear God, only now am I remembering that people die. Does that include me?”96 I feel too frightened and overwhelmed to leave you with more here.

May Macabéa’s tiny frail body, a very stallion in her death, continue to bloom and ripen and sound bells the world over.

Kanna Hudson received a Bachelor of Arts Cum Laude in the Comparative History of Ideas Program from the University of Washington in June 2005. She is currently a graduate student in the University of Washington’s Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program.

95 Ibid., 12.
96 Ibid., 86.

ABSTRACT

In the early hours of December 6, 1921, an Irish and British delegation, weary from weeks of negotiations and arguments, signed a document that promised a lasting peace between Ireland and Great Britain. The document, commonly referred to as the Anglo-Irish Treaty, is certainly the most consequential in the tangled joint history of the two nations. The Anglo-Irish Treaty brought an end to the three-year struggle between Irish guerrilla forces, led by Michael Collins, and the military forces of Great Britain. The British domination of Ireland, a fact of life for seven hundred years, almost completely ceased, and the political and legislative union between the two nations effectively ended. The Treaty did not encapsulate all Irish demands, but was rather a compromise between the two nations. Faced with the threat and the burden of resumed warfare, the Irish delegation signed the document containing the final British proposals, hoping that the rest of Ireland would receive it as a great step towards independence. Under the circumstances, the document may have represented the best possible resolution Ireland could have hoped for. Yet despite all of its merits; despite the realization of so many Irish national aspirations embodied in the document; those who opposed the treaty regarded it as an abandonment of the Irish Republic and a corruption of Republican ideals.
The Freedom to Achieve Freedom
Negotiating the Anglo-Irish Treaty

By Matthew Heintz
University of Washington, Seattle

In the early hours of December 6, 1921, an Irish and British delegation, weary from weeks of negotiations and arguments, signed a document that promised a lasting peace between Ireland and Great Britain. The document, commonly referred to as the Anglo-Irish Treaty\(^1\), is certainly among the most consequential in the tangled joint history of the two nations. The Anglo-Irish Treaty brought an end to the three-year struggle between Irish guerrilla forces, led by Michael Collins, and the military forces of Great Britain. The British domination of Ireland, a fact of life for seven hundred years, almost completely ceased, and the political and legislative union between the two nations effectively ended.

Naturally, the Treaty did not encapsulate all Irish demands, but was rather a compromise between the two nations. Faced with the threat and the burden of resumed warfare, the Irish delegation signed the document containing the final British proposals, hoping that the rest of Ireland would receive it as a great step towards independence. Under the circumstances, the document represented the best possible resolution Ireland could have hoped for. Yet despite all of its merits, despite the realization of so many Irish national aspirations embodied in the document, those who opposed the treaty regarded it as an abandonment of the Irish Republic and a corruption of Republican ideals.

Confronted with the resumption of a war they considered unwinnable, which would place an unfair burden on the Irish public, Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith—soon followed by the other delegates—made what they regarded as a purely symbolic concession on matters of association with the British Empire and acceptance of the Crown, and signed the Treaty. There is no doubt that the position in which the Irish plenipotentiaries found themselves was both difficult and confusing. It was the roles played by Eamon de Valera, then President of the Dáil and head of the Irish Cabinet, and Arthur Griffith, Minister for Home Affairs, that ultimately had the most consequential effects and dictated the terms

\(^1\) The Anglo-Irish Treaty is entitled “Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland.” See Appendix below for a full-text version of the treaty.
of the final treaty. De Valera managed, at several points, to confuse and frustrate his delegates from his removed position in Ireland, serving only to make their task more difficult. For Griffin, it was a simple verbal assurance—a gentleman’s promise—which was exploited by the Prime Minister David Lloyd George as a means to British ends. Faced with a military force far superior to their own, the Irish delegates had little choice but to sign the Treaty and submit it to the Dáil and the Irish people for acceptance.
It is important to consider, first, the situation in which the Irish forces found themselves at the time of the Truce in July of 1921. Although out-numbered and out-gunned, the IRA had many distinct advantages over the British forces. Most active in the country side, particularly in Counties Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Clare, Longford and Waterford, the IRA were able to muster numbers up to brigade strength. In these counties, Irish volunteers were organized into “Flying Columns” and were trained in the guerrilla tactics which would eventually bring the British to the negotiating table. “From eight in the morning to six in the evening the men drilled and trained. [...] Situations were envisaged of engaging the enemy at a stated strength, moving in a certain formation, and officers were appointed, in turn, to command the Column.”

These columns would ambush a passing British patrol and then quickly fade back into the countryside familiar to them from their boyhood, often evading capture or serious casualties. It was this element of surprise and anonymity that allowed the IRA any success. The anonymity afforded them by their style of combat, however, was wholly contingent upon public support. Once the IRA could count on shelter and support from the local population, they were granted an advantage that counteracted their lack of arms and numbers. These advantages only carried the IRA so far, as their lack of supplies often prevented anything more than surprise attacks on small patrols or individual police barracks. The grim situation facing the IRA in 1919 and 1920 is carefully documented by IRA man John McCoy:

in the Newry Brigade area, embracing all of South Down and South Armagh, there was not more than half a dozen rifles to fire .303 ammunition. In revolvers and automatic pistols we had not much that could be classed as serviceable in a military sense... From May, 1920, onwards, we were getting a fair number of .45 revolvers of various makes ... There seemed to be a famine in .45 ammunition ... we got several hundred rounds of Winchester rifle ammunition ... The cases had to be shortened and the ridge on the firing end of the case to be filed down or turned in a lathe so that it would fit the revolvers.

Too poorly equipped to deal with more than a dozen enemies at a time, IRA units all over Ireland were forced to make due with meager combat provisions throughout the war. Even against unsuspecting patrols of the Royal Irish Constabulary, such an ill-equipped IRA certainly had their work cut out for

---

3 Ibid., 149.
4 Ibid., 148-49.
themselves, but could often manage successfully.

When the British escalated their military efforts in September 1920, however, the IRA’s task quickly became increasingly more difficult. Comprised of ex-officers of the British military, veterans of the Great War, and the Police Auxiliaries Cadets (a creation of Winston Churchill), were much better suited to handle the hit-and-run tactics of the IRA. Each member of the Auxies, as they were called, carried two revolvers and a rifle and traveled sitting back to back in two rows in armored cars with revolving machine gun turrets.\(^6\) With an abundance of firepower and a considerable lack of self-control, the Auxies were more than a handful for the IRA. Moreover, the entire might of the British military could have been brought upon the Irish rebels. Although to do so would have meant the alienation of Irish-American sentiment, air raids, artillery bombardments, concentration camps were all well within the scope of British military capability, and indeed, had the decision been made to make use of such measures, the IRA would have been all but completely destroyed. Collins himself had a bleak view of the IRA’s ability to continue with the fighting if the negotiations broke down following the Truce. He was convinced that the continued use of physical resistance would yield no further success, and did not want to be the “leader of a forlorn hope”.\(^7\)

Despite the slight possibility that the IRA could continue fighting if necessary, one must consider its original goal. Never a regular military, the IRA, from the very beginning, could expect only limited victories over the British security forces. Seeking only to make the governance of Ireland problematic enough to bring the British to the table, a complete military victory was never conceived of and indeed never possible. In fact, the one time the IRA attempted anything resembling a large-scale operation the result was dubious. The attack on the Custom House on 25 May 1921, although a considerable propagandistic success, was also a considerable military disaster, with six Volunteers killed, twelve wounded and seventy captured.\(^8\) Perhaps more important, however, was the stress that the fighting placed on the Irish population. With over 200 innocent people killed by Crown Forces in 1920\(^9\), the fighting took a large toll on those for whom the war was being fought. Incidences such as the infamous Cork reprisal of December 11, 1920 becoming increasingly common; it is likely that

\(^7\) Ibid., 220.
\(^9\) Ibid., 145.
these civilian deaths weighed heavily on Collins’ conscious, contributing to his desire for a lasting peace. It is these rather unstable military circumstances under which Collins and the Irish delegation entered negotiations with their British counterparts, and there remains no doubt that both Collins and Griffith favored reconciliation over the resumption of armed conflict.

Although de Valera seemed to have little understanding of the IRA’s operational limitations—pressuring Collins to engage the British in more regular fighting rather than assassination and ambushes; hoping to turn public opinion more firmly in favor of the Irish; calling for “one good battle a month with 500 men on each side”\(^\text{10}\)—what is more concerning was his ignorance of Ireland’s political limitations heading into negotiations with the British. De Valera’s mishandling and complication of the negotiations began before the Irish delegation had even set foot in 10 Downing Street, and continued throughout the ensuing deliberations. Between the Truce of July 1921 and the beginning of official negotiations in October of that year, de Valera and David Lloyd George exchanged a series of letters in which they discussed the possibility of brokering a lasting peace, and the terms of that peace. In his letters to Lloyd George, de Valera expressed a willingness for peace, but also placed in the way several obstacles with his insistence that, “‘our nation has formerly declared its independence and recognised itself as a sovereign state’, and that ‘it is only as the representatives of that state that we have any authority’”. Lloyd George flatly rejected the idea of meeting on such terms, as to do so would involve disloyalty to throne and Empire. Perhaps in fear of losing the chance to negotiate formally, de Valera replied with his hope that the conference proposed by the British would be free and “without prejudice”.\(^\text{11}\) George jumped at this opportunity, and while “reiterating the fundamental and unalterable character of the British demand” issued the Irish an invitation to negotiations on October 11.

The goal of these negotiations would be to determine, “[how] the association of Ireland with the Community of Nations known as the British Empire may be best reconciled with Irish national aspirations”.\(^\text{12}\) With this exchange, and de Valera’s eventual capitulation on the self-recognition issue, Lloyd George maintained the British stance that Ireland would not be recognized as an independent Republic, while de Valera failed to protect the idea of the Irish Republic. The formal invitation sent to de Valera spoke of reconciling Irish national aspirations with membership within the British Commonwealth of Nations, and mentioned

---

10 Dwyer, 153.
12 Ibid., 88.
nothing of two independent political entities negotiating a settlement. By accepting the invitation as written, de Valera had already surrendered one of the most important points before the two delegations were able to meet, whether he realized it or not. Lloyd George’s obstinacy on the issue of association and the Crown were indicative of how all further discussion on those issues were to play out, as he made it clear from the outset of discussion that on those points no ground would be given to the Irish.

De Valera also played the most decisive role in selecting the delegates who were to travel to London to conclude the Treaty. His selections represent a conniving nature that, it seems, could not be suppressed, and served only to further impede progress. Refusing to go himself, Dev offered many reasons why it would be best for him to remain in Dublin. Perhaps most interesting among these was his desire to preserve his status as a symbol of the Irish Republic. He did not feel it prudent to be present at negotiations that might require the surrender of the Republic. As de Valera stated, “It was vital at this stage that the symbol of the Republic should be kept untouched and that it should not be compromised in any sense by any arrangements which it might be necessary for our plenipotentiaries to make.”13 Dev did not anticipate the possibility of the negotiations ending in a way that would not secure the Republic, and sent others in his place to do the unpleasant deed of brokering Ireland’s future. This left him in a position to criticize and direct, without being directly responsible for any unfortunate outcome. He also wished to prevent any hasty decisions by remaining in reserve, allowing the delegates to claim they must first consult de Valera before any final commitment; a strategy which was to fail spectacularly in the face of Lloyd George’s ultimatum. He also felt that his influence could be best utilized in Dublin to persuade staunch Republicans to accept the inevitable compromise, and to act as a unifying figure, as he often had in the past.14 While it is possible that de Valera did indeed remain in Dublin for these reasons, it is also likely that more selfish motives lay behind the decision.

In his stead, he sent a group of men who so differed in their opinions on how the Treaty should be concluded that they were unlikely to agree on any of the important issues from the outset of negotiations. In the end, the Irish delegation was to consist of Arthur Griffith acting as chairman, Michael Collins as second in command, Robert Barton as an economic expert, Gavan Duffy and Eamon Duggan, both lawyers, and Erskine Childers and John Chartres acting as

14 Dwyer, 182-83.

437
secretaries. It was well known that of the Cabinet, Burgha was a die-hard Republican and favored a return to war rather than a compromise and that Stack shared similar views.\textsuperscript{15} It was equally well known that Griffith and Collins did not stand by the idea of the Republic so resolutely. As de Valera stated in a letter of late December, 1921 “That Griffith would accept the Crown under pressure I had no doubt […]”.\textsuperscript{16} De Valera elected Childers to the delegation in hopes that he would hold sway over his cousin, Barton, with whom he shared a very close personal friendship. Childers, de Valera hoped, would hold Barton to the course of the Republic, who in turn would check any willingness to compromise that might reside in Griffith and Collins.\textsuperscript{17}

De Valera’s logic behind the selection of the delegates seemed to be one of the intentional hindering of progress. Not expecting Griffith and Collins to stand their ground on the Republic, he left it up to Barton, and ultimately Childers—the two men who had the least influence out of the entire delegation—to try and secure the Republic. On the eve of the consequential negotiations, de Valera assembled a team of delegates headed by two men who he knew would not hold fast to the idea of the Republic for which he felt the Irish nation so righteously deserved.

Despite the early and stern resistance to anything short of Ireland’s full association within the British Empire, de Valera prepared for the settlement discussions by crafting his own version of how the association between Britain and Ireland should look. He ignored the Britain’s clear position on the subject, and concocted an association scheme which proved to be nothing short of repulsive to the British. As outlined in his plan, which he termed “External Association”, Ireland would remain outside the Empire on all domestic issues, with Britain relinquishing any claim to dominate Irish internal affairs. On matters of “common concern,” however, Ireland would act as another associated state inside the British Commonwealth of Nations. As Jason K. Knirck explains, “Ireland would not be contained within the Empire like the other dominions but would be tangent to it. The point of tangency would be […] international treaties, defense, and foreign policy”.\textsuperscript{18} Knirck refers to External Association as “genius”, and perhaps rightfully so. It seems that the strategy would have granted Ireland the autonomy for which it had fought while maintaining necessary ties to

\textsuperscript{15} Pakenham, 93.
\textsuperscript{17} Dwyer, 186.
\textsuperscript{18} Knirk, 90.
the Empire to ensure British security.

Any genius the plan contained, however, was completely defeated by the fact that it was a proposal which the British would under no circumstances accept. For the British as well as the Irish, the issue of the Crown and association came down to symbolism. Both sides had ideology to maintain in this particular area, and neither was ready to budge. If the British had granted External Association, “[…] Ireland could have been presented as having fought her way out of the Empire, and having achieved what the British Government had a hundred times pledged themselves never in any circumstances to tolerate—a Republic”.19

To allow Ireland External Association would have been to allow her to visibly and publicly weaken the Empire, something for which the British would never stand. When it came time for the Irish to submit their own treaty terms in late November, 1921, the document produced contained a slightly modified version of External Association, one that paid lip service to the Crown as head of any potential association between the two entities. Lloyd George was “in despair about the document” while Birkenhead and Chamberlain found it “quite impossible”. At this point, Lloyd George’s only possible reply was to end negotiations. It was only by the efforts of Tom Jones, George’s wonderfully adroit and capable secretary, and Griffith’s desire for talks to continue, that negotiations did not break down.20 By sending the Irish delegates to London with a plan that was marginally offensive to the British at best, de Valera once again crippled his own delegation and set them up for failure. Moreover, at every turn he insisted that the delegates continue to press External Association, regardless of British reaction to and feelings about the idea. Coming to the table not as victors arranging the surrender of the vanquished, but rather as a problem to be dealt with, the Irish delegation was never in a position to make the demands that de Valera repeatedly forced them to—demands which, from the very beginning, proved wholly unacceptable to the British.

The unfortunate task of reconciling de Valera’s demands with the intransigence of the British fell on Arthur Griffith, head of the Irish delegation. Unlike Cathal Burgha and Austen Stack, Griffith was never a die-hard Republican, but rather favored a more moderate approach to the negotiations. Throughout the peace discussions, Griffith continuously balanced his lack of personal conviction that a Republic was the only form of government which would fully realize Irish

19 Pakenham, 114.
20 Ibid., 238-39.
national aspirations, his feeling concerning how the rest of Ireland viewed the issue, and the knowledge of the military damage that Britain could inflict should negotiations collapse. In the face of Lloyd George’s threat of December 6, however, the last clearly weighed the most heavily, and it is likely he would have persisted in negotiations had he been more fervently committed to a Republic.21 Expecting Griffith to bend on certain key issues, de Valera hoped, “this would make [him] better bait for Lloyd George—leading him on and on, further in our direction.”22 It was not to be how de Valera had hoped, however, and due to a rather cunning series of maneuvers by Lloyd George, Griffith was in turn baited further and further in the direction of the British, ultimately stumbling on the Ulster issue.

It was the original strategy of the Irish delegates to persuade Britain to stand aside and let North and South settle the Ulster issue themselves. As talks progressed, however, it became clear that this would be all but impossible and as such, the Irish amended their strategy to allow Lloyd George to try his hand at persuading Sir James Craig. In allowing Britain into the mix, Sinn Fein hoped for one of several outcomes: 1) That Ulster would be persuaded and join the South in some favorable way; 2) that in the case George was unsuccessful in persuading Ulster to join the South, Britain would make sweeping concessions on other points as compensation, or; 3) that if Ulster remained obstinate, Britain would still not make the Irish a suitable offer and would thus force a break, in which case, public opinion would surely be in favor of the South.

The plan was well-crafted, but suffered from a defect which later proved to be crippling. If the British were somehow able to achieve “essential unity” of Ireland, whether in fact or in appearance, the Irish would be expected to make concessions on a topic important to the British. These concessions would naturally take the form of allegiance to the Crown and a closer association than that of de Valera’s External Association.23

Lloyd George was able to exploit this defect in key ways so as to ensure British success. The first was to instill in the Irish side the idea of the Boundary Commission, and that it could indeed secure the “essential unity” necessary for Irish concessions. Having pledged to resign if the Ulster issue was not resolved, George relied heavily on the Boundary Commission as a way out of this promise. It was first proposed by Tom Jones in a private meeting with Collins and Griffith

21 Ibid., 115-16.
22 Letter From Eamon de Valera to Joe McGarrity, December 27, 1921.
23 Pakenham, 187.
on 8 November, and was put forth as a way to prevent Bonar Law, who would, it was believed, adopt a tough military policy towards Ireland, from becoming Prime Minister in case George resigned. The idea was simply this: allow the Twenty-Six counties of the South all new powers currently under negotiation, while granting Ulster no new powers and electing a committee of some sort to “delimit” the boundary of Ulster. The idea struck Griffith favorably after some thought. As Griffith reported to de Valera, “The arrangement […] would give us most of Tyrone and Fermanagh and part of Armagh, Londonderry, Down, etc.”24 It was clear, then, at least as far as the Irish delegates could see, that the “essential unity” of Ireland would be secured by means of the Boundary Commission that Jones proposed. Moreover, the Boundary Commission could be used as a “tactical” maneuver to “deprive Ulster of support in England by showing people that she had now passed beyond all reason and justice […]”, and was thus a rather promising option.25 When asked if the Irish delegation would support such a course of action, Griffith, as he reported to de Valera, stated that he “[…] could not guarantee its acceptance, as, of course, my colleagues knew nothing of it yet. But I would guarantee that while he was fighting the ‘Ulster’ crowd we would not help them by repudiating them”.26 This promise was made on Saturday, November 12th. By the following day, the agreement had been drawn up by Tom Jones in memorandum form and submitted to Griffith, to which Griffith assented:

If Ulster did not see her way to accept immediately the principle of a Parliament of all Ireland…she would continue to exercise through her own Parliament all her present rights; she would continue to be represented in the British Parliament…In this case, however, it would be necessary to revise the boundary of Northern Ireland. This might be done by a Boundary Commission which would be directed to adjust the line both by inclusion and exclusion so as to make the boundary conform as closely as possible to the wishes of the population.27

Differences exist between Griffith’s own account of the events, as outlined in a letter to de Valera, and that of Austen Chamberlain. These differences were of critical importance. Griffith’s account omits the fact that he was given the proposal in writing and consented to its contents, and instead only mentioned his conversation with Lloyd George the previous day. Chamberlain’s, on the other hand, mentioned both the meetings and also notes that Griffith agreed “not to let

---

24 Ibid., 204.
25 Ibid., 208.
26 Ibid., 215.
Lloyd George down” on the British Ulster proposals. It now stood that Lloyd George had managed to get Griffith, whether implicitly or explicitly, to agree to support, in writing, a means to secure the “essential unity” of Ireland on which the major Irish concessions were contingent. Thus, Ireland had bartered away her claims to a Republic in order to unify the nation.

It is clear from Griffith’s account of events that he thought he had made no serious or binding pledge but had merely agreed to a plan that he felt would keep negotiations moving along smoothly. The British, however, considered it to be something much more potent. Lloyd George had effectively handcuffed Griffith on Ulster, unless he wished to go back on his word, something he would never do. Consequently, when the final British proposals, containing the clauses on Ulster to which Griffith had agreed on November 12, were set before the Irish delegation on December 6, Lloyd George’s trap was sprung. Griffith could not go back on his word and refuse to sign the document on the grounds that it did not provide measures to secure the “essential unity” of Ireland, as he had already agreed to do “not let Lloyd George down,” which here meant not breaking on Ulster and accepting the Boundary Commission. Essential unity thus guaranteed, he was now obliged to make the concessions outlined in the British proposals concerning Crown and association.

It was a brilliant move, and Griffith was checkmated. He had to agree to sign the British proposals and recommend their acceptance to the Irish Cabinet. Realizing that he and he alone made the fateful pledge, Griffith stated that his signing bound no one but himself to the document, and that Barton and Collins, the other representatives of the Irish delegation present on the night of December 6, should wait until they heard Craig’s response to the Boundary Commission, as they had made no such pledge. It is here perhaps, where Collins and Barton could have salvaged the situation to some degree. Had they asked for the methods through which Boundary Commission was to make its decision to be specified, they could have pushed for a plebiscite, the result of which would have almost certainly brought the counties the Irish had originally predicted into the Free State. Collins and Barton did no such thing, however, and even if they had, the concessions on Crown and Empire would have still been made, even if they had stipulated such a procedure. For reasons of unity, and certainly for fear of bringing about a renewal of warfare, Collins and Barton both signed along with Griffith.

28 Pakenham, 218-19.
29 Ibid., 300.
Just as de Valera had feared, Griffith had accepted the Crown and an association within the British Empire that, to de Valera, represented an abandonment of the Republic. It is difficult to understand exactly why Griffith did not protest to the formalization of a verbal agreement, or just how Lloyd George managed to back not just Griffith but the entire Irish delegation into such a tight corner. It is clear, however, that Griffith’s initial pledge of November 12 to not publicly repudiate George’s proposal of the Boundary Commission to Northern Ireland in the event that she refused to enter into an all-Ireland Parliament ultimately sealed the fate of the negotiations. Once that pledge was granted, it was exploited and used as leverage to completely destroy the Irish position.

The bitter debate in the Dáil following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty further highlights the difficulties the treaty represented for the new Irish Free State. The debates tended to follow two distinct lines: Those who opposed the treaty stressed the symbolic concessions embodied in the Treaty and what they would mean for Ireland, while supporters of the Treaty focused on the material benefits of the Treaty. Skeptical of both British honesty and still reeling from the sting of what they perceived as defeat, the anti-Treaty side questioned whether the Treaty delivered all that its supporters claimed it would. They felt that nothing would prevent British domination of Ireland, the greatest manifestations of this continued dominance being the oath and the governor-general. They also argued that the defense clauses of the Treaty, which stipulated for the British responsibility for Irish naval defense, bound Ireland to British foreign policy and that if Britain did go to war, no nation would recognize the neutrality of an Ireland which provided naval bases for the British.

Their most compelling arguments, however, were those made on a more symbolic basis. Refusing to accept the merits of the Treaty or to recognize what it in fact gained for Ireland, Treaty detractors dismissed such talk as “expediency” and instead utilized the rhetoric of the Revolution. Dáil deputy Sean MacEntee stated during the debates, “These things upon which you propose to turn your back […] are your very life and soul. Forsake them now, and everything that is good and true in you is dead”. Treaty supporters had something more concrete on which to rely. Able to stress the merits of the agreement and the benefits it presented to the Irish people, they appealed to the practicality of the Irish nation. Indeed benefits of the Treaty were many. In the short-term, it removed the

---

30 Knirk, 148-49.
31 Ibid., 154.
threat of resumed war with Britain, created an official Irish Army, and allowed the Irish to control their own government and finance. In the long-term, the Treaty “offered hope of ending English domination over the island, reviving Irish culture and language, shaping the future of the Commonwealth, and laying the foundation for Irish democracy.”  

Most importantly, however, Treaty supporters were able to stand on the claim that the majority of Irish people supported the agreement. A few of the Treaty’s opponents even conceded that most of the Irish public favored the Treaty, especially considering that a large portion of the Irish people had either grown weary of war or had not supported it from the beginning. Arthur Griffith, in a speech he made to the Dáil, claimed that 95 percent of the country supported the Treaty. A claim supported by those of J.J. Walsh, representing County Cork, who claimed that he had not met a single person in Cork City who opposed the Treaty, and Eoin O’Duffy from County Monaghan who claimed that “only one or two out of the 35,000 people I represent are against [the Treaty]”.  

As reported in The Times (London) shortly after the Treaty was signed, there was a “striking unanimity” in support of the Treaty throughout Ireland and that a “deep chasm” existed between de Valera’s “private conviction” and the will of the nation.  

By the end of December, it was a widely held belief that the Irish people were of one mind concerning the Treaty. “It is almost certain that every meeting which is called to discuss the Peace Treaty will vote in its favour and will urge Dáil Eireann to complete the work of ratification without further delay. [...] the moral ratification of the treaty has taken place and that, however its formal ratification may be delayed, the people will not go back to war over words that make no difference.” Public sentiment was indeed in favor of the Treaty, as Griffith and the other Treaty supporters suggested. 

This being the case, it is difficult to accept de Valera’s claim that the “[...] terms of this Agreement are in violent conflict with the wishes of the majority of this nation,” as anything other than the manifestation spiteful self-interest. Without the support of the nation, the obstinacy of the Treaty’s detractors was mere selfish pride and ideological obduracy. The people of Ireland stood firmly behind

---

32 Ibid., 134.  
33 Ibid., 127.  
34 “Ireland For Treaty. Moderate View Gaining, De Valera’s Lonely Furrow” (1921), The Times (London), December 11, pg. 10; Issue 42901; col. D.  
35 “Meetings For The Treaty. Ireland’s Mind Made Up” (1921), The Times (London), Dec 29; page 8; issue 49215 col. E.  
the Treaty. That being the case, de Valera’s rejection of the Treaty can be viewed only as further evidence to his role as a severe detriment throughout the entire peace process.

Regardless of the professed practicality of the Treaty, or its claimed symbolic shortcomings, the document presented to the Irish delegates was signed and little could be done afterwards. The Dáil, and by extension, Ireland, was given almost no alternative to the Treaty other than to vote against ratification, which would almost certainly mean renewed warfare, which to most seemed to be no option at all. As TD Kevin O’Higgins stated, “you are not entitled to reject it without being able to show them you have a reasonable prospect of achieving more.”

De Valera believed he had that reasonable prospect; one which could bridge the quickly deepening divide in the Dáil. Document Number Two, as it came to be called, was Dev’s carefully crafted alternative to the Treaty which consisted of little more than Ireland’s negotiating positions throughout talks in London, “with some of the more acceptable elements of the Treaty thrown in for good measure.” Still not understanding the fundamental problem with External Association, de Valera once again mobilized his scheme for Ireland’s proposed relationship with the British Commonwealth of Nations. The first article of the document explicitly stated that all authority in Ireland would be derived from the people, not from the King, as the Treaty seemed to state. For matters of common concern, which were to be “Defence, Peace and War, Political Treaties” Ireland would “recognize his Britannic Majesty as head of the Association.”

In nearly all other aspects, Document No. 2 and the actual Treaty differed in only the most insignificant ways. The plan did indeed preserve the Republic, as all authority would be derived from the Irish people rather than the King, and external association certainly would have been much more acceptable to the Treaty dissidents, but the document was still an exercise in futility. It was centered on a proposal the British had already refused several times. Moreover, in order to even propose the plan outlined in Document Number Two to the British, the Dáil would have had to reject the Treaty; an act which would have been taken as an invitation for the renewal of war.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty, with its flaws and its merits, was to shape the outcome of Irish history, and, just as Cathal Burgha suspected, split Ireland “from top to bottom,”

\[\text{References}\]

37 Knirk, 128.
38 Ibid., 154.
40 O’Conner, 268.
it was to lose many of those who helped create it. The actions of de Valera and Arthur Griffith most certainly played the most influential roles in shaping the outcome of the Treaty. De Valera, through his unwavering insistence on his plan of External Association, served only to confound and confuse the Irish delegation, while retarding any serious progress towards securing the concessions the Irish sought. Griffith’s actions were equally as frustrating to the Irish cause, but were undertaken in a different spirit. It is almost unfair to both men to say that Lloyd George took advantage of Arthur Griffith. Unfair to Griffith, as it suggests some naivety or ineptitude on his part, unfair to Lloyd George in that it implies underhandedness. But there remains little other explanation for what happened between the two. Regardless of Lloyd George’s diplomatic cunning, the Anglo-Irish Treaty represented the best terms for which the Irish could have ever hoped. Its merits were many, and though it did have its disadvantages, it was by no means the abandonment of the Republic that de Valera and his supporters claimed it to be. The only truly damaging aspect of the Treaty was the rancorous civil war it sparked; the blame for which cannot justly be placed on the delegates. The symbolic concessions to the British were made in order to secure for Ireland what she had been denied for seven hundred years: a life of her own, free of British domination. As Michael Collins himself wrote, “What made Ireland a nation was a common way of life, which no military force, no political change could destroy. Our strength lay in a common ideal of how people should live, bound together by mutual ties, and by a devotion to Ireland which shrank from no individual sacrifice.”[41] Thus, the concessions made in the Treaty meant little to an Irish nation that, because of the Treaty, had gained so much.

Matthew Heintz is a junior at the University of Washington, studying history and political theory. His research is focused upon modern European history, with a special interest in Irish history.

Appendix: Final text of the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland as signed, London, 6 December 1921.

1. Ireland shall have the same constitutional status in the Community of Nations known as the British Empire as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa with a Parliament having powers to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Ireland and an Executive responsible to that Parliament, and shall be styled and known as the Irish Free State.

2. Subject to the provisions hereinafter set out the position of the Irish Free State in relation to the Imperial Parliament and Government and otherwise shall be that of the Dominion of Canada, and the law, practice and constitutional usage governing the relationship of the Crown or the representative of the Crown and of the Imperial Parliament to the Dominion of Canada shall govern their relationship to the Irish Free State.

3. The representative of the Crown in Ireland shall be appointed in like manner as the Governor-General of Canada and in accordance with the practice observed in the making of such appointments.

4. The oath to be taken by Members of the Parliament of the Irish Free State shall be in the following form:- I . . . . . . . do solemnly swear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State as by law established and that I will be faithful to H.M. King George V., his heirs and successors by law, in virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain and her adherence to and membership of the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations.

5. The Irish Free State shall assume liability for the service of the Public Debt of the United Kingdom as existing at the date hereof and towards the payment of War Pensions as existing at that date in such proportion as may be fair and equitable, having regard to any just claim on the part of Ireland by way of set-off or counter-claim, the amount of such sums being determined in default of agreement by the arbitration of one or more independent persons being citizens of the British Empire.

6. Until an arrangement has been made between the British and Irish Governments whereby the Irish Free State undertakes her own coastal defence, the defence by sea of Great Britain and Ireland shall be undertaken by His Majesty's Imperial Forces, but this shall not prevent the construction or maintenance by the Government of the Irish Free State of such vessels as are necessary for the protection of the Revenue or the Fisheries. The foregoing provisions of this article shall be reviewed at a conference of Representatives of the British and Irish governments, to be held at the expiration of five years from the date hereof with a view to the undertaking by Ireland of a share in her own

---

coastal defence.

7. The Government of the Irish Free State shall afford to His Majesty's Imperial Forces (a) In time of peace such harbour and other facilities as are indicated in the Annex hereto, or such other facilities as may from time to time be agreed between the British Government and the Government of the Irish Free State; and (b) In time of war or of strained relations with a Foreign Power such harbour and other facilities as the British Government may require for the purposes of such defence as aforesaid.

8. With a view to securing the observance of the principle of international limitation of armaments, if the Government of the Irish Free State establishes and maintains a military defence force, the establishments thereof shall not exceed in size such proportion of the military establishments maintained in Great Britain as that which the population of Ireland bears to the population of Great Britain.

9. The ports of Great Britain and the Irish Free State shall be freely open to the ships of the other country on payment of the customary port and other dues.

10. The Government of the Irish Free State agrees to pay fair compensation on terms not less favourable than those accorded by the Act of 1920 to judges, officials, members of Police Forces and other Public Servants who are discharged by it or who retire in consequence of the change of government effected in pursuance hereof. Provided that this agreement shall not apply to members of the Auxiliary Police Force or to persons recruited in Great Britain for the Royal Irish Constabulary during the two years next preceding the date hereof. The British Government will assume responsibility for such compensation or pensions as may be payable to any of these excepted persons.

11. Until the expiration of one month from the passing of the Act of Parliament for the ratification of this instrument, the powers of the Parliament and the Government of the Irish Free State shall not be exercisable as respects Northern Ireland, and the provisions of the Government of Ireland Act 1920, shall, so far as they relate to Northern Ireland, remain of full force and effect, and no election shall be held for the return of members to serve in the Parliament of the Irish Free State for constituencies in Northern Ireland, unless a resolution is passed by both Houses of the Parliament of Northern Ireland in favour of the holding of such elections before the end of the said month.

12. If before the expiration of the said month, an address is presented to His Majesty by both Houses of the Parliament of Northern Ireland to that effect, the powers of the Parliament and the Government of the Irish Free State shall no longer extend to Northern Ireland, and the provisions of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, (including those relating to the Council of Ireland) shall so far as they relate to Northern Ireland, continue to be of full force and effect, and this instrument shall have effect subject to the necessary modifications. Provided that if such an address is so presented a Commission consisting of three persons, one to be appointed by the Government of the Irish Free State, one to be appointed by the Government of Northern Ireland, and one who shall be Chairman to be appointed by the British Government shall determine in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland, and for the purposes of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and of this instrument, the boundary of Northern Ireland shall be such as may be determined by such Commission.
13. For the purpose of the last foregoing article, the powers of the Parliament of Southern Ireland under the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, to elect members of the Council of Ireland shall after the Parliament of the Irish Free State is constituted be exercised by that Parliament.

14. After the expiration of the said month, if no such address as is mentioned in Article 12 hereof is presented, the Parliament and Government of Northern Ireland shall continue to exercise as respects Northern Ireland the powers conferred on them by the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, but the Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State shall in Northern Ireland have in relation to matters in respect of which the Parliament of Northern Ireland has not power to make laws under the Act (including matters which under the said Act are within the jurisdiction of the Council of Ireland) the same powers as in the rest of Ireland, subject to such other provisions as may be agreed in manner hereinafter appearing.

15. At any time after the date hereof the Government of Northern Ireland and the provisional Government of Southern Ireland hereinafter constituted may meet for the purpose of discussing the provisions subject to which the last foregoing Article is to operate in the event of no such address as is therein mentioned being presented and those provisions may include:

(a) Safeguards with regard to patronage in Northern Ireland.
(b) Safeguards with regard to the collection of revenue in Northern Ireland.
(c) Safeguards with regard to import and export duties affecting the trade or industry of Northern Ireland.
(d) Safeguards for minorities in Northern Ireland.
(e) The settlement of the financial relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.
(f) The establishment and powers of a local militia in Northern Ireland and the relation of the Defence Forces of the Irish Free State and of Northern Ireland respectively, and if at any such meeting provisions are agreed to, the same shall have effect as if they were included amongst the provisions subject to which the powers of the Parliament and the Government of the Irish Free State are to be exercisable in Northern Ireland under Article 14 hereof.

16. Neither the Parliament of the Irish Free State nor the Parliament of Northern Ireland shall make any law so as either directly or indirectly to endow any religion or prohibit or restrict the free exercise thereof or give any preference or impose any disability on account of religious belief or religious status or affect prejudicially the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending the religious instruction at the school or make any discrimination as respects State aid between schools under the management of different religious denominations or divert from any religious denomination or any educational institution any of its property except for public utility purposes and on payment of compensation.

17. By way of provisional arrangement for the administration of Southern Ireland during the interval which must elapse between the date hereof and the constitution of a Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State in accordance therewith, steps shall be taken forthwith for summoning a meeting of members of Parliament elected for constituencies in Southern Ireland since the passing of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and for constituting a provisional Government, and the British Government shall take the steps necessary to transfer to such provisional Government the powers and machinery requisite for the discharge of its duties, provided that every member of such provisional Government shall have signified in writing his or her acceptance of this instrument. But
this arrangement shall not continue in force beyond the expiration of twelve months from the date
hereof.

18. This instrument shall be submitted forthwith by His Majesty's Government for the approval of
Parliament and by the Irish signatories to a meeting summoned for the purpose of the members
elected to sit in the House of Commons of Southern Ireland and if approved shall be ratified by the
necessary legislation.

(Signed)

On behalf of the British Delegation, On behalf of the Irish Delegation.

D. Lloyd George. Art Ó Griobhtha.
Austen Chamberlain. Micheál Ó Coileain.
Birkenhead. Riobárd Bartún
Winston S. Churchill. E. S. Ó Dugain.
L. Worthington-Evans. Seórsa Ghabháin Uí Dhúibhthaigh

Hamar Greenwood.

Gordon Hewart.

ANNEX.
1. The following are the specific facilities required:- Dockyard Port at Berehaven.
   (a) Admiralty property and rights to be retained as at the date hereof. Harbour defences to remain in
   charge of British care and maintenance parties. Queenstown.
   (b) Harbour defences to remain in charge of British care and maintenance parties. Certain mooring
   buoys to be retained for use of His Majesty's ships. Belfast Lough.
   (c) Harbour defences to remain in charge of British care and maintenance parties. Lough Swilly.
   (d) Harbour defences to remain in charge of British care and maintenance parties. AVIATION.
   (e) Facilities in the neighbourhood of the above ports for coastal defence by air. OIL FUEL
   STORAGE.
   (f) Haulbowline [and] Rathmullen[.] To be offered for sale to commercial companies under
   guarantee that purchasers shall maintain a certain minimum stock for Admiralty purposes.

2. A Convention shall be made between the British Government and the Government of the Irish
Free State to give effect to the following conditions :-
   (a) That submarine cables shall not be landed or wireless stations for communication with places
   outside Ireland be established except by agreement with the British Government; that the existing
   cable landing rights and wireless concessions shall not be withdrawn except by agreement with the
   British Government; and that the British Government shall be entitled to land additional submarine
cables or establish additional wireless stations for communication with places outside Ireland.
(b) That lighthouses, buoys, beacons, and any navigational marks or navigational aids shall be
maintained by the Government of the Irish Free State as at the date hereof and shall not be removed
or added to except by agreement with the British Government.
(c) That war signal stations shall be closed down and left in charge of care and maintenance parties,
the Government of the Irish Free State being offered the option of taking them over and working
them for commercial purposes subject to Admiralty inspection, and guaranteeing the upkeep of
existing telegraphic communication therewith.

3. A Convention shall be made between the same Governments for the regulation of Civil
Communication by Air.

**ABSTRACT**

In the face of persistent yet heterogeneous global injustice and inequality, what is the task of the feminist epistemologist in the era of globalization? In an attempt to answer this question, this essay performs several tasks. First, it provides a reading of the institutional fields of feminist epistemology and globalization studies that is relational. Second, I advance the thesis that the occlusion of issues of globality within feminist epistemology, wittingly or unwittingly, commits a predictably familiar and tired move: it allows transnational and neocolonial feminist complicities to remain unchecked and unperceived. Therefore, my argument goes, feminist epistemology, unless it is theorized within a global frame, will tarry insufficiently in any attempt to answer questions of global injustice and inequality. Feminist epistemologists should be concerned with the diverse epistemics of various subjects’ modes of being and doing because knowledge production practices, be they feminist or otherwise, are nothing if not heterogeneous. Feminist epistemologists should expand their academic pursuits outside of the boundaries of their institutional disciplinarity in order to consider the scholarship of those working on questions of globality. Were feminist epistemologists to do this, they would open up the possibility of theorizing feminist epistemologies that are attuned to the heterogeneous logics of knowledge production practices within the diverse conditions of globality they would then be a position to “acknowledge a responsibility toward the trace of the other, not to mention toward other struggles.” In the doing, they would irreparably change the face of feminist philosophy.


© 2009 intersections, David Rubin. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of intersections and the author
Situating Feminist Epistemology in a Global Frame

By David Rubin
University of Washington, Seattle

Introduction

Varieties of feminist theory and practice must reckon with the possibility that, like any other discursive practice, they are marked and constituted by, even as they constitute, the field of their production.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

If feminism is set forth as a demystifying force, then it will have to question thoroughly the belief in its own identity.

T. Minh-Ha Trinh

In the face of persistent yet heterogeneous global injustice and inequality, what is the task of the feminist epistemologist in the era of globalization? In an attempt to answer this question, this essay performs several tasks. First, it provides a reading of the institutional fields of feminist epistemology and globalization studies that is relational. Second, I advance the thesis that the

---


3 By ‘feminist epistemology’ I mean to indicate two different conceptions: 1) the institutional, disciplinary, and discursive field consisting of a limited number of scholars, located mostly within the U.S., who have been in scholarly dialogue with each other for approximately 20 years concerning the topic of ‘feminist epistemology’. These scholars, situated mostly within philosophy departments (as opposed to women’s studies, feminist studies, or gender studies departments) are primarily concerned with the question of how to theorize feminist knowledge: through what normative constraints, what experiential faculties, what conditions of cognitive status, what operational modalities of rationality, what criteria of justification, what standards of truth, etc. I am thinking, for example, of Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, Lorraine Code, Eve Browning Cole, Donna Haraway, Kathleen Lennon, Margaret Whitford, Linda Alcoff, and Elizabeth Potter, among others. Many of these scholars are routinely anthologized together in collections of feminist epistemology. See, for example, Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintinka, eds. Discovering reality: feminist perspectives on epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and Philosophy of science. (Holland, Boston, and London: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1983); Sandra Harding (ed.) Feminism and methodology (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987); Linda Martin Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (eds.) Feminist epistemologies (New York and London: Routledge, 1993); and Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford (eds.) Knowing the difference: feminist perspectives in epistemology (New York: Routledge, 1994).

2) By ‘feminist epistemology’ I also mean a broader definition of the epistemics of feminist knowledge production that considers questions of historical and epistemic heterogeneity to be central to theorizing adequate knowledge. In this sense, this essay is an argument for an expansion of the definition of feminist epistemology that moves from the first toward the second.
occlusion of issues of globality within feminist epistemology, wittingly or unwittingly, commits a predictably familiar and tired move: it allows transnational and neocolonial feminist complicities to remain unchecked and unperceived. Therefore, my argument goes, feminist epistemology, unless it is theorized within a global frame, will tarry insufficiently in any attempt to answer questions of global injustice and inequality. Feminist epistemologists should be concerned with the diverse epistemics of various subjects’ modes of being and doing because knowledge production practices, be they feminist or otherwise, are nothing if not heterogeneous. I am not calling for a liberal, multiculturalist anthropology of epistemologies. I am, rather, suggesting that it is simply not enough for feminist epistemologists to preoccupy themselves solely with issues generally accorded a greater measure of esteem in philosophy departments such as objectivity, cognitive faculty, rational justification, and scientific authority. While it is certainly appropriate to consider these matters when the question of gender is at stake; nevertheless, they do not span the entire spectrum epistemic practices. Therefore, feminist epistemologists need to expand their academic pursuits outside of the boundaries of their institutional disciplinarity in order to consider the scholarship of those working on questions of globality. Were feminist epistemologists to do this, they would open up the possibility of theorizing feminist epistemologies that are attuned to the heterogeneous logics of knowledge production practices within the diverse conditions of globality. They would then be in a position to “acknowledge a responsibility toward the trace of the

---

4 By ‘globality’ I mean a global frame of analysis. Gayatri Spivak asks the crucial question: “In what interest, to regulate what sort of relationships, is the globe evoked?” in “Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace: Revisiting the ‘Global Village’”, in Cosmopolitics: thinking and feeling beyond the nation, Eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Indianapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 329. Spivak answers that “Globality is invoked in the interest of the financialization of the globe, or globalization” (330). I therefore employ Spivak’s definition of ‘a transnational world’:

That it is impossible for the new and developing states, the newly decolonizing or the old decolonizing nations, to escape the orthodox constraints of a ‘neo-liberal’ world economic system which, in the name of Development, and now ‘sustainable development’, removes all barriers between itself and fragile national economies, so that any possibility of building for social redistribution is severely damaged.


5 This is another way of saying that knowledge production simply is not solely an issue for philosophers hiding in the ivory tower, but is an every day, ground-clearing activity that is partially constitutive of the possibility of globalization. In other words, I am arguing that feminist epistemologists need to look at knowledge-production not as if it is only something that they themselves do, but as if it is something that all subjects and agents do (in heterogeneous ways).

6 By ‘the logics of knowledge production within the diverse conditions of globality’ I mean logics which include, but are not limited to, the logics of capital flow, the logics of discursivity, the logics of scattered hegemonies such as patriarchies and regimes of heteronormativity, the logics of nation-state formation and relation, the logics of value-coding practices, logics of the international division of labor, and the logics of institutionality.
other, not to mention toward other struggles.” In the doing, they would irreparably change the face of feminist philosophy.

I provide ‘reasonable plausibility’ for my argument by critically reading Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, Gayatri Spivak, and Tani E. Barlow as feminist theorists whose scholarship situates knowledge production practices within globality without reducing the heterogeneity of their epistemics. These theorists are exemplary in that they demonstrate the decentered, displacing quality that transnational feminist theory can affect on cultural and economic politics, as well as the politics of knowing and doing feminism, by deconstructing the breach between culture and economy, and thus between feminist theory (epistemology) and feminist practice (ontology). That is, these theorists, despite their many differences, emphasize the necessity of thinking globality as irreducible heterogeneity, and therefore underscore the specificity that feminist theorizing requires if it is to be capable of analyzing the innumerable geopolitical manifestations that globalization has now taken. The production of knowledge thereby becomes, in their work, not only a point of problematization, but also a point of crisis and intervention. What my reading of their scholarship shows, I hope, is that transnational feminist cultural studies offers critical and viable alternatives to exclusionary versions of feminist epistemology that are inadequate to theorizing knowledge production practices within the heterogeneity of current geopolitics. Putting my argument in this form enables me to confront the differences and tensions between what Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan have called “liberal and more progressive forms of feminism.” In other words, I argue that if progressive feminist theorizing is to have a thoroughly transformative role in the thinking and practicing of globality, then it will have to follow the advice of Gayatri Spivak and T. Minh-Ha Trinh given in the epigraphs above by putting into question both its enabling conditions and its identity. Transnational feminist cultural studies, I contend, is one area of scholarship that is doing this, and with enormous success. If subsequently theorizing through transnational feminist cultural studies enables the insight that thinking through

---

7 Ibid., 198.
8 Spivak uses the term ‘crisis’ to refer to the moment at which the “presuppositions of an enterprise are disproved by the enterprise itself.” The postcolonial critic: interviews, strategies, dialogues (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 139.
9 As Tani E. Barlow puts it, “neoliberal feminist scholarship is not sufficient to the questions on the horizon” because it refuses to envision contemporary geopolitics historically. “‘green blade in the act of being grazed’: Late Capital, Flexible Bodies, Critical Intelligibility,” differences 10, no.3 (1998): 147.
the role of knowledge production in the production of globality and the role of
globality in the production of feminist knowledge means attempting to grasp
irreducible difference as heterogeneity, then transnational feminist cultural
studies will provide one telling example of how to rethink feminism’s
relationship to theory and practice, to specificity and singularity, which is also to
say, to history and ethicopolitics.

Situating Knowledge Production in Enabling Conditions

In their essay “On Critical Globality,” Alys Weinbaum and Brent Edwards
suggest that scholars of the cultural, political, economic, and social
dimensions of ‘globalization’ must carefully attend to their geopolitical
situatedness within dynamic, uneven, and complex relationships of power if they
are to attune their ethicopolitical sensibilities to their analytic strategies.¹¹ The
scholar of ‘globality’ should be intent on, in Weinbaum and Edwards’ words,
“becoming conscious of the place from which one speaks.”¹² This, they contend,
is one of the only viable ways to work against the universalizing and
(neo)colonizing tendencies inherent within scholarship that ignores, or is
uncritical about the mediated nature of its access to, its enabling conditions, but
that nevertheless claims to be ‘global’.¹³ Much of such scholarship, they argue, in
fact tacitly reinforces, instead of displaces, the positionality of the West as core
and the Rest as periphery, i.e., Europe and the U.S. as (neo)imperial center and
the third world and the south as colonized margin.

On a general level, Weinbaum and Edwards’ call echoes many similar arguments
put forth by those within the emergent field known as ‘feminist epistemology.’
Donna Haraway, for example, has argued persuasively that achieving accurate
knowledge about social relations entails acknowledging that the production of
knowledge is always “situated,” always “partial [and] locatable” within the
particularities of the spaces of social and historical matrices.¹⁴ Weinbaum and
Edwards, like Haraway, are not content to solely invoke the ‘situatedness of
knowledge’ for its own sake. Neither are they interested in getting epistemically
‘situated’ simply to enjoin in uncritical academic navel-gazing. Rather, decoding
and historicizing the situatedness of knowledge means first of all, as all three
scholars have argued, refusing to reduce the radical heterogeneity of the

¹² Ibid., 258.
¹³ Ibid.
contemporary historical moment to a common epistemic denominator. At its most fundamental level, the politics of situating knowledge in its heterogeneity thereby entails interrogating the differential enabling conditions of the specific sites from which subjects produce knowledges. Both Weinbaum and Edwards and Haraway alike thereby remind us of the critical importance of the specific conditions of possibility that facilitate our own practice as academics. However, as Pheng Cheah suggests, we cannot just assume “the possibility of a self-reflective critical consciousness capable of grasping the limits of its own situated perspective in order to transcend provisionally the discursive formation that this consciousness inhabits” and then simply call it a day for our epistemic efforts at grasping the globe; this would be to ignore the persistent significance of the specificity of the differential epistemics of globality. Just as there is no outside to discursivity, there is no space outside of situatedness. Likewise, in a certain way, there is no outside of globality. For just as the institutions which facilitate academic production—be they juridical, national, disciplinary, economic, discursive, or otherwise—cannot be exempted from critical interrogation in scholarly work precisely because they condition and inform scholars’ own most practices in both the strictest political and pedagogical senses, neither can we simply assume that our conditions of possibility can be interrogated once and for all.

Tani E. Barlow has contended that “formulating general laws and universal lexicons is not the task of historians” and I would like to build on Barlow’s point by arguing that this insight does not just hold for historians. It also holds for feminist epistemologists because the production of knowledge only happens under highly specific historical conditions. According to Barlow, one task of the historian should be to “emphasize the instabilities inherent in globalizing claims written into much used analytic categories such as ‘Asia’ or ‘revolution’ or ‘women.’” Emphasizing instabilities as such brings to light the complex constitutive conditions under which globalized catachreses are produced by historical subjects. The kind of scholarly work Barlow is suggesting is therefore

---


16 But this does not mean, of course, that discursivity, situatedness, and globality is all that there is in some finalistic ontological sense. It solely means that it is through discursivity, situatedness, and globality that historical heterogeneity can ever be articulated.

17 Barlow, “green blade in the act of being grazed”, 131.

18 Ibid., 120.

19 Gayatri Spivak states in *The Postcolonial critic* that a ‘catachresis’ is a concept-metaphor “without an adequate literal referent” (154). Spivak spells this notion out in terms of how: “A deconstructive awareness would insistently be aware that the masterwords are catachreses…that there are no literal
that of a deconstructive feminist historical analysis: “To undo the presumed relation between signifier and signified, historical event and historiographic convention (e.g., “gender,” a signifier of difference, in “development,” a metaphor of control over global processes) and to hold these ensembles up to scrutiny is a useful undertaking, since the logics in question animate forces that discipline into manageable categories conditions of unspeakable heterogeneity.”

Taking Barlow’s historical lesson to the interstices between feminist epistemology and globalization studies, I want to inquire into the institutional politics of their situatedness within, and relationality to, certain enabling conditions that I am calling, for lack of a better term, globality.

Feminist Epistemology and Globalization Studies

I am a student of both feminist theory and philosophy. Although today there is generally a great deal of overlap between these academic sites, what is not often noted is that the specific relationship between feminist theory and the study of philosophical epistemology was first firmly consolidated when Discovering reality: feminist perspectives on epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and the philosophy of science, edited by Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka, was published in 1983. Catherine Hundleby goes so far as to call this book “the first collection of feminist epistemology,” but although this book is the first collection to formally ask questions about how feminism might contribute to “a new theory of knowledge,” it is not actually the first feminist scholarship to ask questions about feminism and epistemology. However, I point to this text here because I...
think it should alert us to the (not so) simple fact that feminist epistemology has a
history. Twenty five years since the publication of this text, the field of feminist
epistemology has emerged as a specific (interdisciplinary) site. This scholarly
domain has generated what should be understood as its own methodologies,
cannons, analytic strategies, philosophical tools, and critical procedures for
understanding the epistemics of knowing practices. Feminist epistemology
therefore has a complex, unique, and singular history, and this history, for the
most part, has yet to be written.

As a student who has studied feminist epistemology for the last few years, I have
learned that defining the term ‘feminist epistemology’ is, at best, a slippery
enterprise. For the moment I will refrain from offering my own definition of this
term and will instead turn to feminist epistemologists Kathleen Lennon and
Margaret Whitford, who assert that the special contribution of feminist
epistemology to scholarship in general is that it brings to the fore “the power
relations at the heart of knowledge production.” As they define it:


feminist epistemology is neither the specification of a female way of knowing (there is no such thing) nor simply the articulation of female subjectivity which reveals itself to be diverse, contradictory and at least partially discursively constructed through patriarchal oppositions. Feminist epistemology consists rather in attention to epistemological concerns arising out of feminist projects, which prompt reflection on the nature of knowledge and our methods for attaining it. 28

In this same vein, feminist epistemologists Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter argue that while feminist epistemology reveals “the politics involved in knowledge,” feminist epistemology does not putatively consist of “a reduction of epistemology to politics.” 29 Rather, feminist epistemology provides a space for thinking through the manifold ways in which, in Alcoff and Potter’s words, “values, politics, and knowledge are intrinsically connected” and mutually constitute each other in a field mediated by difference. 30 Within such a wide-spanning definitional schema, it is no surprise that Alcoff and Potter contend that the field of feminist epistemology is “internally heterogeneous and irreducible to any uniform set of theses.” 31 This essay, however, is neither a literature review of the field’s wide-spanning and heterogeneous scholarly productions, nor is it a genealogy of feminist epistemology’s heterogeneity. Instead, it is intended as an intervention in that heterogeneous history itself.

My point of entry into this history is, by necessity, through my location as a scholar situated within the U.S. academy. It is from within this uneven yet shared site that Weinbaum and Edwards, who work within American studies and literary criticism, observe that much recent scholarship in the U.S. in the humanities and social sciences has been moved to analyze “processes of globalization as they impact on culture and society.” 32 I do not think that it would be unfair to go somewhat further and say that the study of globalization has become big business in contemporary academia, 33 particularly within the U.S., as

28 Ibid., 13.
30 Ibid., 3.
31 Ibid., 3.
it frequently draws the eyes and ears of both cultural studies specialists and corporate executives. As I understand it, the interdisciplinary site of globalization studies primarily involves considerations of political economy, the nation-state system, transnationalism, and flows of culture, community, and capital across global and (trans)local spaces. According to Arjun Appadurai, a major theorist of “the cultural dimensions of globalization,” the study of globalization requires attending to “certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics that we have only begun to theorize.” So while globalization studies involves analyzing “the globalization of multinational capitalism,” it also includes critically researching “the destabilization [and restabilization] of nationalisms, the production of dynamic border zones, and reconfigurations of identities as well as… [the consolidation and disruption of regimes of] transnational corporate exploitation.” In other words, the study of globalization is nothing if not heterogeneous (which does not mean of course that structural and institutional patterns cannot be tracked).

I note this here because it would be easy to assume that discursive heterogeneity is one of the few things that globalization studies has in common with feminist epistemology. However, the presumed disconnection between feminist knowledge production and globality, apparent in much scholarship in both globalization studies and feminist epistemology, seems in need of serious reconsideration. It is the work of this essay to suggest that invocations of the supposed difference between feminist epistemology and globalization studies preclude any consideration of the role of globality in the production of feminist knowledge and vice versa. This, I want to contend, consolidates, rather than destabilizes, existing regimes of neocolonial power relations. This consolidation, in turn, prevents opening up the possibility of, in historian William Haver’s words, “a historical, political practice that would be something other than a continuity with, or maintenance of, the present.”


The Occlusion of Globalization within Feminist Epistemology

Feminist epistemology has not, for the most part, attended to questions being raised within recent studies of ‘globalization.’ As I see it, the occlusion of the issue of globalization within feminist epistemology could be explained in at least two ways. Firstly, it could be explicated by reference to the scholarly ‘common sense’ that says that feminist epistemology is about the feminist philosophical analysis of the politics and practice of knowledge production, while globalization studies, on the other hand, is about the analysis of cultural flows and capital mobility within global capitalist postmodernity. This first possible explanation is not just an account of the supposed difference in content between feminist epistemology and globalization studies, but is also disciplinary, that is, institutional. In other words, the occlusion of globalization within feminist epistemology could be said, were we to make certain assumptions, to make sense considering the disciplinary structure of knowledge formations within contemporary academic institutions: put crudely, it comes down to the claim that what philosophers essentially do is philosophize (whether they are ‘feminist’ or not), and that philosophizing does not involve analyzing and thinking through the heterogeneous political and cultural economies that constitute what Gayatri Spivak calls “globality” or the “financialization of the globe.”

The second possible explanation, not unrelated to the first possibility, is that the occlusion of globalization within feminist epistemology is due to the fact that feminist epistemology is largely produced within frameworks that centralize (and thus naturalize and take for granted) the West and the U.S. as paradigmatic models for knowledge production. This would be another way of saying that those who do feminist epistemology are by large situated within the West and the U.S. and that they, by virtue of their situatedness, assume that they do not need to attend to the fact that their situatedness can easily make them complicit with neo-colonial practices of academic production.

The occlusion of globality within feminist epistemology should alter us to something very particular. That is, whereas almost every discipline within the humanities and the social sciences—from sociology to history to political economy to literary criticism—has felt the need to comment on the question of...

---

38 There are at least two feminist epistemologists whose work I see as exempt from this. See Kimberly Hutchings, “The Personal is International: Feminist Epistemology and the Case of International Relations” in *Knowing the difference: feminist perspectives in epistemology*, eds. Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford (London: Routledge, 1994).

‘globalization’, feminist epistemology has been curiously silent. I will consider this silence by analyzing the two positions briefly sketched above in greater detail.

Let us first consider the possibility that feminist epistemology and globalization simply have different disciplinary content areas, and, therefore, do not have anything in common to raise to the level of interdisciplinary academic dialogue, debate, or contentious. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter’s important anthology Feminist epistemologies (1992) seems to make the case most strongly for this possible explanation, that feminist epistemology does not deal with questions of globalization because of the disciplinary structure of academic institutions. According to Alcoff and Potter, feminist epistemology must be thought of as constituted in relation to ‘traditional epistemology,’ which can be conceived as a search for “a theory of knowledge in general.” This seemingly banal historical insight, certainly not incorrect I think, is posed by Alcoff and Potter in terms of the relationality between the history of philosophy and the history of feminism. In this sense, Alcoff and Potter argue that ‘traditional philosophy proper’ is in need of insistent critique because it has been historically dominated by questions of “the nature of knowledge itself, epistemic agency, justification, objectivity, and whether and how epistemology should be naturalized,” questions which obscure the role of gender, politics, and history in the production of knowledge. Alcoff and Potter therefore contend further that the academic site of feminist epistemology is constituted through the feminist interjection of questions about gender, politics, and history (questions they see as outcomes of feminism) into the heart of traditional philosophical discourse.

What Alcoff and Potter do not attend to, though, is the possibility that feminist epistemology is also constituted in relation to global processes. Their definition of history thus seems to be reductive in more than one sense, because it occludes the heterogeneity of the global processes that may contribute to the enabling conditions which constitute the possibility of the production of feminist epistemology such as, for example, global economic relations, the history of imperialism, U.S. overconsumption, etc. However, it is necessary at this early point in my analysis to point out another historical caveat for consideration: that

---

40 Here I am invoking a strong distinction between feminist epistemology and feminist theory. Transnational feminist theory, in particular, has been attentive to the question of globalization. I will take up some of this scholarship later in this essay.

41 Alcoff and Potter, “Introduction”, 1. This is similar to Patricia Hill Collins’ assertion that in Black feminist thought that epistemology “is the study of the philosophical problems in concepts of knowledge and truth,” (202).

42 Ibid., 1.
globalization discourse in academia is slightly younger than feminist epistemology, that while it has flourished recently, when Feminist epistemologies was published it was much less visible, although it was not, despite what some may claim, completely invisible. This, though, does not seem to me to account for the lack of attention paid by Alcoff and Potter, or the contributors to the volume for that matter, to questions of how knowledge is produced in both local and global contexts. Although Alcoff and Potter convincingly argue that “to be adequate, an epistemology must attend to the complex ways in which values influence knowledge, including the discernible social and political implications of its own analysis,” questions of nationalism, transnationalism, globalization, globality, and neocolonialism do not seem to be on their, or the contributors, list of feminist epistemic priorities. That is, it is not clear which ‘values’ and ‘social and political implications’ of our own analyses Alcoff and Potter want us to attend to.

Despite this confusion, it would simply be ignorant to argue that feminist epistemology and globalization studies are not situated differently within the disciplinary structure of academia, that their content areas are not significantly different, and that their methods, bodies of theory, historical archives, analytical strategies, and critical procedures are not quite different. But it also wouldn’t be entirely off the mark to argue that the absence of questions of globality and related topics in Alcoff and Potter’s anthology is a product of an implicit U.S.-/euro-centrism that produces what are, at least in certain ways, neocolonial feminist epistemologies. Despite the apparent disjuncture between the discourses of feminist epistemology and globalization studies, and despite the traces of a residual neocolonialism within certain feminist epistemologies, it is part of the agenda of this essay to suggest that thinking the politics of knowledge production ethically must mean, in the most robust sense, thinking the politics of globality. It is not just that the topic of ‘globalization’ can be immensely useful for the feminist epistemologist; it is that the feminist epistemologists’ occlusion of globality consolidates neo-colonial power relations by reinforcing retracements that have a long history within traditional masculinist philosophy, not to mention in the history of imperialism. This is not to accuse feminist epistemology of making, as Gayatri Spivak says, “the straight white Christian man of property the ethical universal,” but it is to note the role of the history of masculinism and

imperialism in the constitution of the enabling conditions which produce both feminist knowledges and politics.

Situating “Situatedness”

Vivek Dhareshwar wrote several years ago scholarly criticism in the age of globalization must “examine its own location and site of production.” In this spirit, or perhaps in contradistinction to it, there has been a recent trend among feminist theorists in the social and human sciences to characterize knowledge production as a process that is invariably tied to concepts such as ‘positionality,’ ‘locality,’ ‘situatedness,’ and ‘embodiment.’ For example, Alcoff and Potter ask the crucial question, “How does the social position of the subject affect the production of knowledge?” Articulating the role of the ethicopolitical in what might be taken as a response to this question, feminist theorist Caren Kaplan proposes that “The struggle for accountability requires a negotiation… [between] positionality and the knowledges produced from those locations [that position subjects].” M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, editors of the superb collection Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures, comparably suggest that thinking through transnational feminist practices in globalization requires “grounding analyses in particular, local feminist praxis…but we also need to understand the local in relation to larger, cross-national processes.” Not disagreeing with Alexander and Mohanty’s analysis, I nevertheless would point out, following literary critic Bruce Robbins, that the problem with performing the kind of critical work they advocate is that “habits of thought and feeling [are] already shaped and have been shaped by particular collectivities, that are socially and geographically situated, hence both limited and empowered.” The predicament of the feminist epistemologist within globality is how to ascertain in what ways and to what ends subjects of knowledge are both specifically limited and empowered by their ‘situatedness.’

The exigency of a being in space that is simultaneously constraining and enabling of certain social, political, and epistemic possibilities is noted by feminist

48 Kaplan, Questions of travel, 169.
epistemologists Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford, who echo Robbins’ claim when they argue that “all our interactions with reality are mediated by conceptual frameworks or discourses, which themselves are historically and socially situated.” What such historically and socially mediated situatedness means—how to address it, how to come to terms with it, what to do with it—however, is an issue they fail to address. Feminist historian of science Donna Haraway, in the oft-cited “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” has made similar, although more conceptually nuanced, arguments by theorizing a somewhat curious doctrine of ‘feminist objectivity.’ Haraway turns traditional notions of objectivity as the “view from nowhere” on their head by reasoning that “feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object,” and, furthermore, that “feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges.”

In a like manner, Sandra Harding contends not just that “all knowledge attempts are socially situated” but, moreover, that knowledge production practices are always “embodied and visible not only in that they start from some particular set of lives, but also because conceptual frameworks are always those of a particular historical moment.” What Harding calls “strong objectivity” is, Harding suggests, a theoretical tool for understanding the critical role that locality plays in knowledge production practices. According to Haraway’s reading of this critical concept:

Strong objectivity insists that both the objects and the subjects of knowledge-making practices must be located. Location is not a listing of adjectives or assigning of labels such as race, sex, and class. Location is not the concrete to the abstract of decontextualization. Location is the always partial, always finite, always fraught play of foreground and background, text and context, that constitutes critical inquiry. Above all Location is not self-evident or transparent. Location is also partial in the sense of being for some worlds and not others.

55 Ibid., 244.
Despite the fact that Haraway’s reading of ‘strong objectivity’ seems to make ‘location’ more of an ambiguous concept than anything else, Haraway’s last claim here—that ‘location is partial in the sense of being for some worlds and not others’—seems to me to point to the curious paradox of recent calls to ‘contextualize’ knowledge production practices through recourse to such concepts as ‘positionality,’ ‘location,’ ‘situatedness,’ and ‘embodiment.’ That is, many feminist epistemologists call for the contextualization of knowledge production without situating their own knowledge production practices within what I am calling ‘globality,’ without performing what Gayatri Spivak calls “a scrupulous declaration of ‘interest’.”57 Spivak calls attention to the role of ideology in the articulation of the scholar or intellectual’s enterprises time and time again because Spivak is fundamentally concerned with complicities, be they transnational, neocolonial, feminist, or otherwise. By calling for ‘contextualization’ without situating knowledge production within a frame attuned to the logics of the ideologies which craft scholars as subjects, globality, and neocolonial and transnational complicities, may be occluded once again. By ‘globality’ I simply mean the heterogeneous enabling conditions which constitute the possibility of feminist epistemologists’ knowledge production practices. I am suggesting that calls for ‘positioning,’ ‘localizing,’ ‘situating,’ or ‘embodiying’ knowledge production practices can often perform the very move that they so often critique: the gesture of ahistoricism, universalization, and decontextualization. Blindly invoking some vague object called ‘context,’—be it in the form of positionality, locality, situatedness, or embodiment—without attending the singularity and historicity of subjects of knowledge, serves not only to misconstrue the enabling conditions which are the conditions of possibility for the production of knowledge; it, also, in Tani E. Barlow’s words, “blunts the promise of criticism more generally.”58 This is not to say that ‘positionality,’ ‘locality,’ ‘situatedness,’ and ‘embodiment’ are not useful categories for the scholar concerned with interrogating knowledge production practices in globality; but as the work of Caren Kaplan, Tani E. Barlow, and Judith Butler suggests,59 these terms have themselves been historically produced through highly specific, discretely singular practices and events, and as such they must be treated with the utmost careful consideration and critical scrutiny, lest they turn into ahistorical qualifiers for abstract, essentialized, homogeneous geographies of identity.

57 Ibid., 110.
58 Barlow, “green blade in the act of being grazed”, 119.
59 See Kaplan, Questions of travel; See also Barlow, “Theorizing Woman : Funū, Guojia, Jiating”; and Judith Butler, Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex" (New York: London, 1992).
It is against such practices of reductionism that Arjun Appadurai, putting the question of knowledge production through locality into the heart of globalization discourse, contends that, because “locality is itself a historical product” it seems important to identify the knowledge forms through which…locality emerges in a globalized world.” This analysis holds, I believe, for any critical concept intended to make intelligible the always specific and singular production of knowledge: ‘positionality,’ ‘locality,’ ‘situatedness,’ and ‘embodiment’ are just a few concepts whose complex genealogies have yet to be written. One place to begin tracking the genealogies of these concepts would be within the discourse known as ‘feminist epistemology,’ wherein these terms have circulated with great frequency for a number of years. The writing of such genealogies is not, as I remarked above, the labor that I want to undertake here, and I will leave that task for future scholarship to attend to.

Having so far argued that feminist epistemology requires a global frame if it is to attend to its own enabling conditions, I want to continue this line of argument by attempting outline what would be minimally necessary for any attempt at ‘situating’ feminist epistemology within transnationalism. I will then examine how thinking knowledge production through what is known as “transnational feminist cultural studies,” via the work of Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, Gayatri Spivak, and Tani Barlow, opens up possibilities for theorizing the production of knowledge that can work against neocolonial logics of reductionist, ahistorical, universalizing epistemic projects by pointing to transnational and neocolonial feminist complicities.

In various philosophy departments and certain academic feminist departments, a sub-disciplinary ghetto that falls under the name ‘feminist epistemology’—and between the disciplines of feminism and philosophy—has recently gained some notoriety. For Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, this sub-field is an (inter)disciplinary site in tension, and this tension “marks the uneasy alliance of feminism and philosophy.” Alcoff and Potter’s characterization reflects their general understanding that feminism has a relationship, however tenuous it has

---

61 Ibid., 18.
62 By ‘situate,’ I mean place within what I am calling globality.
been at certain historical moments, to the history of philosophy. The relationship of feminist epistemology to the history of philosophy is worth noting once more because, as Alcoff and Potter put it, “those working in feminist epistemology are engaged in a dialogue with one or more traditions in the history of epistemology.”

Which is also to say, feminist epistemology is produced through history; it is both a product of and is itself a kind of specific historical practice that is, in William Haver’s words, “an effect of, and subject to, the vicissitudes of history.”

Since the field’s inception roughly twenty years ago, a large body of extraordinary work has been produced. Although classes taught on a regular basis on feminist epistemology are still rare at most institutions, an ever-expanding body of scholarly literature which ‘substantiates’ feminist epistemology as a ‘proper’ area of study is quickly amassing, and not only on university book store shelves, but also on the bookshelves of such large chain-stores as Barns and Noble, Borders, and the online bookseller Amazon.com. This empirical fact should alert scholars and students alike that feminist epistemology does not only have its place among the ranks of those within the confines of the ivory tower who want to inspect the mechanics of the workings of knowledge, gender, and epistemic justification, but that feminist epistemology also has a place, however small or large, in late-capitalist postmodernity. This location has possible relationships to: 1) academic institutions as institutions (of nation-states) that employ people, that have divisions of labor, that produce subjects, that fund research, publishing, and teaching (and that subsequently have made and continue to make possible the discursive production of feminist epistemology); 2) the international division of labor insofar as it is connected to, a product of, or perhaps even partially sustaining of academic institutions (and the divisions of labor in academic institutions); 3) transnational flows of scholarly knowledge production circulating between and through the conduits of educational institutions of the world via the late-capitalist global telecommunications apparatus of transnational publishing, scholarly conferences, and information-transfer technologies; 4) global economic relations; 5) histories of imperialism, colonialism, decolonization, postcoloniality, and neocolonialism.

The question of how feminist epistemology finds itself now situated within some of what Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan call the “scattered hegemonies” that

65 Ibid., 2. Emphasis mine.
66 Haver, The body of this death, 47.
make up late-capitalist postmodernity, the international division of labor, and global economic relations—the complex geopolitical matrix Donna Haraway calls “technoscience”—is a question that would require the specific and detailed consideration of feminist epistemology historically. And this point, remarked upon above, is also a comment about how the political economic leads towards the historical, for economies of value-coding can only be produced within specific historical conditions. I will return to this issue near the end of this paper.

Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies

If feminist political practices do not acknowledge transnational cultural flows, feminist movements will fail to understand the material conditions that structure women’s lives in diverse locations. If feminist movements cannot understand the dynamics of these material conditions, they will be unable to construct an effective opposition to current economic and cultural hegemonies that are taking new global forms. Without an analysis of transnational scattered hegemonies that reveal themselves in gender relations, feminist movements will remain isolated and prone to reproducing the universalizing gestures of dominant Western cultures.

Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan

As scholars located within the interdisciplinary contexts of women’s studies, cultural studies, and literary criticism, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, editors of the groundbreaking collection Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices, are concerned primarily with theorizing feminist practices in their heterogeneity. For Grewal and Kaplan, this means that feminisms must be understood as historical, and that feminist travels are ‘transnational’ in the sense that they have historically crisscrossed, conjoined, consolidated, and disrupted the boundaries of diverse nations and states, cultures and economies, and borders of social and political spaces. Grewal and Kaplan prefer the term ‘transnational’ over the term ‘international’ because the latter implies staying within the parameters of the nation, while the former implies, at least at certain times, challenging them. In their words, Grewal and Kaplan use the term ‘transnational’ “to problematize a purely locational politics of global-local or center-periphery in favor of...the lines cutting across them.” Their deconstructive bent is telling here, for it stresses the articulation of relationality as opposed to static notions of unchanging difference or essential identity.

68 Haraway, Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium, 3.
70 Ibid., 13.
Working within the interstices of international feminist theory, Marxism, postcolonial studies, and poststructuralism, Grewal and Kaplan’s is a theoretical practice that seeks to negotiate between these discourses without reducing them to a coherent master theory.\textsuperscript{71} Undertaking projects that situate feminism in relation to the postmodern, the postcolonial, the neocolonial, and the geopolitical, these scholars refuse to “choose among economic, cultural, and political concerns.”\textsuperscript{72} Consistently challenging the “inadequate and inaccurate binary divisions”\textsuperscript{73} that characterize much of the scholarship within the humanities and social sciences, they articulate a feminist framework that takes seriously “the methodological imperative that brings together gender, political economy, the international division of labor, and, crucially because of where we are located, a critical understanding of the role of academic institutional production.”\textsuperscript{74} Their task is, as they put it, to make visible “the conflicts and dependencies that structure a multinational world of neo- and postcolonialisms,” while at the same time confronting the various roles of feminisms in the management and containment of diversity.\textsuperscript{75} Grewal and Kaplan continuously ask poststructuralist questions such as “What is being consolidated [in a given practice], and who is being served though such retrenchments?”\textsuperscript{76} That is, their concern is with the heterogeneous relations of power and knowledge that constitute the contemporary historical moment I have been thus far been calling globality.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{71} Grewal and Kaplan, “Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies”, 356.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 359.
\textsuperscript{73} Grewal and Kaplan, “Introduction”, 13.
\textsuperscript{74} Grewal and Kaplan, “Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies”, 357.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 349.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 355.
\textsuperscript{77} It might not be inappropriate to note, even though it is well known, that the term ‘power-knowledge’ comes originally from Michel Foucault, \textit{Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison} (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977). In brief, for Foucault, “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (27). Power-knowledge thus conceived functions both specifically and strategically in different ways in different (con)texts. See also Michel Foucault, \textit{Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977} (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); \textit{The history of sexuality} (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); \textit{Language, counter-memory, practice: selected essays and interviews} (Ithaca, N.Y.,: Cornell University Press, 1977). If the task of the feminist epistemologists is to identify the “faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers [of power-knowledge] that threaten the fragile inheritor” of history, and to underscore the complexity of “the subtle, singular, and subindividual marks that might possibly intersect in them [the faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers of history] to form a network that is difficult to unravel” (Language, counter-memory, practice, 81–82), then an awareness of the radical nature of historical heterogeneity is necessary. In terms a strict discursive frame, the point is that, in Thomas Keenan’s words, “As much as one might like to ignore this linguistic moment, it cannot be evaded: the differential relations of power-knowledge are entangled within, not without, discourse, made possible by linguistic structures and events.” See Keenan, \textit{Fables of responsibility: aberrations and predicaments in ethics and politics} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 151.
What they name “transnational feminist cultural studies” can be understood as a methodology or a practice of scholarship: what Foucault would have called an ethos perhaps. It is not characterized by any set of foundational claims, nor by any unitary grand theory of the social or the political, yet it takes, as its point of departure, the problematic of feminist epistemic production in its historical specificity. Transnational feminist cultural studies “recognize[s] that practices are always negotiated in both a connected and a specific field of conflict and contradiction and that feminist agendas must be viewed as a formulation and reformulation that is contingent on historically specific conditions.” Pinpointing the importance of poststructuralism in transnational feminist cultural studies, Grewal and Kaplan argue that “Theories of opposition that rely on unified subjects of difference and metaphysics of presence and voice cannot create alliances across differences and conflicts within a context of imperialism and decolonization.” Here, stressing that a more complex set of feminist analytical strategies and critical practices is needed—one that does not assimilate heterogeneity to an essential, ahistorical sameness—Grewal and Kaplan underscore the manners in which theory is itself a practice, the ways that practice is theoretical, and the irreducible inseparability of theory and practice as the constitutive condition of any ontology or epistemology. In their words, “What we need are critical practices that link our understanding of postmodernity, global economic structures, problematics of nationalism, issues of race and imperialism, critiques of global feminism, and emergent patriarchies.”

Creating such linkages, as Grewal and Kaplan contend, makes feminism, Marxism, and poststructuralism the most adequate discourses to use as theoretical resources, so long as, that is, no discourse is allowed to become a master theory that dominates the others. Mediating between diverse discourses requires relentlessly putting into question the basic categories through which we understand the world. It is a practice of persistent resistance against any attempts to naturalize the knowledge field. Transnational feminist cultural studies is therefore a mode of analysis that questions:

any emphasis on similarities, universalisms, or essentialisms in favor of articulating links among the diverse, unequal, and uneven relations of historically constituted subjects. Within humanist paradigms, similarities imply bonding between full subjects. Linkages suggest networks of economic and

---

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
social relations that occur within postmodernity vis-a-vis global capital and its effects. Linkage does not require reciprocity or sameness or commonality. It can and must acknowledge differentials of power and participation in cultural production, but it also can and must trace the connections among seemingly disparate elements such as various religious fundamentalisms, patriarchies, and nationalisms.\textsuperscript{82}

What Grewal and Kaplan articulate in the above passage is what I think Tani E. Barlow would call “a feminist politics rooted in difference without identity.”\textsuperscript{83} It is a kind of politics, heavily influenced by both Foucauldian and Derridian strains of poststructuralism, that understands the production of historical subjects through what is by definition a field mediated by difference, that is, historical heterogeneity as \textit{différance}.\textsuperscript{84} As T. Minh-Ha Trinh so eloquently put it quite some time ago, “Difference undermines the very idea of identity.”\textsuperscript{85} This is not to say that Grewal and Kaplan simply renounce the categorical imperative the discursive imposes upon us; discursivity is what enables them, therefore they must negotiate with it.\textsuperscript{86} But they retain a radical skepticism against reductionist, homogenizing gestures or modes of analysis, be they feminist or otherwise, because such analytical methods have proven inadequate to the task of theorizing feminism transnationally.\textsuperscript{87}

According to Grewal and Kaplan, we must also retain an insurgent distrust of theories of the transnational which do not attend to how gendering logics operate

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{82}Ibid., 359.
\item \textsuperscript{83}Barlow, “Theorizing woman: funü, guojia, jiating”, 173.
\item \textsuperscript{84}For an explication of \textit{différance}, see Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in \textit{Margins of philosophy}. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); also see Spivak, “Feminism and Deconstruction Again: Negotiations” in \textit{Outside in the teaching machine} (especially pp. 132-33) for a thought-provoking discussion of this concept in relation to feminism as displacement. Briefly, for Derrida, ‘\textit{différance}’ means both ‘to differ’ and ‘to defer’ (7). On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernability; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of a spacing and temporilizing that puts off until ‘later’ what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible (8). When I refer to the ‘heterogeneity as \textit{différance},’ I mean to indicate the epistemological impossibility of there ever being a ‘closure’ of history. History, in this sense, is thought of in terms of an open, unpredictable, unstable horizon. In terms of how I understand history as discursive and discourse as historical, heterogeneity should be thought in terms of radically incalculable, but not wholly untraceable, movements of \textit{différance}—what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have called “lines of articulation” and “lines of flight” (\textit{A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia} [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987], 3)—and these movements make history/theory writing that seeks to follow non-reductionist logics a difficult, complex, and urgent undertaking. See Barlow’s “Theorizing Woman: Funü, Guojia, Jiating” on this issue.
\item \textsuperscript{85}Trinh, \textit{Woman, Native, Other}, 93.
\item \textsuperscript{86}I take this argument from Spivak, \textit{The postcolonial critic}, 101. In Spivak’s terms, “feminism must negotiate with phallocentrism because it is what enables us” (147).
\item \textsuperscript{87}See Barlow, “Theorizing woman: funü, guojia, jiating”, on this point.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
in their historical specificity. Arguing for “an international frame that addresses asymmetries of power and complex constructions of agency,” Grewal and Kaplan call for a methodology that neither reduces the subjects in a given study to objects, nor takes the knowledge field created with these subjects to be unmediated or nonideological. Scholarly practices are in every way ideological. This is because scholars, like anyone else, have vested interests tangled up in their epistemic and ontological practices.

Grewal and Kaplan read Gayatri Spivak’s work as exemplary of the kind of analysis they advocate. As they note, “By bringing together Marxism, poststructuralism, and feminist perspectives within a comparative study of the first and third worlds, Spivak radically rewrites the paradigms of modernity and postmodernity.” They continue, “Rather than follow the path of retrenchment and consolidation, Spivak has used moments of crisis and contradiction to theorize the relationships between cultural and economic value systems.”

Taking up the topic of this relationality between cultural and economic value systems and structures, I read Spivak’s *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* as an example of a kind of thinking of the politics of knowledge production in globality that displaces easy binary oppositions between the cultural and the economic.

---

89 Ibid., 356.
90 Ibid.
Gayatri Spivak and the Question of Globality

Persistently to critique a structure that one cannot not (wish to) inhabit is the deconstructive stance. Transnational feminism is neither revolutionary tourism, nor mere celebration of testimony. It is rather though the route of feminism that economic theories of social choice and philosophical theories of ethical preference can be complicated by cultural material.  

Gayatri Spivak

For those readers familiar with Spivak, it will be no surprise if I suggest that a plausible gesture would be to begin with a consideration of “the question of the text.”  

Spivak is by most disciplinary standards classified (and self-identified) as a literary critic. In Spivak’s first publication, a translation of Derrida’s Of *grammatology* that includes a long introductory essay, Spivak tells us that “text[s] have no stable identity, no stable origin, no stable end. Each act of reading the “text” is a preface to the next.” Spivak goes on, “if the assumption of responsibility for one’s discourse leads to the conclusion that all conclusions are genuinely provisional and therefore inconclusive, that all origins are similarly unoriginal, that responsibility itself must cohabit with frivolity, this need not be cause for gloom.” This remark may sound familiar to readers of Spivak’s more recent work, whom will know all too well that “the question of the text” has been one of the central concerns of Spivak’s illustrious career. How should one responsibly read texts? What defines a text, anyway? And what conditions enable the reading of texts? These questions may well be the driving force behind the practically endless list of essays, books, papers, talks, speeches, and interviews that have been published under Spivak’s name. Spivak reports again and again from the front lines of the wars waged over the politics of reading (which are, in a certain way, also the politics of what Spivak calls “worlding” that the responsible critic can learn much from deconstructive, Marxist, and feminist

---

91 Spivak, *Outside in the teaching machine*, 284.

92 I am here paraphrasing the first sentence of Spivak’s famous introduction to Derrida’s *Of grammatology* (ix). See Spivak, “Translators Introduction,” in Jacques Derrida, *Of grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). I should note that Spivak’s original sentence concerns the relationship between Derrida and “the question of the preface” (ix), not “the question of the text.” It would seem to be more than a coincidence that the preface to *A critique of postcolonial reason* contains, in a certain way, the entirety of the book.

93 Ibid., xii.

94 Ibid., xiii.

95 Spivak defines “worlding” geographically, as in “the worlding of a world on uninscribed earth... a violent concept metaphor of violation” (*A critique of postcolonial reason*, 211-12). This concept is particularly useful for understanding the axiomatics of imperialism. Both hermeneutic and epistemological, it also alludes to an interpretive model of for understanding the production of knowledge as a process of inscription.
strategies of analysis and practice. Spivak’s latest book brings together these various strategies of reading in the service of examining “the structures of the production of postcolonial reason”.  

These structures are, as Spivak tells us, “of heterogeneous provenance”. It is in examining these structures that, in a nuanced and meticulously rigorous manner, this text traces Spivak’s “practitioner’s progress from colonial discourse studies to transnational cultural studies”. This journey takes Spivak through, across, and in between the vast discursive terrains of philosophy, literature, history, and culture. By intervening in current debates over feminism, deconstruction, Marxism, globalization, transnationalism, postcoloniality, ethicopolitics, cultural studies, and neo-colonialism, Spivak argues for a different reading of “the vanishing present”. The question which preoccupies Spivak during these travels is: “what subaltern is strategically excluded from organized resistance”? Spivak’s answer to this question comes in heavily coded language by way of a peculiar term: the ‘native informant.’ Spivak articulates the figure Spivak calls the “Native Informant” as the stage for the irreducible différence that is the playing out of what Spivak calls the “axiomatics of imperialism”. As Spivak’s book teaches us, these axiomatics are also of heterogeneous provenance. (Before I proceed with my consideration of how Spivak situates knowledge production in globality, I should note, from the start, the arguments put forward, theses advanced, and narratives stitched within this vast textual labyrinth are, like what Spivak calls “networks of power/desire/interest,” “so heterogeneous that their reduction to a coherent narrative is counter-productive—a persistent critique is needed”. In this spirit, to attempt do justice to A critique of postcolonial reason (an (im)possible task) would be, I believe, to persistently rethink the complex web of textual threads that constitute the book’s four hundred and thirty one pages in a manner that is attendant to the lessons that are housed within its pages, but that also subjects them to rigorous and concomitant critique: it would be to practice what Spivak calls, in a word, autocritique. As I can only begin to barely approach this task in the space that follows, I must admit up front that this analysis will by necessity be inadequate to the task at hand.)

---

96 Ibid., xii.
97 Ibid., x.
98 Ibid., ix-x.
99 Ibid., x.
100 Ibid., xi.
101 Ibid., x.
102 Ibid., 340.
103 Ibid., 249.
It might not be all that off the mark to say that Spivak is concerned with relationality in the most fundamental sense, how relationships between, for example, objects and subjects of knowledge are constituted, how relationships between flows of capital and the manipulation of classes are produced, how universalist feminism relationally substantiates neocolonialism, how the ethics of alterity can stand in as a politics of identity through the reinscription of the Self/Other structure, how binary oppositions substantiate each other. In the first chapter, “Philosophy,” Spivak lays out the figure, impossible perspective, or “unacknowledgeable moment” called “the native informant” in its relation to the axiomatics of imperialism as a necessary foreclosure. Spivak’s understanding of foreclosure comes from Lacanian psychoanalysis. Foreclosure is understood as “the rejection of an affect”. Psychoanalysis here is grasped as a method of “reading the pre-emergence (Raymond Williams term) of narrative as ethical instantiation”. In other words, Spivak is fundamentally concerned with the production of the Self and the Other and this production’s (constitutive?) relation to “ethical responsibility”. With this in mind, Spivak dockets “the encrypting of the name of the “native informant” as the name of Man—a name that carries the inaugurating affect of being human”.

Decoding Spivak’s complex language into my own, Spivak’s argument concerns what we might call the ‘becoming human’ or anthropomorphic moment of the instantiation of ethical responsibility. Spivak is therefore attempting to highlight the traces of exclusion that inhabit (inhibit) the production of humanity through ethical relatiomality. The term ‘Man’ is not insignificant in this light, and it serves to point toward the feminist direction that Spivak’s arguments will take in later chapters. For now, suffice it to say that Spivak’s small foray into psychoanalysis hints at the claim advanced in the fourth chapter that “the ‘truth of culture’…is the battle for the production of legitimizing cultural explanations”. Put differently, this is to say that Spivak, following Lacan, conceives of foreclosure as an expulsion from the Symbolic that reappears in the Real. But of course, as Lacan patiently insisted, the Real is forever inaccessible to us. Spivak’s book then, should not be taken as making claims upon the Real, upon the ‘truth of culture,’ but should be understood as a meditation on the impossibility of making claims about the Real ‘truth of culture.’

104 Ibid., 4.
105 Ibid., 5.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., 340
108 Ibid., 5.
The native informant is foreclosed by the axiomatics of imperialism because it is both needed and rejected, or, rather, it is both disclosed and effaced by the logics of "colonialism proper as it displaces itself into neocolonialism". The thrust of Spivak’s argument comes from the fact that, in tracing how the native informant forms part of the textual weave “for a narrative of crisis management”, Spivak is able to chart the narrative of (neo)imperialism as the history of the vanishing present. It is worth pointing out here that Spivak also focuses on the appropriation of the position of the native informant by the emergent migrant or postcolonial. This masquerade is a further example of how “third-worldist /colonial-discursivist criticism unwittingly “(con)states,” in the form of an alibi, what neo-colonialism is performing and has already performed”. This masquerade is also a form of the sanctioned ignorance that Spivak’s ceaselessly warns against ignoring. But instead of just sling mud, to use Spivak’s term, Spivak urges us to attempt to “discover a constructive rather than disabling complicity” between our own positionality (whatever that may be?) and the foreclosure of the native informant.

Throughout the first chapter, then, Spivak continually redraws attention to how, particularly within the new North/South divide, the native informant, and specifically “the poorest woman of the South”, is foreclosed through the establishment and (re)inscription of normative (Eurocentric, patriarchal, universalist feminist, or otherwise) conditions of being human (the production of humanness that Pheng Cheah describes by his use of the term ‘anthropomorphism’). I will not here go into Spivak’s dense reading of Kant, Hegel, and Marx, but it is not of the last importance that I take the time to point out that Spivak’s analyses of their texts exemplify a modulation between making visible the disclosure and effacement, the foreclosure, of the native informant, and, therefore, the production and “formation of the European ethico-political subject”. That is, Spivak demonstrates how the axiomatics of imperialism are at work both in the deepest nooks and crannies of the ‘great texts’ of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also in the taken for granted schema that divides or “worlds” the world into three worlds, or, now, more precisely, the North and

109 Ibid., 3.
110 Ibid., 7.
111 Ibid., 2, note 1.
112 Ibid., 4.
113 Ibid., 3-4.
114 Ibid., 6.
116 Spivak, A critique of postcolonial reason, 9.
the South as the constitutive geography (both tropological and literal, ultimately catachrestic though) of globality.

In Chapter two, “Literature,” Spivak looks at “the vicissitudes of the native informant as a figure in literary representation”. This chapter brings feminist issues to the forefront of thinking narrativity, marginality, culture, and globality, as do the remaining two chapters. In an outstanding investigation of the figuration of women in the literary enclave, Spivak argues that “when publishing women are from the dominant “culture,” they sometimes share, with male authors, the tendency to create an inchoate “other” (often female), who is not even a native informant but a piece of material evidence once again establishing the Northwestern European subject as ‘the same’”. In this light, the continuing current of Spivak’s critique of universalist feminism, offered most strongly in the final chapter, can be comprehended by way of its disclosure of the foreclosure and (partial) erasure of the native informant in different (con)texts. For example, when reading Bronte, Spivak tells us that “what is at stake, for feminist individualism in the age of imperialism, is precisely the making of human beings, the constitution and “interpellation” of the subject not only as individual but also as ‘individualist’”. Invoking the production of normative subjects under the reign of the axiomatics of imperialism, Spivak once again returns us to the (im)possible perspective of the native informant so as to make visible (an)other narrative of the production of the vanishing present.

Reading Bronte, Mary Shelley, Baudelaire, Kipling, Rhys, Mahasweta, and Cotzee figuring coloniality and postcoloniality, Spivak underscores the “epistemic violence of imperialism”, as well as the epistemic violence of Eurocentric universalist feminism, not to mention that of third worldist feminism, as complicit with neocolonialism today through the invocation and uncritical celebration of globality and hybridity without the force of a political economic perspective. “If Feminism takes its place with ethnic studies as American studies, or postcolonialism as migrant hybridism, the South is once again in the shadow, the diasporic stands in for the native informant”. Stressing that “literature remains singular and unverifiable”, Spivak interrogates the politics

---

117 Ibid., 112.
118 Ibid., 113.
119 Ibid., 116.
120 Ibid., 129.
121 Ibid., 147
122 Ibid., 164
123 Ibid., 169.
124 Ibid., 175.
of marginality studies as they intersect with multiculturalist and postcolonialist struggles, and, once again, directs our attention towards the margin, a move that has a long history in Spivak’s career. Spivak’s innovative reading of Mahasweta and Cotzee are particularly moving in their attention to the ways in which different types of institutionality figure in the production of subjects. This, I believe, encapsulates Spivak’s relentless attention to the enabling conditions which produce the contexts in which literature (as well as philosophy, history, culture, and feminism for that matter) is made.

This attention to enabling conditions surfaces again in the third chapter entitled “History.” Here, Spivak faces the subject of ethics again by arguing “a critical intimacy with deconstruction might help metropolitan feminist celebration of the female to acknowledge a responsibility toward the trace of the other, not to mention toward other struggles”. Spivak urges “people of our disciplinary outlines or decoupages [to concentrate] on documenting and theorizing the itinerary of the consolidation of Europe as sovereign subject, indeed sovereign and Subject, [so that] we would [be able to] point at an alternative geography of the “worlding” of today’s global South”. Reading Hayden White and Dominique LaCapra on the philosophy of history, Spivak attends to the relation between literature and the archive as “a crosshatching of condensations, a traffic in telescoped symbols” suggesting that the historian and the literary critic can indeed learn from each other, particularly if they are attentive to the strategies of deconstructive reading, as long as they don’t uncritically valorize the vocation of the other. Taking this strategy to a reading of two different historical cases, the Rani of Simur and that of Sati, Spivak once more locates the foreclosure of the sexed subaltern as strategically necessary to the mechanics of the imperialist project. Included in this section is a heavily revised version of “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

I do not wish to go into a detailed consideration of Spivak’s critique of Foucault and Deleuze here for reasons of time and economy, but a few words are certainly necessary. I should note that Spivak’s reinscribing of the importance of the concept of ideology is useful for situating political economy and cultural critique within each other’s domains, not merely side by side (this is recurrent Spivakian move). I should like to add that Spivak’s reading of “the track of ideology” in the Foucault-Deleuze conversation lays out many lessons for intellectuals to take

---

126 Spivak, A critique of postcolonial reason, 198.
127 Ibid., 200.
128 Ibid., 205.
note of, among them, the importance of closely tracking the mediated nature of knowledge production, the non-transparency of discourse, and the role that the international division of labor plays in intellectual production. This last issue brings us to Spivak’s repeated insistence that the position of the intellectual as investigating subject be made subject to autocritique in a way that does not consolidate the project of (neo)imperialism through the reproduction of the self-sameness of the investigating subject or the investigating subject’s construction of the Other. In other words, Spivak’s argument is for changing the politics of scholarship, and is still, alas, much needed today. In Spivak’s much more nuanced summary of what is at stake here: “In the face of the possibility that the intellectual is complicity in the persistent constitution of the Other as the Self’s shadow, a possibility of political practice for the intellectual would be to put the economic “under erasure,” to see the economic factor as irreducible as it reinscribes the social text, even as it is erased, however imperfectly, when it claims to be the final determinant or the transcendental signified.”

This brings us to the subaltern. Spivak advances the thesis that “If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow”. Taking this argument to the theatre of globality proper, Spivak writes “in contemporary globalization, the mechanism of “aid” is supported by the poorest women of the south, who form the base of what I have elsewhere called globe-girdling struggles (ecology, resistance to “population control”), where the boundary between global and local becomes indeterminate. This is the ground of the emergence of the new subaltern...To confront this group is not only to represent (vertreten) them globally in the absence of infrastructural support, but also to learn to represent (darstellen) ourselves”. I cannot comment here on the importance of this passage for an integral reading of Spivakian politics. However, what this means in the face of Spivak’s contention that “knowledge of the other subjects is theoretically impossible” is an issue that cannot be left unremarked upon. Is Spivak purposely contradicting the earlier contention? While Spivak cautions that “to ignore or invade the subaltern today is, willy-nilly, to continue the imperialist project; in the name of modernization; in the interest of globalization”, perhaps the stakes of Spivak’s argument are not only those of ethics. That is, Spivak argues that “it is important to acknowledge our complicity in the

129 Ibid., 266.
130 Ibid., 274.
131 Ibid., 276.
132 Ibid., 282
133 Ibid., 290.
muting”\textsuperscript{134} of the subaltern precisely because that is the only way to even entertain the (persistently deferred) (im)possibility of a future dialogue with the subaltern. Here we must be wary of making the subaltern speak as a way of silencing the subaltern yet again.

In the final chapter, “Culture,” Spivak examines the structures of the production of ‘postmodernism’ by way of reading Fredric Jameson. Reading the postmodern against the modern (and against the grain), Spivak tells us that “One of the...imperatives of deconstructive practice is to fix the critical glance not specifically at the putative identity of the two poles in a binary opposition, but at the hidden ethico-political agenda that drives the differentiation between the two”\textsuperscript{135}. Keeping this in mind, let us look at the following passage on “the axiomatics of imperialism”\textsuperscript{136}; “Why are they operative? Because the lines of contact between imperialism and de-colonization on the one hand, and the march of world capitalism on the other, constitute the most encompassing crisis of narrative today, the problem of producing plausible stories so business can go on as usual”.\textsuperscript{137} Here, tackling what Spivak has elsewhere called the ‘financialization of the globe’ head on, Spivak returns us to what is by now a familiar argument: “Even if history is a grand narrative, my point is that the subject position of the native informant, crucial yet foreclosed, is also historically and therefore geopolitically inscribed”.\textsuperscript{138} In this light, the general subject matter this chapter is also well-known to those engaged in the current debates of globalization, transnationality, and international feminism, that of thinking the politics of globality.

In this contested arena of cultural, historical, economic, and political inquiry, Spivak raises the seemingly simple but deceptively complex question: “In what interest are differences defined?”\textsuperscript{139} More specifically, Spivak asks: “In what interest, to regulate what sort of relationships, is the globe evoked?”.\textsuperscript{140} Pointing our attention to the politics of the setting of agendas—be they local, global, national, or transnational—Spivak implicitly broaches the question of role of ideology in shaping the politics of globality. This is another way of asking how the borders, limits, and frontiers of globality get demarcated, how they get

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 309.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 332.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 340.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 344.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 357.
\textsuperscript{140} Spivak, “Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace”, 329.
constituted, how they are regulated, by whom and in whose interests, and how they may be rearticulated—all the while keeping in mind the costs and benefits, and the necessity and usefulness, of “taxonomies of culture”. As Spivak points out, Development has increasingly become a very peculiar kind of a taxonomy of the mechanics and politics of globality. Spivak is worth quoting at length:

The general ideology of global Development is racist paternalism (and alas, increasingly, sororalism); its general economics capital-intensive investment; its broad politics the silencing or resistance and of the subaltern as the rhetoric of their protest is constantly appropriated.

Spivak’s taxonomy of thinking the politics of globality proposes the thesis that “globality is invoked in the interest of the financialization of the globe, or globalization”. In order to plausibly argue for this, Spivak presents a critical reading of Marshall McLuhan and Jean-Francois Lyotard that locates their own politics of thinking globality as “providing the narrative of development (globalization)-democratization (U.S. mission) an alibi”. Attentive to the uneven effects of neocolonial globalization, Spivak’s argument is both a critique of such alibis and is also an account of contemporary globe-girdling movements that can work in the service of refuting and destabilizing the crude cultural relativism of the received narrative of Development. Underscoring the possibilities of resistance to “the financialization of the globe” fostered by these globe-girdling movements, movements for ecological, environmental, and reproductive justice, Spivak cautions us against forgetting the place of “ethical singularity” in the complex and sensitive task of persistently (re)thinking the politics globality. In Spivak’s words:

Ethical singularity is approached when responses flow from both sides. Otherwise, the idea that if the person I am doing good to resembles me and has my rights, he or she will be better off, does not begin to approach an ethical relation (nor, of course, does an attitude of unqualified admiration for the person as an example of his or her culture).

---

142 Ibid., 373.
143 Ibid., 364.
144 Ibid., 364.
145 Ibid., 371.
146 Ibid., 364.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., 384
149 Ibid.
In this sense, thinking globality (or transnationality for that matter) means, for Spivak, recognizing that as “the barriers between fragile national economies and international capital are being removed, the possibility of social redistribution in the so-called developing states, uncertain at best, is disappearing even further”.

Speaking of globality in terms of the links between the power lines of local developers with the forces of global capital and the common thread of profound ecological loss, the loss of forest and river as foundation of life, Spivak highlights the neocolonial complicities generated by the all too common interests of development agencies and divergent nation-states in global financialization no matter what the (ecological, ethical, human, etc.) cost. This timely critique is all the more necessary during the current historical moment, wherein “The blame for the exhaustion of the world’s resources is placed on Southern population explosion, and hence upon the poorest women in the South. This in turn—making women an issue—is taken as a justification for so-called aide, and deflects attention from Northern overconsumption: the two faces of globalization”.

Spivak’s spirited feminist critique of the invocation of globality in the name of women and development is also two sided. It pinpoints the dangers of a metropolitan feminist universalism as well as deconstructs the breach between home and work in the homework economy. More broadly, Spivak’s point is that it can be productive to see “resistance to Development as a strategy of alternative development”. This, then, is the strength of Spivak’s final chapter: Spivak persistently denies the foreclosure of reexamining, through rigorous critique, the politics of globality, all the while pointing to the limits of this very critique itself. In other words, Spivak situates the politics of development in globality (or globality in development) as the fast-paced financialization of the globe because this underscores the crucial role that political economy can play in a feminist deconstructive analysis. And it is at this point at which Spivak argues that “The village form that must teach us to make the globe a world. We must learn to learn. Cultural studies is otherwise only a symptom”. This not so simple point also reminds us that, in the house of cultural studies as in the house of geopolitics, taking globality for granted under the rubric of its supposed givenness, what we might call its own peculiar kind of ‘common sense,’ for example, the general will to sanctioned ignorance of the ethicopolitical stakes generally swept under the carpet by UN feminism and the World Bank alike in the interest of neocolonial development, can be akin to forgetting place of the

---

149 Ibid., 380
150 Ibid., 385
151 Ibid., 390.
152 Ibid., 343.
ethical in the economic. Which is also to say, such gestures can become the kind of alibis for development that Spivak so forcefully urges us critique and resist. A feminism that does not make room for a vision of the economic in the ethical (or cultural) and the ethical in the economic is, wittingly or unwittingly, part of the problem.

The Problems of History Writing and the (Re)turn of Marginality

the sort of critique that ignores the centrality of female production and the relation of the developed and developing worlds echoes through the mindless division of labor between cultural studies and economic studies. To build on [Spivak’s] point, a feminism that ignores contemporary history and the problems that the historiographic heritage imposes becomes, in the last instance, part of the problem. 153

Tani E. Barlow

According to feminist historian/historiographer Tani E. Barlow, “What is useful in the Marxism of Gayatri Spivak is the confusion of subjects and objects, culture and economy: what gets to be a subject and how it gets that status is unclarified”. 154 Barlow continues, “The question of indeterminacy requires that each subject be specified as a subject of something and, furthermore, that the question of the production of human beings through the vaginas of women be moved to the center of any inquiry into global exploitation or gendered oppression”. 155 The complexity of Barlow’s nuanced argument here should not be understated. Keeping in mind Barlow’s deconstructive feminist stance, it is important to emphasize that Barlow seeks to displace easy binary oppositions of culture and economy through tracking the historical singularity of subject predication. Barlow’s preoccupation with subject predication, therefore, allows her to extend Spivak’s point by arguing that feminism must be able to deconstruct the breach between culture and economy, and that it can do this through charting its own historical enabling conditions. Barlow thereby displaces common understandings of ‘history’ in order to argue for a richer, more complex form feminist theorizing. What makes this displacement so powerful is Barlow’s attention to three topics: late capital, flexible bodies, and critical intelligibility.

154 Ibid., 142.
155 Ibid.
In “‘green blade in the act of being grazed’: Late Capital, Flexible Bodies, Critical Intelligibility,” Barlow situates the divergent logics of national formation in late capital, bodies in political economy, and competing claims on Enlightenment heritage in relation to feminist history writing projects. As a historian of gender whose work focuses on East Asia, Barlow is simultaneously concerned with the economic, political, and cultural transformations that are now underway in contemporary “Asia.” By taking up questions of heterogeneity and anomaly, Barlow rewrites feminist historical practice as singularity, thereby challenging and disarming universalizing, neocolonizing moves written into much work on ‘globality’ and ‘development.’

Simultaneously intervening in debates over the nature of history as a discipline and the politics of feminist knowledge production, Barlow argues the thesis that “What constitutes history are singular subjects and irreducible, incongruent specificities that may neither be reduced to a common denominator nor excluded from consideration when uncritically mobilized into story form. History is never ‘just narrative’.” 156 With this in mind, Barlow takes up the problematic of how to write histories of the relations between political economy, bodily materiality, and competing heritages of critical thought without reducing them to a common epistemic foundation. Also interested in displacing universalizations of gender, be they feminist or otherwise, Barlow suggests “that the political deconstruction of “women” (as “women” has been predicated at various sites in the globalizing economy) must be undertaken, but that this operation must be extended into the arena of historiography itself…critical histories must not repudiate heterogeneity or reduce to a commonality those singularities embedded in the empirical archives.” 157

This argument is illustrative for it demonstrates what nonreductionist gender history can look like. In “‘green blade in the act of being grazed’, ” we find a roadmap for what Barlow calls “thinking towards relational logics”. 158 Relational logics “articulate rather than define geopolitical entities. They describe entities as these come into being—they operate a politics of predication—rather than positively fixing stable, substantial artifacts”. 159 Relational logics “focus on how relational and provisional singular entities…operate in a field of unfathomable complexity”. 160 Using relational logics, Barlow argues that “theoretical work is

---

156 Ibid., 136.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid., 130.
159 Ibid., 132
160 Ibid.
historically explicable, which is to say it should be understood in terms of its presuppositions.”¹⁶¹ Thinking through knowledge production using relational logics thus can be a way of using nonreductionist logics to articulate how knowledge production practices are themselves singular and historical.

But such an analysis may sidestep a crucial issue Spivak raised some twenty years ago called the ‘irreducibility of the margins.’ What Spivak called “the irreducibility of the margin in all explanations”¹⁶² has to do with how explanation, as that process by which analytic concepts, conceptual schemas, and critical frames—in other words, theory—normalizes and polices the realms of the thinkable in domains of knowledge. That is to say, Spivak’s thesis is that “all explanations…claim their centrality in terms of an excluded margin”,¹⁶³ and this excluded margin, Spivak insists, constitutes the possibility of a given knowledge-regime’s self-centralization. As such, the irreducibility of the margin marks, for Spivak, the decisive moment of strategy in the production of theory and practice (if that distinction is even useful any longer?) wherein, according to Chandra Mohanty, “the central issue, then, is not one of merely acknowledging difference; rather, the more difficult question concerns the kind of difference that is acknowledged and engaged.”¹⁶⁴

The question that Mohanty raises for Spivak’s theory of irreducible marginality—the question of what kind of margins are excluded in a given (con)text—can be transposed for my purposes into the following question that I have been implicitly addressing throughout the body of this essay: How can feminist epistemologists think knowledge production practices in their heterogeneity in globality? In Spivak’s celebrated and controversial 1988 essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”¹⁶⁵ Spivak argued that epistemic orders, as well as “networks of power/desire/interest,” “are so heterogeneous that their reduction to a coherent narrative is counterproductive—a persistent critique is needed.”¹⁶⁶ Ten years later, in Barlow’s “‘green blade in the act of being grazed’,” Barlow recapitulated this argument by contending that “it is still necessary, if perhaps

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 129.
¹⁶³ Ibid., 380.
¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 272.
banal, to establish that no historian can reduce to a single epistemic order the
diverse experiences of colonial modernity or capitalist postmodernity”. 167 These
arguments should not be taken lightly, particularly if it is the case that they are
forgotten all too often inside the corridors of the teaching machine. 168 But what
specifically remains to be done once these arguments have been posed, however,
is not yet entirely clear. One strategy, proposed here, is to use transnational
feminist cultural studies as a methodology that situates knowledge production
within globality by paying critical attention to the specific historical processes
whereby knowledge is produced and (sometimes) becomes globalized. Both
Barlow and Spivak, in their respective ways, have suggested different scholarly
methodologies that address this question of strategy.

On the one hand, if history is fundamentally heterogeneous then historians
should take Barlow’s advice and “work with singularity… [without] leaving in
place reductionist explanatory frameworks”. 169 For Spivak however, an attention
to history will not save scholarship be it in feminist epistemology or elsewhere
from reductionism; for Spivak repeatedly insists, as we saw, that “all
explanations… claim their centrality in terms of an excluded margin”. 170 For
Barlow, conversely, not all history has to be either explanatory or exclusionary;
and furthermore, writing history as what Barlow calls “interrogative (as opposed
to narrative) histories” 171 can be nonexclusinary insofar as it is nonreductive. In
Barlow’s conceptualization, interrogative history is a form of “history writing
that employs relational logics and foregrounds a politics of predication”. 172 It asks
questions like, “What processes bring subjects into historical and political
predication?” 173 because such questions reveal “the historical possibilities that are
predicating subjects, the types of subjects that are surfacing to visibility in the
contemporary archive, [and] the ways these subjects behave” 174 without
“positively fixing stable, substantial artifacts like ‘woman,’ ‘individuals,’ [or]
‘nations,’” in any kind of universal, ahistorical, transcendental sameness. That
is, interrogative history is a way of writing histories of différance, a way of writing
history without foreclosing the possibility that the history of the future

167 Barlow, “green blade in the act of being grazed”, 121.
168 I am referencing the title of Spivak’s Outside in the teaching machine.
169 Barlow, “green blade in the act of being grazed”, 119.
171 Ibid., 132.
172 Ibid., 134.
173 Ibid., 143.
174 Ibid., 132.
anterior\textsuperscript{176} will have been both deferred and different indefinitely. Interrogative history is therefore by definition a provisional enterprise because it accounts for the extreme instability of historicity, historical consciousness, and history writing projects.\textsuperscript{177} History writing projects as such can be “incongruent, though not incommensurate”\textsuperscript{178} because they focus on “situated singularities”.\textsuperscript{179} The ‘situatedness’ of such singularities is entirely historical, which is to say, contingent upon specific conditions. In other words, interrogative history is “a way of retaining surrounding heterogeneity (insofar as this is thinkable) while fixing opportunity on a finite and singular project.”\textsuperscript{180}

This is to say that, in a certain sense, in Barlow’s formulation there are no irreducible margins as such because Barlow does not see history as a text in the narrative sense that Spivak alludes to when Spivak speaks of the “scripts of history.”\textsuperscript{181} That is, Spivak proposes that “history is the narrativizations of various kinds that are in a field of contention”\textsuperscript{182}. This view of history may be a product of Spivak’s disciplinary training as a literary critic. What is not of the least importance here is that, since Spivak sees texts as narratives and history as textual, as a field of narratives contesting for hegemonic reign, Spivak’s thesis of the irreducibility of the margin logically follows from Spivak’s own premises. For Barlow, on the other hand, who, as we saw, argues that “History is never ‘just narrative’”\textsuperscript{183}, interrogative history need not be reduced to a zero-sum game of power. Just because interrogative history writing projects are theorized within finite conditions, and just because they are finite themselves—about some things and not others—this does not, I think, logically entail that they are a priori exclusionary or constituted on the basis of irreducible excluded margins.

\textsuperscript{176} Diane Elam proposes that:

\begin{quote}
any history of women should not be written in the past tense, or even in the present or simple future tenses—all of which necessarily ground themselves on the truth of woman—and should instead be written in the future anterior. The writing of history, that is, should expose itself to the political question of what women \textit{will have been} and thus destabilize any claim to positive knowledge or restrictions on the non-category “women.”...history written in the future anterior doesn’t claim to know in advance what it is women can do and be: the radical potentiality of women does not result from a break with the past, nor is it to be found in any for of assurance provided by the past or the present. Instead, the future anterior emphasizes the radical uncertainty and looks to its own transformation. It would be a history that is a rewriting, yet is itself always already to be rewritten.
\end{quote}

Feminism and deconstruction: \textit{ms. en abyme} (New York: Routledge, 1994), 41.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 120, 132.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 132. Author’s emphasis

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{180} Barlow, personal conversation.

\textsuperscript{181} Spivak, \textit{The postcolonial critic}, 114.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 54.

\textsuperscript{183} Barlow, “green blade in the act of being grazed”, 136.
Spivak’s charge that “The ways in which history has been narrativised always secures a certain kind of subject position which is predicated on marginalizing certain areas” is, I would like to propose, a kind of universalization that preempts the possibility that history will have been otherwise. But to stick with Spivak’s argument for the moment, when taken to the domain of scholarly production it is that the exclusion of certain margins constitutes any practice of scholarship because all scholarship is, in Spivak’s paradigm, a form of explanation and is therefore a kind of narrative. Barlow’s thesis on historicity, counter to Spivak’s position, suggests that it would be extremely historically reductive to see history as solely narrative.

But Spivak’s position is not without its advantages because it opens up the question of how exclusionary practices are built into the constitution of social, political, economic, philosophical, and psychodynamic structures. Spivak’s attention to the politics of inclusion and exclusion that produce subjects and their Others is useful in that it reminds us that, as Spivak puts it, “Theory always norms practice” and, perhaps more importantly, that “It is in the production of… [theory] that the great cultural explanations are produced that allow the entire capitalist caper to carry on the other side of the international division of labor.”

When Barlow’s and Spivak’s different arguments are taken to the purposes of my present endeavor, two different ways of analyzing knowledge production within globality take shape. On the one hand, putting epistemologies in a historical frame a la Barlow would be to interrogate heterogeneous knowledge production practices by focusing on the irreducibility of the singularities that constitute their historical articulations, focusing on the specific historicity of epistemologies. Spivak’s position, on the other hand, would position theoretical investigation into the constitution of knowledge production in globality on the basis of the production and exclusion of its alterities, its necessarily excluded irreducible

---

184 Spivak, The postcolonial critic, 43.
185 The full citation:
Theory always norms practice. When you practice, as it were, you construct a theory and irreducibly the practice will norm the theory, rather than be an example of indirect theoretical application. What I’m more interested in now is the radical interruption of practice by theory, and of theory by practice, and to an extent my inability to produce a quick answer is because its a genuine interruption. (Spivak, ibid., 44)
186 Ibid., 44. See also Spivak, “Diasporas old and new: women in the transnational world” on the problems of recoding transnationality as labor migrancy and how this practice is complicit in what Spivak calls “the financialization of the globe” (263).
187 Ibid., 21. Alterity, in the sense that I am attempting to use it here, can be thought of, as Spivak states, “the trace of the historical other” (Outside in the teaching machine, 208). See the same volume (211-12,
margins. This latter option seems to me to rest on the presupposition that knowledge production practices are kinds of explanations, texts in the narrative sense, while the former presupposes, I think, that knowledge production practices are necessarily articulated in the form of irreducible singularities. So the question is: Are knowledge production practices in globality texts in the sense of explanatory narrative texts, or are they irreducible singularities in the sense of each having their own specific and singular histories? And does posing this question as a binary opposition even serve to clarify what is at stake here?

Instead of falling into what Barlow, after Spivak, calls “the binary trap”, 188 I want to suggest a different logic. The tension that I have drawn out between Barlow’s thesis on historicity and Spivak’s thesis on narrativity can remain, I want to contend, unresolved. At different moments, each theoretical position seems to have certain advantages over the other. In this sense, leaving the question of knowledge production practices’ historicity and/or narrativity open may well allow thinking through the historical and narrational possibilities that have inscribed the epistemics of globality into the empirical archive.

Conclusion

I want to conclude by briefly returning to the question with which I began— “In the face of persistent yet heterogeneous global injustice and inequality, what is the task of the feminist epistemologist in the era of globalization”? I have endeavored to suggest that feminist epistemology must, first of all, recognize that there are manifold and heterogeneous logics by which the production of knowledge takes place within and across the globe, and that this is one very good reason why heterogeneous analytic strategies and critical approaches are necessary. I have simultaneously tried to argue that transnational feminist cultural studies, and particularly Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, Gayatri Spivak, and Tani E. Barlow, help us to chart a path though the heterogeneity of globality. I have also attempted to suggest that the institutional domain of feminist epistemology, if it is to be able to responsibly attend to its enabling conditions—which is to say, to globality—must expand both its content and its methods to accommodate the numerous questions riding on the global epistemic

---

236) and A critique of postcolonial reason (424-426) on this concept. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Hellen Tiffin argue that this term highlights how “the ‘construction’ of the subject can be seen to be inseparable from the construction of its others.” Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, Key concepts in post-colonial studies. Key concepts series. (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 11.

188 Barlow, “green blade in the act of being grazed”, 131.
horizon. If feminism is to challenge persistent but heterogeneous inequalities and injustices existing on a global scale, then part of its provocation must be to interrogate, in the most rigorous way possible, the epistemics of the practice of feminism itself, so that feminism may incessantly resist allowing itself not to question its own thinking, doing, or knowing, as well as its own complicities in the thinking, doing, or knowing of others and other struggles. An emphasis on continually putting into question its enabling conditions and its identity thus proves more than valuable because it forces feminist practice to, as Spivak and Trinh noted in the epigraphs which began this essay, theorize itself out of (into) the field of its production and to, therefore, take on the role of being a thoroughly demystifying force.

**ABSTRACT**

I present here an interpretation of Nietzsche’s concept of the “will to power” as an immanent and creative force that serves as an organizing principle of reality. This churning, yet systematic chaismological force is first (re)constructed from Nietzsche’s posthumously published notes in *The Will to Power* and is then applied to the field of non-equilibrium thermodynamics, showing how order arises from chaos through the internalization and organization of energy in an open system. These conclusions are then applied to various scales of social organization, focusing on the creative capacity of chaos and the problem of rigid organization.


© 2009 *intersections*, Luke Caldwell. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author
Genesis and Order in the Chaosmos
Will to Power as Creative Cosmology

By Luke Caldwell
University of Washington, Seattle

Much of Nietzsche’s philosophical project can be seen as an extended effort to expound the conclusions of a wholly immanent philosophy. As critic of transcendental metaphysics, Nietzsche’s project endeavors to show how order emerges out of antagonistic power relations. Though many have argued about the centrality of the concept of the will to power to Nietzsche’s philosophy, this paper will examine the merits of the will to power as a cosmological principle that allows for the emergence of order from chaos.¹

The place held for the concept of the will to power within Nietzsche’s philosophy is a contentious matter in the secondary scholarship.² The concept is only mentioned in 32 aphorisms of Nietzsche’s published works and often

¹ Abbreviations for, and sources of Nietzsche texts cited in this essay:


² For example see Bernd Magnus & Kathleen M. Higgins, The Cambridge companion to Nietzsche (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6-7; 41-42.
remains on the periphery of his thought.³ His unpublished notebooks, however, contain many references to this enigmatic concept. Considering the controversy surrounding this concept, we will not attempt to clarify “what Nietzsche really thought” about the will to power—such a pursuit would hardly be Nietzschean—but will rather present a perspective, an interpretation, of how the will to power could function as a creative and organizing principle of reality. In this interpretation we will glean what is available from Nietzsche’s published writings, but will primarily rely upon the posthumously gathered selections from his notebooks entitled The Will to Power.

Immanence and Cosmology

Nietzsche’s position regarding cosmology is complicated and multifaceted. In many ways, Nietzsche rejected cosmology and metaphysics because they posit a truth about the way the universe is organized that is ahistorical and free from interpretation. In Twilight of the Idols he goes so far as to claim that there is neither a true world nor an apparent one⁴ and in the Genealogy he claims that all knowledge is perspectival.⁵ While these positions lead to a radical denunciation of the idea of an objective reality of “things” toward which science or religion could guide us, Nietzsche also does not want to claim that there is no world and no meaning at all. This view would merely amount to a reaction to cosmology and would fail to break free from the nihilistic and life-denying consequences of such a view.⁶ Rather, he would like to move beyond concepts that reinforce a logocentric cosmos: “unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, thinghood, [and] being” are all concepts that should be avoided.⁷

A good example of a cosmos structured by these totalizing principles is presented in Plato’s Timaeus, whereby a divine “Demiurge” imposes form upon a chaotic substance, creating the material world as an imperfect image of a perfect, timeless plan.⁸ Since this divine plan invests the Platonic cosmos with order and meaning—everything that is in conjunction with the plan is both “good” and

⁴ TI “The History of an Error”, 486.
⁵ GM III: §12: “There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective ‘knowing’”. In The Gay Science he also claims, “A ‘scientific’ interpretation of the world… might… be one of the most stupid of all possible interpretations” (§373).
⁶ WP §1.
⁷ TI “Reason in Philosophy”: 5, 482.
“beautiful” because the plan is changeless, eternal, and perfect—change and disorder are understood as degenerations of this fundamental order and are imperfections to be rationally ordered and overcome.\(^9\) The unity of the perfect plan and the cause of the “Demiurge” transmit a permanent identity to material things and a teleology that rationally structures the organization of substance. Nietzsche clearly rejected this mode of thinking, but there are other possibilities for a cosmology that avoids these essentializing concepts.

If we understand cosmology as “the study of the origin and structure of the universe”,\(^11\) and if we see the cosmos as “the whole world...conceived as ordered and law-governed”,\(^12\) we can see that there is space within the definition of cosmology for a principle that structures and generates reality by means of an immanent process that is chaotic and emergent rather then ordered by transcendental principles. Nietzsche presents the immanent process of the will to power as a way to ground a cosmology of this sort, in which the material world is “a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with...the simplest forms striving toward the most complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory, and then again returning home to the simple out of this abundance”. Concluding dramatically he claims, “This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!”\(^13\) Rather than a Platonic cosmos, Nietzsche’s will to power drives an immanent chaosmos\(^14\)—a world of process, of becoming rather than being, in which forms are not imposed from a transcendental dimension but rather emerge from a fundamental chaos.

Nietzsche envisions the will to power as a field of force that is constantly shifting in its relations. Power emerges through the differential relationships between forces and therefore requires resistance for emergence.\(^15\) The material world is generated through these articulations and changes as power relations evolve.\(^16\) Since the will to power as a field of force is defined by the specificity of its

---

\(^9\) Ibid., 29a.

\(^10\) Ibid., 30a.


\(^13\) WP §1067.

\(^14\) See WP §711: “that the world is not an organism at all, but chaos”.

\(^15\) WP §636. See also Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche and philosophy, European perspectives, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 50.

\(^16\) WP §638.
relations, one might conclude that Nietzsche is advocating a mechanistic cosmology. This, however, is not the case. Nietzsche famously writes:

The victorious concept ‘force,’ by means of which our physicists have created God and the world, still needs to be completed: an inner will must be ascribed to it, which I designate as ‘will to power,’ i.e., as an insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive….

This “inner will” is constantly striving toward greater power through “every center of force,” producing a constant dynamism of power relations.

Despite this dynamism, the will to power can also give rise to order. Nietzsche claims that “the will to power interprets…it defines limits, determines degrees, variations of power.” Interpretation is a way of organizing and “becoming master” of a multiplicity of forces. While all forces strive to impose order upon others, not all are successful because there are quantitative differences between forces, allowing some to be more successful at the expense of others. When forces are in opposition, this quantitative difference gives rise to a qualitative difference in kind between types of forces. Power relations therefore follow two general modalities: active and passive. The active is a force that shapes, appropriates, and assimilates other forces, while the passive is that which is overwhelmed and determined. This process of appropriation and subjugation produces the development of bodies and the enduring material structures of reality. This structure, however, is always contingent upon its will to power in

---

17 WP §619, emphasis mine.
18 Nietzsche uses this phrase, but it is a little misleading. Seeing this “inner will” as analogous to the will of the subject whereby one believes that willing involves choosing to do or not do something is mistaken. This runs afoul of Nietzsche’s critique of consciousness. Rather, this “inner will” wills only through doing because there is “no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything” (GM I: §13). This “inner will” therefore exists solely through the process of striving for more power.
19 WP §689.
20 WP §643.
21 Ibid.
22 WP §629-631, 565.
23 Deleuze, 42-44.
24 WP §657. Psychologically this schema is developed in GM I: §2, 10.
25 WP §656, 657.
26 WP §636: “every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force…and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement…thus they then conspire together for power. And the process goes on”.

499
relation to other external forces. This “Dionysian world” is “eternally self-creating” and “eternally self-destroying”. 

The will to power as a concept is an empirical observation derived from the study of organic life, but this process of emergence and destruction is similar to both organic and inorganic material. Nietzsche claims that the “entire distinction is a prejudice” and that the “will to power in every combination of forces, defending itself against the stronger, lunging at the weaker, is more correct.” Organically, however, the will to power achieves a level of “cunning” whereby the active forces “continually extend the bounds of their power”. Life, Nietzsche claims, is a “multiplicity of forces, connected by a common mode of nutrition” —a process of overcoming whereby every center of force must reconstitute itself at every moment. Zarathustra speaks of the will to power in this way: “Where I found the living, there I found the will to power...And life itself confided this secret to me: ‘Behold,’ it said, ‘I am that which must always overcome itself.Only where there is life is there also will: not will to life but...will to power.'”

The Will to Power: Thermodynamics, and Life

While Nietzsche was very critical of the field of thermodynamics, there are many parallels between the functioning of the will to power and the recently developing field of non-equilibrium thermodynamics. Nietzsche was introduced to thermodynamics through the works of Robert Mayer, who argued that all forms of energy—chemical, electrical, thermal, etc.—came from a single cause. The work of James Prescott Joule confirmed this principle of

---

27 WP §1067.
29 WP §655. Also §642 and §676.
30 WP §544.
31 WP §644, emphasis mine.
32 WP §641. According to this definition, inorganic material would also be considered alive, though probably less capable of expanding its own quanta of force.
33 WP §634.
35 The field of thermodynamics looks at processes of energy flow and transformation.
36 Keith Ansell-Pearson, A companion to Nietzsche, Blackwell companions to philosophy, 33, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 191
equivalence, experimentally verifying that energy could change in form. 38 This eventually became formulated into the first law of thermodynamics that claims there is always a conservation of energy.

The second law of thermodynamics, which interests us most here, claims that energy in a sealed system moves to a maximum state of entropy (i.e. equilibrium) over time. 39 This is easiest to see with thermal energy, where heat produced in one area of a room does not remain isolated to one area but rather spreads equally throughout the room. An early cosmological conclusion of this law was that the universe is moving toward a state of equilibrium in which concentrations of force are nonexistent. 40 Nietzsche was highly critical of this view because he saw it as a nihilistic and pessimistic science that failed the test of the eternal return. 41

This cosmological conclusion, however, was based upon an assumption that the universe operates as a “closed-system”, much like a big airtight room that would settle into a boring thermal equilibrium if given enough time. 42 Recent work that has focused on open-system, non-equilibrium thermodynamics has found that when systems are subjected to continuous flows of energy from outside of the system, rather than moving to equilibrium, structures of organization emerge immanently within the system, creating and maintaining stable states that are highly energized rather than powerless. 43 Systems, such as organic bodies retain their organization because of the energy that is constantly captured and integrated—one could say interpreted—into their processes. 44 If this integration ceases, the organization of the body breaks down and is captured by a different process—the body becomes soil, the soil becomes a nutrient medium for the plant, the plant becomes food. Beyond living systems, processes of self-organization drive and form other natural phenomena such as chemical oscillators, thunderheads, and whirlpools. 45

This view of the natural world is remarkably close to the way that Nietzsche conceptualizes the will to power. What does the will to power overcome? The
will to power overcomes equilibrium, and it does this through the integration and subordination of other forces. The will to power must reaffirm itself at every moment, just as bodily integrity requires the constant transformation of external energy for the maintenance of internal consistency. Nietzsche also claims that when a body gains more power than it can effectively organize, the body must split in two: “The sphere of a subject constantly growing or decreasing, the center of the system constantly shifting; in cases where it cannot organize the appropriate mass, it breaks into two parts.” An increase in power leads to bifurcations and eventually, with increasing energy, chaotic turbulence and oblivion.

Chaos, Creation, and Value

Nietzsche often writes of the will to power in the context of chaos, creation, and value. Zarathustra famously claims “one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.” Creation requires destruction: for Zarathustra to go over he must first go under. The Genealogy follows the same theme. The slave’s “inversion of the value-positing eye” creates only boundaries and blocks the emergence of new forms: “slave morality from the outset says No to what is ‘outside,’ what is ‘different,’ what is ‘not itself’; and this No is its creative deed.” Zarathustra, the new noble, is required to move beyond it. Fertility requires the breaking of boundaries—the sperm into the egg, the artist to the canvas, the musician to the silence, the activist to the masses. If organization is too restrictive, we are left to nihilism.

Nietzsche claims that nihilism is the process of the highest values devaluing themselves. This is possible because the will to power produces value through the process of overcoming—“Value is the highest quantum of power that a man is able to incorporate.” The growth of value therefore requires a growth of power and the creation of a new state of affairs. The fortification of boundaries,

---

46 WP §634.
47 WP §488.
48 Schneider and Sagan, 81.
49 Z Prologue §§, 129.
50 Z Prologue §§, 127.
51 GM 1: §10.
52 Is it any wonder that the priest seeks to moralize and restrict pregnancy (AC §48)? All creation must be repetition, the boundaries are written in the stars...
53 WP §2.
54 Z I “On the 1001 Goals”, 170-172. WP §710.
55 WP §713.
however, is the expression of a very weak power that is incapable of expanding. Through the triumph of the slave revolt, society has managed to codify a “tablet” of values that are an expression of this weakness.\textsuperscript{56} Judeo-Christian society exists in a very stable form because of its reactive values, but it maintains its existence through the collective subordination of the highest creative potential. This \textit{stable state} of society maintains itself by feeding off of the strong and the noble through the punishment of those that diverge from the prescribed norm.\textsuperscript{57} In this state, the highest values are turned into their opposites—they serve as a nutrient medium for the collectivity that assaults them. This is the triumph of nihilism.

On an individual level, consciousness often works as a similar barrier. Human consciousness develops out of society’s need to “breed an animal \textit{with the right to make promises}”.\textsuperscript{58} Consciousness, as the voice of the boundaries of society, arises as a reactive phenomenon that serves as a check against natural instincts and the will to gain more power.\textsuperscript{59} Rather than being a thing-in-itself, consciousness is an \textit{effect} of ones will to power, not a cause. The attribution of causal power to consciousness is merely a belated attribution of a doer to a deed.\textsuperscript{60} The human subject as an agent is a fiction. Consciousness as a phenomenon functions in a similar way as the nihilistic morality of society by forming rigid boundaries around the self and making the multiplicity of forces that constitute the human body believe they are a fundamental unity.\textsuperscript{61} Instead, if we conceive of the subject as a multiplicity of forces, the conscious barriers that inhibit creative potential are broken down: the “value-positing eye” is freed from the determinism of reaction and growth can once again emerge.

One problem with this picture, however, is that a body—inorganic, organic, or social (i.e. the state)—requires a basic level of organization to maintain growth. Nietzsche often opposes the will to power to the will to self-preservation, the former being an uninhibited creative urge and the latter being a reactive manifestation.\textsuperscript{62} The former creates in a flourish and passes away, while the latter is less powerful but enduring. A moderate level of chaos opens possibilities for becoming, but too much is destructive. \textit{Some} boundaries are necessary to maintain internal consistency. The more complex an organism becomes, the

\textsuperscript{56} GM I: §10. BGE, §46.
\textsuperscript{57} GM II: §1-3, 22. TI “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind §2, 502.
\textsuperscript{58} GM II: §1-3.
\textsuperscript{59} GM II: §16.
\textsuperscript{60} GM I: §13. TI “The Four Great Errors” §3, 494.
\textsuperscript{61} WP §485.
\textsuperscript{62} Z II “On Self-Overcoming”, 225.
more boundaries are necessary for its efficient functioning. Think of the human body and the multiplicity of bodies within it: cells, proteins, DNA, organs, all working together in a synchronized fashion. This organization is a necessary condition for the maintenance of human life. The boundaries between all of these parts, however, are selectively permeable. Each body integrates nutrients that enable and improve their functioning, but also reject what will destroy them—the immune system, excretion, nausea.61

This view raises the question, “can we conceptualize the social body as a production of the will to power in the same way that the human body is?” If we are to hold to the monism of the will to power, this must be the case. While the concept of the will to power supports a view of nested individuation—bodies within bodies, acting as both parts and wholes—Nietzsche frowns upon the power and values that emerge from collective organization. Nietzsche’s condemnation centers on the fact that the values created by large groups are highly constrained by resestiment and reactivity. This is why the individual human has such a central place in Nietzsche’s view. This, however, does not completely rule out the power of connectivity. Zarathustra’s isolation and loneliness stinks of his own particular resestiment and reactivity. Considering the organization of society today, groups and movements have a creative potential that is able to break from rigid moralism in a way that the individual is not. If we are to avoid falling to the determinism of reaction, we must work within the social circumstances that we are given, rather than absolving ourselves completely of our social context. Nietzsche claims, “one must not be a reactive but a concluding and forward-leaning spirit”.64 Today, for better or worse, cultivating this “forward-leaning spirit” means acting within the world with a balance of impulse and strategy.

This paper has presented an interpretation of Nietzsche’s concept of the will to power as an organizing principle of reality. We first examined how the will to power as a primordial force drives cycles of chaos and order, emergence and destruction. We then briefly looked at an empirical example of this phenomenon through the field non-equilibrium thermodynamics. Finally, we concluded with a discussion of how the will to power creates value and the process whereby these

61 Zarathustra’s nausea over the thought of the eternal return is a similar phenomenon. The nausea is an indication that his body is unable to assimilate and use the thought in a way that increases his power. His nausea is a way of avoiding the poison of pessimism. Z III “On the Vision and the Riddle” §2, 269-272.

64 WP §848.
values are manifested in social organization. While many areas of this interpretation are open to dispute, we have aimed to provide a constructive account of how the will to power could function as an immanent cosmological force. Such a view presents a this-worldly vision of a dynamic and creative universe, overflowing with infinite possibilities. From a social perspective, however, it raises questions about the value of connectivity and the importance of order. Such questions are seeds for further inquiry.

Luke Caldwell is an undergraduate at the University of Washington, studying the Comparative History of Ideas, History, and Human Rights. Much of Luke's research engages the critical tradition of continental philosophy and focuses on the tensions between order and creative emergence.

ABSTRACT

Karl Barth and Paul Tillich were two of the foremost Protestant Christian theologians of the twentieth Century; Nietzsche was one of the nineteenth century's most influential prophets of atheism. Even so, Barth and Tillich did not simply read Nietzsche; they encountered his ideas head on and even used them in the exploration of their respective theologies. This article discusses the different ways each thinker addressed Nietzsche, and what this encounter meant for their theology.


© 2009 intersections, Craig Wiley.
I Was Dead, and Behold, I am Alive Forevermore
Responses to Nietzsche in 20th Century Christian Theology

By Craig Wiley
University of Washington, Seattle

God is dead.

The ominous, more than century-old words of Friedrich Nietzsche have been repeated to the point of becoming cultural wallpaper, often by people who have no idea who said them or what they actually mean. Nietzsche’s contention that God would no longer be able to function as a means of orientation in the world has sent shockwaves through the modern and post-modern world. Still, religion persists.

It does not simply persist in ignorant masses, among those who remain unexposed to Nietzsche’s thought. God is defended by intellectuals. Among religious thinkers, Nietzsche is neither unquestioningly accepted nor rejected; he is wrestled with and analyzed, co-opted and contradicted. Even Christians, for whom he reserved special bile, have found Nietzsche’s writings useful. Two significant examples are noted Christian theologians Paul Tillich and Karl Barth; each engaged and used Nietzsche’s writings in the delineation of their respective theologies.

Tillich and Barth were born a few months apart in the year 1886, the year that Friedrich Nietzsche published his Beyond good and evil. They were 14 years old in the year 1900, both the turn of the 20th century and the year Nietzsche died. Although each one would become a prominent theologian, and would each draw on Nietzsche, they would do so in very different ways to achieve very different ends: Tillich, to deconstruct the notion of rejecting God by considering him “dead,” and Barth, to discuss the implications of Nietzsche’s thought for a genuine Christian worldview.

2 Nietzsche and Kaufmann, 23.
To understand Paul Tillich’s perspective on the “death of God” requires first some grasp of the foundational notion of God which Tillich holds. Tillich uses the phrase “ultimate concern” as his description of God. In discussing this concept, he writes:

The religious concern is ultimate; it excludes all other concerns from ultimate significance; it makes them preliminary. The ultimate concern is unconditional, independent of any conditions of character, desire, or circumstance. The unconditional concern is total: no part of ourselves or our world is excluded from it; there is no ‘place’ to flee from it.¹

If one is to genuinely relate to God, in Tillich’s terms, one must relate to God as “ultimate concern.” This is not simply to understand God as important; it is to see God as that which is essential to “being” – “the whole of human reality, the structure, the meaning, and the aim of existence.”²

To address Nietzsche’s idea of the death of God from this perspective, Tillich discusses an excerpt from Nietzsche’s Thus spake Zarathustra. In it, the character Zarathustra confronts “the Ugliest Man,” whom he accuses as “the murderer of God.”³ The Ugliest Man admits guilt, claiming that God “had to die; he saw with eyes that saw everything; he saw man’s depths and ultimate grounds, all his concealed disgrace and ugliness.”⁴

According to Tillich, Nietzsche, in saying this, demonstrated that he “knew more about the power of the idea of God than many faithful Christians.”⁵ Why? In Tillich’s words, “anyone who has never tried to flee God has never experienced the God Who is really God.”⁶ Such a God means that “our privacy is public”.⁷ Simply put, this God is utterly inescapable.

The omnipresence of the Christian God, however, is a fairly non-controversial point. As for the human desire to do the impossible and escape from this God, Tillich is able to quote a passage from a biblical Psalm which expresses the same sentiment: “O, where could I flee from Thy face?”⁸ These are but foundational

² Ibid., 14.
³ Nietzsche and Kaufmann, 376.
⁴ Ibid., 378.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid., 176.
⁸ Ibid., 174. Tillich quotes Psalm 139.7.
issues in raising the central issue of Nietzsche’s parable: the death of God. The death of God is arguably the form that an escape from God must take—there is no temporal escape from an omnipresent deity. Even one’s own death is no escape: “If I make hell my home, behold, thou art there.” Thus, rejection of the omnipresent God means that this God must be “killed.” It is the only conceivable way to hide oneself.

Still, does the Ugliest Man have the ability to do so? Tillich answers resoundingly in the negative. Tillich writes that “the Ugliest Man subjects himself to Zarathustra, because Zarathustra has recognized him, and looked into his depth with divine understanding. The murderer of God finds God in man. He has not succeeded in killing God at all.” The Ugliest Man has attempted to liberate himself from God as an ultimate concern; in trying to make Zarathustra the object of ultimate concern, he has proved that he is not free from God. If the death of God means that God is no longer a valid way of drawing meaning from the world, then God is certainly not dead. If God were truly dead, then his murderer would be able to seek meaning in some way not dependent on having a god: even in its rejection, the idea of God exerts its frightful influence. In this way, escape from God is impossible to Tillich existentially as well.

One could argue that as the one attempting murder is the Ugliest Man, rather than Zarathustra, it could have represented for Nietzsche a failed attempt to kill God. This does not seem to be the case from Thus spake Zarathustra, though. Although the Ugliest Man is seen as disgusting or pitiable in many ways, it is Zarathustra himself, Nietzsche’s voice in the book, who makes the accusation of murder. Nietzsche regards the Ugliest Man as successful in his killing of God, and so any failure to see that God is not yet truly dead belongs to Nietzsche as well as the Ugliest Man.

This is not to say that Tillich’s viewpoint has no problems. Paraphrasing Walter Kaufmann, Leonard Wheat writes, “a theology of ultimate concern imputes gods to everyone. ‘God’ is one’s ultimate concern, and the only question is whether one’s concern is truly ultimate or merely idolatrous.” Tillich agrees. He writes that the example from Zarathustra demonstrates “the utter impossibility of atheism.” The question, then, becomes a question of idolatry. What

---

11 Ibid., 174. Tillich quotes Psalm 139.8.
12 Ibid., 176-77.
constitutes the genuine ultimate concern? Zarathustra’s divinization in the eyes of the Ugliest Man is no doubt idolatrous; Tillich’s point was not to claim that Zarathustra had become a legitimate god, just that the Ugliest Man was unable to escape the notion of ultimate concern.

Tillich, however, has much higher idols in mind, writing that even theological concepts can be problematic. In using terminology such as “Divine Omnipresence” and “Divine Omniscience, one runs the risk of turning God into “an object besides other objects, the existence and nature of which are matters of argument.” At that point, atheists are “justified in destroying such a phantom and all its ghostly qualities.” Tillich’s thought here becomes eerily reminiscent of a passage in Nietzsche’s *Antichrist*. Nietzsche writes that in the conception of the philosophers God became “something ever thinner and paler; he became an ‘ideal,’ he became ‘pure spirit,’ the ‘Absolute,’ the ‘thing-in-itself.’ The deterioration of a god: God became the ‘thing in itself’.”

In his rejection of what is certainly a common conception of God among the religious as well as atheists, and in the abstract and ambiguous nature of the God which he does affirm, Tillich certainly seems to be discarding a large part of Christianity. It is no wonder that there are some, such as Leonard Wheat and Walter Kaufmann, who assert that Tillich is some sort of crypto-atheist. In Kaufman’s words, “even if we were to concede Tillich a verbal triumph over the atheist, the substance of atheism has been conceded.” For people on both sides of the discussion of the death of God, Tillich’s response may be too equivocal and esoteric to prove ultimately satisfactory.

One may, at least at first, argue that Karl Barth does not seem to take Nietzsche anywhere near as seriously as Tillich does. In a letter to a colleague, written toward the end of his life, Barth writes:

Be cheerful and of good courage. The statement that God is dead comes from Nietzsche and has recently been discovered and trumpeted abroad by some German and American theologians and now by certain schoolboys. But the

---

15 Ibid., 176.
16 Ibid.
17 Nietzsche and Kaufmann, 585.
18 Wheat, 18.
good Lord has not died of this; he who dwells in heaven laughs at them. This is all I have to say on the matter.¹⁹

He clearly does not believe that Nietzsche’s thought is dangerous in terms of the actual existence of God. Then again, he does not think that God’s existence was what Nietzsche was focused on, per se: he writes that Nietzsche “knew atheism neither as an experience nor as an event, but by instinct. ‘God is dead’ — there is no need for heat or polemics.”²⁰ Nietzsche was speaking to those for whom the statement was already becoming an experiential reality.

For the follower of a God who still lives,²¹ then, the statement becomes not a problem of God’s existence, but of a culture which has lost its access to this God. To the death of God as a cultural (rather than ontological) event, Karl Barth was keenly attuned. Stephen H. Webb writes that German liberal theologians’ endorsement of German action in the First World War shocked Barth into reevaluating the positions upon which he stood; he concluded that “no longer should theology trust in any alliances with the political or philosophical powers of its day. No longer should theology take God for granted as an adjunct to human affairs. In fact, Barth was to decide that theology itself was part of the problem.”²² Barth was to mount a reevaluation of Christian thought in contradiction to the liberal theology of his day. Instrumental in the development of this thinking was Franz Overbeck, a friend and colleague of Nietzsche and adamant critic of the liberal theologians.²³ Barth was to draw from Overbeck’s critique in looking at the places where Christianity had gone wrong when developing into its German liberal form.

Barth was certainly no Nietzschean. Still, as in Overbeck’s case, Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity was to prove useful. For example, in Barth’s The Epistle to the Romans, commenting on Paul’s statement that “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God”:

²¹ I do not here mean to imply that Barth simply assumes the existence of God with no epistemological foundation; the issue simply does not factor in to Barth’s dealings with Nietzsche, and is thus beyond the scope of this essay.
²³ Ibid., 63.
The recognition of the need of the forgiveness of sin has nothing in common with pessimism, with contrition and the sense of sin, or with the ‘heavy depression’ of the ‘preachers of death (Nietzsche); […] the need for forgiveness of sin might in fact be regarded as a Dionysiac enthusiasm, were it not that it can be placed in no such human category.  

Barth here does not simply take exception to a Nietzschean critique of Christianity; rather, he is taking exception to the very attitude that Nietzsche critiques. Paul’s statement, says Barth, is in context a declaration of the equality of all who stand before God. After all, in full, Paul’s passage reads “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned, and fall short of the Glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” For this statement to lead to the “heavy depression” of the “preachers of death” is precisely the opposite of what is intended. While Nietzsche would almost undoubtedly criticize the results of Barth’s own interpretation upon different grounds, his critique has still provided a tool useful for Barth to evaluate and correct an area in which he felt the Church had gone astray.

Where Barth most fully grapples with Nietzsche is in Barth’s discussion in his Church dogmatics of what must be conceived as the point of origin for the Christian conception of humanity. It is a critical point for Barth’s theology, as it is the fundamental element in determining one’s “responsibility before God,” if such responsibility exists. Barth writes that in order to do this, “we have to rule out the possibility of a humanity without the fellow-man.”

Barth clarifies what he means by a humanity without the fellow man, describing it as the conception that “I am, that I am for myself, and neither from nor to others. […] ‘I am’ means that I satisfy myself even in the sense that I have to do justice to myself, that I am pressingly claimed by myself.” This conception sees the self as the primary reality, as the point from which all of life must be confronted. Upon this battlefield Barth confronts Nietzsche.

This is not to say that Barth sees Nietzsche as the only proponent of the view of humanity without the fellow-man. Barth’s phrasing of the view in terms of “I am” is reminiscent of the Cartesian “cogito, ergo sum”: that the existence of the self is the only thing that cannot be doubted, and that all other thought must proceed from this. Although Barth does not explicitly refer to Descartes, he attacks those

24 Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 100-101.
25 Ibid., 99.
26 Barth and Bromiley, Church dogmatics, 228.
27 Ibid., 229.
who would criticize Nietzsche too hastily, by noting that “Goethe, Hegel, Kant
and Leibniz would come under the same condemnation,” as holding the same
underlying ideas that gave birth to Nietzsche’s thought. 28 Barth is clear that he
does not see this way of thinking as limited to these philosophers, either; it
belongs to “the spirit of all European humanity.” 29 The perspective has simply
been “represented with less restraint and we might almost say with greater
honesty by Nietzsche.” 30 Nietzsche was willing to make actual tendencies in
philosophy that had previously been only potential, following trains of thought to
radical conclusions rather than stopping where social norms dictated. Others did
not see the incompatibility of their worldview with Christianity because they “did
not go far enough and were not consistent enough.” 31

Nietzsche’s expression of what Barth termed “humanity without the fellow-man”
can be clearly found in Nietzsche’s *The genealogy of morals*, in which Nietzsche
writes, “all truly noble morality grows out of triumphant self-affirmation. Slave
ethics, on the other hand, begins by saying no to an ‘outside,’ an ‘other,’ a non-
self, and that no is its creative act.” 32 What Nietzsche terms “slave ethics” he
views as inherently problematic: its establishment in distinction from a powerful
other leads to hatred and vindictiveness, which are bottled up and poisonous. 33
The “noble” who acts from self-affirmation is not subject to these intrinsic inner
poisons. 34 Nietzsche does not view this self-affirmative state as simply impulsive
or random. Rather, he writes of the noble that “being truly free and possessor of
a long-range, pernicious will, he also possesses a scale of values. Viewing others
from the center of his own being, he either honors or disdains them.” 35 Thus, in
Barth’s terms, Nietzsche is an avid proponent of a humanity not rooted in the
fellow-man.

28 Ibid., 236.
29 Ibid. Barth goes so far as absolving Nietzsche of particular responsibility for the rise of the Third Reich:
“If Nietzsche prepared the ground for National Socialism, the same may be said with equal justification
of other manifestations of the European spirit during the last centuries” (ibid). Barth even states that
“Nietzsche directed his most scathing terms against the German nationalism of his age, the age of
Bismarck, so that any contribution he made to [National Socialism’s] development was highly indirect”
(ibid).
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 241.
32 Friedrich Nietzsche and Francis Golffing, *The birth of tragedy and the genealogy of morals* (New York:
33 Ibid., 171.
34 Ibid., 173.
Christianity, to Nietzsche, must not simply be one of the many sets of externally imposed moral structures to be overcome and thus made irrelevant by an individual asserting his will. If that were all it was, one could not explain Nietzsche’s utter focus on attacking Christianity; why he must “finally act in this matter as if there were no other foe on earth, and no more urgent task than to vanquish it.”\(^{36}\) Certainly, Nietzsche classifies Christianity as a form of “slave ethics” which had developed in response to hatred of Rome.\(^{37}\) This viewpoint does indeed explain some of Nietzsche’s antipathy toward Christianity. Still, the fact that Nietzsche could not simply leave his critique here indicates that there must be something more fundamental at stake. The distinction between noble and slave ethics is made in *The genealogy of morals*, and it is only afterwards that Nietzsche wrote his polemic *The Antichrist*.

Barth points to a passage in *The Antichrist* which is key: Nietzsche writes of the image of God himself being crucified as meaning that “all that suffers, all that is nailed to the cross, is *divine*.” Why can he not simply ignore this? Why does it offend him so? According to Nietzsche’s *Thus spake Zarathustra*, an individual, asserting himself, should raise himself above the masses of humanity— to “overcome” man,\(^{38}\) to be a god unto himself. He makes himself the “overman.” Barth points to the inherent solitude of a life lived out completely through self-affirmation.\(^{39}\) If one derives value totally from the expression of one’s own will, the other contributes nothing; an overman may derive value from what he gives, but not from what he is given. To do so would be to accept the imposition of the other, to allow that other some level of power over the self.

Christianity stands opposed to this solitude. It says, in Barth’s words, that the individual “is not God but a man, and therefore under the cross of the Crucified and one of its host.”\(^{40}\) Christianity confronts the individual with the “suffering man,” Jesus, and in doing so “demands that he should see the man, that he should accept his presence, that he should not be man without him but with him, that he must drink with him at the same source.”\(^{41}\) The crucifixion, in divinizing suffering, functions as bestowal of value which extends to the sufferer from an *other*. The other must thus be acknowledged, which means that value, from a Christian perspective, cannot be totally derived from within. The acceptance of

\(^{36}\) Barth and Bromiley, *Church dogmatics*, 239.

\(^{37}\) Nietzsche and Golffing, 186.

\(^{38}\) Nietzsche and Kaufmann, 124.

\(^{39}\) Barth and Bromiley, *Church dogmatics*, 234.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 241.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.
this externally offered value for oneself also means the acceptance of this value for and in others, meaning one is put on the same level as the rest of humanity, no matter how much one tries to transcend them. Christianity, then, is inherently at odds with a view of humanity that does not include the fellow-man; the concept as spelled out by Nietzsche is in direct contradiction to the cross of Christianity.

Barth, as a Christian, thus rejects as a dead end the conception of humanity rooted entirely in self-affirmation. The basic form of humanity must include the fellow-man. Does this mean that Barth is left simply having to affirm “slave ethics?” Barth does not seem to think so. Upon his rejection of humanity without the fellow-man, he offers an altered form of the “I am” statement, owing a considerable debt to a line of thinking exemplified by Martin Buber’s I and thou. He writes that the act of speaking “I am” implies speaking to another, to whom the words are addressed: a “Thou”. The addressee of this implied “Thou” may in turn address the first speaker as a “Thou”. Through this, implicit value is established on both sides, and must be worked out in relation. In Nietzsche’s slave ethics, one’s starting point is the distinction from and rejection of the other; here, the other is recognized, and the self and the other are mutually affirming even in their distinction from one another.

Ultimately, Karl Barth seems to give more credit to Nietzsche than does Paul Tillich. Barth sees Nietzsche’s philosophy as one following as a natural (if regrettable) Nietzsche than does Paul Tillich. Barth sees Nietzsche’s philosophy as one following as a natural (if regrettable) conclusion from his starting point, while Tillich sees Nietzsche as ultimately being deluded in his attempt to argue his escape from God. Ironically, this means that Barth must reject Nietzsche’s thought far more fully than Tillich does. Barth must go back to the very source of Nietzsche’s arguments, while Tillich may simply chisel away the elements that do not fit with his views.

It is doubtful that either of these theologians has had the final word on the contentious relationship between Christianity and Nietzsche. God certainly does not seem to be dead yet, but the madman who proclaimed the death of God in Nietzsche’s The Gay Science also announced that he “came too early” – that it will take time for the event to reach human minds, just as it takes time for the light of

42 Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber: the life of dialogue (New York: Routledge, 2002), 325.
43 Barth and Bromiley, Church dogmatics, 44.
44 Ibid., 245.
a star to reach human eyes.\(^4^5\) One does not know if a star has been snuffed out until long afterward. Only time will tell; in the meantime, God still seems to very much have the spark of life.

\(^{4^5}\) Nietzsche and Kaufmann, 96.

ABSTRACT

This study is an exploratory analysis to understand evangelical Protestant church growth in the Dominican Republic. In light of social, economic, and religious needs there, and due to the inefficient supply of religion from the Roman Catholic Church, Dominicans seek sources of fulfillment. Protestant churches reach out to them more efficiently because—in organizational terms—they are entrepreneurial, decentralized communities, who are responsive and adaptive to local custom. I show that Protestant churches multiply rapidly while maintaining their religious identity; indeed, they grow because of it. In ideological terms Protestant churches carry a specific theological orientation that emphasizes affective worship, a spiritual experience of a God that is said to intervene supernaturally, and a demanding moral world. I combine two conceptual traditions to explain Protestant expansion—religious economy and sub-cultural identity theory. These theories presume specific social and metaphysical rewards, predict the creation of religious boundaries, and explain the boundary-keeping characteristics of the moral worlds established by evangelical Protestant Dominicans.


© 2009 intersections, Daniel F. Escher. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of intersections and the author
Religious Transformations
The Protestant Movement in the Dominican Republic

By Daniel F. Escher
Princeton Theological Seminary

I. Catholics and Protestants

I was not a Christian most of my life. I changed when I prayed for my sick daughter that she would be cured of a disease. And if God answered the prayer, then I would follow God. And she was healed. But after I prayed, she still could not walk or talk. Then I prayed and she walked. Then I prayed again, and she talked.¹

In 1930, a Pentecostal preacher from Puerto Rico, Francisco “Pancho” Hernández González, received a mandate from God to preach the gospel to the nearby people of the Dominican Republic. Sailing there with trepidation, he witnessed intense persecution of non-Catholics by dictator Rafael Trujillo. He returned home to Puerto Rico. As punishment for returning home, the story goes that God struck Hernández with tuberculosis. Repenting, he traveled again to the Dominican Republic and embarked on an eight-year journey, “proclaiming a message of hope and of the quick coming of Christ’s return, offering health to the sick, and creating places of solidarity and life together.”²

Now some seventy years later, that Pentecostal “message of hope” has become part of a religious transformation throughout the world, especially in Latin America and the Dominican Republic. Across this region, Protestantism has weakened the dominant religious institution — Catholicism — and encouraged people to transform their lives with faith and devotion.

¹ I would like to thank Professors Jim Wellman, Chair of the Comparative Religion Program, UW, and Kathie Friedman, Chair of the Jewish Studies Program, UW, for their assistance in molding a vague, ambiguous idea into something refined. I would have never had the opportunity to go to the Dominican Republic had I not been a part of University Presbyterian Church during my stay at the University of Washington, whose program, World Deputation, sent me to the Caribbean. This project was also made possible by the generous support from a Mary Gates Research Grant. I would also like to thank Children of the Nations, which was kind enough to let me conduct research while I worked with them in the Dominican Republic.
This rise of Protestantism in the past century, both globally and in Latin America, has been widely observed and discussed by political analysts, feminists, church members, observers, natives, and foreigners. However, the current sociological literature on religion contains little analysis for the Caribbean region in general and for the Dominican Republic specifically. Indeed, most studies cyclically examine and re-examine more ‘mainstream’ nations (e.g. Brazil, Chile, and Guatemala) and extrapolate those conclusions to peripheral countries. In doing so, these case studies underestimate the regional variances in sects (e.g. differences in doctrines), cultures and societies (e.g. levels of unemployment and urbanization) among Protestants in Latin America, which leads to imprecise theorizations of intra-country situations. Moreover, these analyses on a whole neglect to tie broad social forces — culture, economics, and politics — into what happens inside and outside the walls of Christian churches — and these forces tend to vary between countries. Finally, generalized reasons for Protestant expansion pay no attention to historical contexts (e.g. the curious reality that the majority of Protestant growth in the Dominican Republic has occurred entirely in the past three decades).

Due to this drastic shift in influence over the religious lives of people in Latin America and particularly in the Dominican Republic, I ask the following: Why, in spite of historical privileges, is the Catholic Church’s power and membership decreasing in the Dominican Republic while Protestant churches and membership are increasing? This question necessitates two areas of investigation — first, the societal reasons that Dominicans are attracted to Protestantism, and second, the reasons Protestant churches do better as organizations once people come to them. While some of the explanations are transferable from other countries, I seek to understand what is specific about the Dominican Republic to cause expansion there now.

I theorize that Protestantism is growing because, in societal terms, Dominicans are searching for something to give them an identity, a role, and to meet their social, emotional, educational, economic, spiritual, and physical needs. As Dominicans seek places to fill these needs, Protestant churches easily welcome them because — in organizational terms — they are nimble, decentralized communities led by native Dominicans that multiply easily without losing core values. Hence, I combine two theories to explain Protestant expansions — rational choice theory and social identity theory.

First, I set the background and examine the context of the Dominican Republic, both its social and religious history. Second, I review the literature and debates in religious studies, particularly the theories of Protestant growth and Catholic decline. I conclude with a look at the two theories, rational choice and sub-cultural identity, that matter most to my arguments. Third, I explain the methodology for my study and research, and explore my findings. Finally, I consider the implications for religious growth in Latin America and globally.

II. The History of Catholic and Protestant Expansion in the Dominican Republic

Villamán asserts that religious systems can be categorized as dominant, established, and, depending on their level of institutionalization and acceptance within a country. Their locations, then, determine what power they have and what their focus is. Villamán argues that states seek cordial relations with dominant religious institutions as a way of ensuring status quo relations in society. Both sides, therefore, frequently establish concordats that give a prominent role to that religious institution (e.g. the Concordat of 1954 that made Catholicism the official religion of the Dominican Republic). The Catholic Church, which held its first Mass on January 6, 1494 in La Isabela, plays this role in the Dominican Republic. Its most successful and recent contribution to Latin America has been “Base Communities.”

Established religious systems have a long presence with multiple social sectors, but they have not achieved the same privileges or advantages from the State as dominant ones. Protestant churches, arriving first in 1824 to the Dominican Republic, comprise this group. These churches include Presbyterians, Conservative Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Moravians, among others. Unestablished religious systems (e.g. Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism) — which have caused the majority of the recent Protestant growth worldwide — are contemporary arrivals that are most popular with the urban poor and have a limited relationship with the State. Pentecostals and Evangelicals are exclusive

---

4 Marcos P. Villamán, El auge Pentecostal: certeza, identidad, salvación (Mexico City: Centro Antonio de Montesinos, 1993).
5 Ibid. Villamán states that a dominant religious system is one that “throughout its history constitutes a relevant component of the world vision of the different social sectors” (23). Translation mine.
6 Concordats are agreements between a pope and a government that regulate State-Church interactions.
7 See the "Glossary of Terms", Appendix.
8 The vast majority of Protestants in the Dominican Republic do not include churches affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or with Jehovah’s Witnesses, for they do not subscribe to the Nicene Creed of AD 381—the statement of faith upon which every other Christian denomination agrees.
and active in education, evangelization, and Spirit-filled cultos. Although both groups are frequently analyzed separately from “main-line” Protestant denominations—they are still, nonetheless, only a recent form of Protestantism. That is, while their emphases vary slightly, their core doctrines are indistinguishable from other Protestant groups. Hence, I consider the change in the Dominican Republic to be a Protestant one.

In general, Christians in the Global South are not the liberal, activist revolutionaries that the West expected based on the teachings of liberation theology in the 1970s. To the contrary, they are “far more conservative in terms of both beliefs and moral teachings… [They] are stalwartly traditional or even reactionary by the standards of economical advanced nations.”

There are two categories of Protestant churches and organizations. First, “traditional” or “historic” groups (like Presbyterians, Mennonites, Lutherans, Methodists, and Episcopalians) have historically been supporters of education, human rights, and health care projects. Their style of worship is formal and traditional—the most staid of all the groups. Second, Pentecostals—by far the largest reason for growth in Latin America—engage in worship experiences and encounters. They desire to have a personal relationship with God (highlighting that aspect instead of doctrine); out of this relationship flows participatory worship—healings, testimonies, and speaking in tongues.

Several traits characterize Protestant churches. First, they rely on nationals to direct organizations and congregations in Latin America. Whereas the Catholic priests are often non-native (due to a chronic understaffing), these groups put lay people—those without any formal education in seminary—in charge with some supervision from the home country (virtually always the US). To be sure, these churches and organizations are still very reliant on their “home” support. Second, the focus of these groups is evangelization. That is, members respond to the inner joy of the Gospel that they receive by making other disciples. Third, there is an emphasis on the individual testimony or story of each person, which

---

9 See “Glossary of Terms,” Appendix, p. 523.
10 Although both groups are frequently analyzed separately from “main-line” Protestant denominations—they are still, nonetheless, only a recent form of Protestantism.
14 To evangelize means “to preach the gospel to someone.” An evangel is a “messenger,” from the Middle English evangile, from Late Latin evangelium, and from Greek evangelion, which means “good news.”
provides an outlet for self-assertion to people who are not heard otherwise. Fourth, Protestant churches are characterized by splits and schisms regarding Biblical teachings. In other words, each group feels unique and loyal to itself because it teaches the “right” doctrine of baptism, confession, or Biblical inerrancy.

Wellman describes the differences between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals. Evangelicals emphasize Scripture and the inerrancy of the Bible. They focus on a truly religious experience in their conversion or in healings. Churches are independent and decentralized. Finally, Evangelicals welcome lay participation in leadership, often including women as missionaries and occasionally as pastors.

In Latin America three categories of Catholics exist. The first category is the traditional Roman Catholics who follow the hierarchy demonstrated in the Vatican City, who pray to Christ, the Virgin Mary, and Saints, and who practice ancient rituals. The second category, progressive Catholics or Liberation Catholics, began in the 1970s under the writings of Gustavo Gutiérrez, who emphasized the Biblical mandate to care for the poor. Hence, these Catholics fight for the liberation of the impoverished from oppressive and exploitative economic systems. One manner in achieving this result was CEBs — Comunidades Eclesiales de Base — whose goal was the gathering of communities and the development of native priests and nuns. Liberation theology is viewed as an impetus of the Sandista Revolution in Nicaragua in 1979, as well as the reason behind the martyrdom of archbishops, priests, nuns, and followers. The Vatican in the 1980s removed several influential Church officials to reign in liberation theology in its original form; however, basic tenets and principals regarding poverty remain. The third and most recent category is Charismatic Catholics — those who worship outwardly and utilize testimonies and Bible study like Pentecostals while still embracing (to a lesser extent than traditional Catholics) Catholic doctrine.

Starting in 1492 with the arrival of Christopher Columbus, the Catholic Church and the State were intimately connected. Religious affairs were political ones and vice versa. In 1844 (after Haitian occupation for 22 years when the eastern two-thirds of Hispaniola became the Dominican Republic), the Church’s intimacy with the State was solidified in the first constitution. During the dictatorship of

---

Rafael L. Trujillo from 1930-1961, the Catholic Church spiritually supported him (i.e. gave its blessing and support) in exchange for material benefits: Trujillo restored buildings, churches, schools, rectories, convents and provided for stipends for clergy. In 1954, the Dominican Republic and the Holy See signed a Concordat, which gave Catholicism special privileges. The Catholic Church can use public funds to finance certain church expenses (e.g. the rehabilitation of church facilities). The state waives all customs duties when the Catholic Church imports goods.  

On the other hand, Wipfler emphasizes the Church’s weakness and immobility in the 20th century: “Thus, the church entered the era of Trujillo (1930-1961) as a legal nonentity threatened with the confiscation of its already meager possessions. Its structure, consisting of a single archdiocese, had not changed in four centuries, a sign of its stagnation.” Yet to its credit, the Catholic Church has survived the rise and fall of slavery, economic troubles, myriad Dominican constitutions, skirmishes and battles, US military occupation in 1916-1924 and 1965-1966, and a brutal dictatorship. In addition, the Vatican and the clergy in the Dominican Republic did withhold favor from Trujillo toward the end of his dictatorship, denying him the title of Benefactor of the Church.  

Protestantism, meanwhile, did not enter the Dominican Republic until 1822 through missionaries from the Methodist Church of England in Puerto Plata. The African Methodist Episcopal Church arrived in 1824 with several thousand former slaves from the US lured by the promise of freedom and good, arable land to work. The Dominican Episcopal Church entered in 1896 and the Moravians in 1907, followed by the Free Methodists and the Adventists in 1908.

---

19 Bell, The Dominican Republic, 237.
20 See United Methodist Church, “Dominican Republic: Mission Profile,” General Board of Global Ministries, http://gbgm-umc.org/country_profiles/country_mission_profile.cfm?id=12 (accessed February 24, 2005). The reason for Protestantism’s late arrival in the Dominican Republic is the simple fact that the Dominican Republic was under either Spanish or French rule until Juan Pablo Duarte led a movement for independence in 1844. In other countries, Protestantism started much earlier. For example, shipwrecked soldiers established churches in Belize in 1638, the British seized Jamaica in 1655 and established Anglicanism there, and pirates who attacked Spanish galleons were usually Protestant. As Nelson quotes Stephen Caiger: “they [pirates] looked upon the plundering of the Spanish as almost a Holy War against the greed of the conquistadores and the cruelty of the Inquisition... Every ship had its Bible on which the Oath of Brotherhood was sworn.” Wilton M. Nelson, Protestantism in Central America (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 4.
The United Methodist, the Presbyterian USA, the British Methodist, and the Moravian churches formed the Dominican Evangelical Church in 1922.

Pentecostalism — an American movement that started in California at the turn of the 20th century — was briefly present in 1918 but was truly established in 1930 in the Dominican Republic with the Assemblies of God. Villamán lists four “cardinal” beliefs in the doctrines of Pentecostalism — the second coming of Christ, salvation by faith, divine healing, and the baptism by the Holy Spirit. In the Dominican Republic, Pentecostalism started with the missionary activity of “Pancho” Hernández under the dictatorship of Trujillo — a time “of instability, of tireless swings, of human sufferings, of scarcity of food and clothing, of ruptures in congregations, and of social and religious scorn.” The State and the Catholic Church marginalized Pentecostal adherents, leaving them poor with virtually no food or money. Yet since the 1970s, Pentecostalism has caused an explosion of denominations. It is “a new, national infrastructure of churches that… own their own buildings, have juridical personality, and have organized well within and beyond their own communities.” Indeed, the largest denomination (after the Catholic Church) in the country is Assemblies of God, which arrived in 1940. In the current state of religious affairs, Pentecostalism is by far the biggest threat to the Catholic Church’s dominance.

The current economic condition of the Dominican Republic is prosperous relative to its neighbor, Haiti (the poorest country in the Western hemisphere). The United Nations ranks the country as 98 out of 177 countries in the Human Development Index—a measure of literacy, life expectancy, and GDP per capita in terms of purchasing power parity. Industrial parks, tax-free areas, export-led processing zones, tourism, and mining companies dominate the economies of the largest cities — Santo Domingo (the capital), San Pedro de Macorís, La Romana, and Santiago. These cities boast better education, health care, and public services than rural areas. The attraction to these cities as an escape from rural poverty has resulted in intense urbanization — one of the highest

---

21 Villamán, El auge Pentecostal, 55.
23 Protestants in the Dominican Republic are more ecumenical than one might expect by looking at the number of denominations. For instance, the label evangélico (or, less frequently, protestante) serves to identify non-Catholics. This is in contrast to—for example—the United States where Christians almost always label themselves specifically by their denomination. The term pentecostal, however, has the same significance in Spanish as in English although it is less frequently used. See also Nelson, Protestantism in Central America, 60; and Hallum, “Taking Stock and Building Bridges”, 43.
25 See Tables 1 and 2 for denominations in the Dominican Republic
percentages in the world [see Figure 1]. Because of this fast growth, new neighborhoods in cities often lack any social services. This allows an opportunity for churches to enter with provisions.27

Ethnic tension between Dominicans and Haitians has been a source of repeated conflicts throughout the country since the early 1800s. International human rights groups have issued repeated warnings about the condition of Haitians (also known as Dominico-Haitians) in the Dominican Republic. These Haitians generally work as sugar cane cutters or plantain harvesters and reside in *bateyes* near the fields. The majority of these Haitians entered the country around the turn of the 20th century, and — though they have resided in the Dominican Republic for four or five generations — they are still “illegal people.” Many churches and Protestant organizations have taken up helping these workers who number from 500,000 to 1,000,000 people.28 Broadly, the population is comprised of 85 percent Hispanics and 14 percent Haitians with 1 percent of another race (Jamaican, Chinese, Lebanese, or Japanese).29 Of the Hispanics, 7,136,000 are Afro-Caribbean, and 1,360,000 are Euro-American.30

A deep tension between Catholics and Protestants has been constant since the 1940s in the Dominican Republic (and, indeed, since the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century), when increasingly large numbers of Catholics began to convert to Protestantism. These clashes endure as both sides try to make the other an enemy or scapegoat for social ills.

DeHainaut describes that Protestants in the Dominican Republic fear that those in power politically and socially (Roman Catholics) will attempt to restrict the freedom of worship of those not in power (Protestants) in an effort to eliminate anti-Catholic sentiments.31 Meanwhile, Protestants are engaging in campaigns to vocalize their contempt for Catholicism. Because of the opportunities at stake, both sides are playing smarter and harder to gain and maintain political control over their adherents.32 Yet this current confrontation is hardly new. For

---

29 The actual numbers are Jamaican, 25,000; Chinese, 9,000; Lebanese, 3,200; and Japanese, 1,700.
32 Ibid. One can see an example of this cycle of attacks: an evangelist Eugenio Rodríguez López during radio broadcasts in 1991 called the Catholic Church a “tool of Satan and blamed it for all of Latin America’s grave social ills—for general immorality, for irresponsible governments and even for the
example, former Archbishop of Santo Domingo Ricardo Pittini furiously denounced Protestants to in a letter to Trujillo in 1943:

> I have viewed with alarm the Protestant propaganda grow and intensify, directed and financed from the United States... Salaried ministers travel the country, inundating it with Bibles, magazines, leaflets, [and] handouts that always ooze a subtle venom and often direct vulgar attacks against our Catholic Religion. 33

As recently and publicly as 1992 during the fourth Latin American Bishop’s Conference (CELAM) in Santo Domingo, the late Pope John Paul II famously declared Protestants to be “rapacious wolves”34 and appealed to the notion that Latin America is inherently Catholic35 — and thus relies on the Catholic Church for stability:

> We should not underestimate a particular strategy aimed at weakening the bonds that unite Latin American countries and so undermine the kinds of strength provided by unity. To that end, significant amounts of money are offered to subsidize proselytizing campaigns that try to shatter such Catholic unity. 36

Indeed, Catholics portrayed Protestant missionaries as embodying British domination during colonialism, as Yankee imperialism during independence,37

---

34 Pope John Paul II’s statement refers to one of Jesus’ warnings—to watch out for false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ferocious wolves. See the Gospel of Matthew 7:15-16.
35 See C. René Padilla, “Latin American Evangelicals Enter the Public Square,” *Transformation* 9, no.2 (1992). Padilla writes that the “Roman Catholic hierarchy finds it exceedingly difficult to set aside the centuries-old premise that Latin American society is essentially Catholic. Thus it acts with an integralist vision of the Church and civil society according to which the Church depends heavily on the support of the oligarchic State to maintain its position of power”(4). See also Cleary, “Latin American Protestantism,” 134-135.
36 Cleary, “Introduction: Pentecostals, Prominence, and Politics”, 5. Strachan (quoted in Wipfler) writes that:
> The extraordinary growth of that wing of the Protestant missionary enterprise which is not officially linked with the historic or traditional denominations has brought about a significant change in the evangelical situation in Latin America today...[T]he movement represented by these bodies has grown to such proportions that it can no longer be ignored.

37 Indeed, the “trendy expression” during the 1940s according to Archbishop Pittini was “Protestant imperialism infiltrates through three steps: the Bible, the dollar, the Marines” (Vega, *La Vida Cotidiana Dominicana*, 73. Translation mine).
and as Communist influence during the mid-20th century. Yet Martin reminds readers that this religious revolution is “an indigenous enthusiastic Protestantism rooted in the hopes of millions of Latin Americans.”

According to the *International Religious Freedom Report 2004* from the US State Department, religious groups are required to register with the Government to operate legally. The Catholic Church, which pays no customs on imported goods, is privileged: other religious groups must request exemptions from customs duties from the Office of the Presidency. The Report notes that Evangelical Protestant leaders have lobbied the Government to equalize the privileges that all churches receive. One point of contention is that — although all civil unions are recognized by the state — Roman Catholic weddings are the only religious marriage ceremonies that the Government legally recognizes. As late as 1999, members of the National Police were required to attend Mass weekly.40

The Dominican Republic seems like the archetype for Catholicism. Official statistics invariably list the population as being 85 to 90 percent Catholic.41 However, estimates of actual church involvement range from 5 to 15 percent of the population.42 In the Dominican Republic, official statistics still show a high number of Catholics. According to *Demos 97*, a population survey taken in 1997 by the *Instituto de Estudios de Población y Desarrollo* (Institute of Population and Development Studies) the population is 68.1 percent nominally Roman Catholic and 11 percent Protestant Christian. (This figure includes Pentecostals, members of Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and traditional Protestants.) One fifth of the sample (20.1 percent) claimed to have no religion. Protestant Christians

---

42 The discrepancy in statistics is theorized to be from people who were baptized or confirmed in the Church but have no part in it today.
meanwhile insist to have 20 to 25 percent of the population as members; the Catholic Church claims 87 percent. 43

Operation World is a survey of Christian activity around the world. The most recent edition, from 2001, shows that Catholics still outnumber Protestant members in the Dominican Republic. However, revealing information is found in the column “Congregations.” Here, Protestant groups far exceed the number of congregations; hence, while their numbers are smaller, their ability to rapidly expand to form new denominations and congregations is intriguing.

As seen in Table 1, the sheer number of denominations that are Protestant or Independent as well as their ability to sustain large numbers of small congregations predicts that they will be able to grow rapidly. Indeed, examining Table 2, that is the case. So-called Independent denominations are able to grow annually at about 8 percent — far faster than other Christian groups. Thus, the ability of non-mainline Protestants to expand and form small nuclei of religious activity far exceeds the ability that Catholics have to perform the same function.

We have seen the economic, historic, and ethnic contexts of the Dominican Republic currently. We have also explored the histories of Protestantism in the Dominican Republic, ending with a look at their relative strength in numbers. In addition we looked at the rife tensions between Catholics and Protestants — a trend that becomes of utmost importance in determining social identity. I now explore the reasons behind the success of Protestants. I begin with a look at political activity and practical, concrete reasons for growth, and then move into more abstract theories of religious growth. I conclude with a comparison of rational choice and sub-cultural identity theories.

III. Exploring the religious debate: how political are Protestants?

Certainiy, Protestantism and Catholicism as movements have fluctuated in their political power throughout history. Yet the current literature debates to what extent Catholics and Protestants as people are politically involved. The simple answer is that Protestants are inherently and directly political, seeking to grow their power for political and economic gain. Current conditions, though,

43 State Department. “Dominican Republic”
Table 1: Catholic and Protestant Congregations in the Dominican Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>MegaBloc</th>
<th>Congregations</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Affiliates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3,917,867</td>
<td>7,522,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-Day Adventist</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>111,455</td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>22,806</td>
<td>71,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God of Prophecy</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>23,716</td>
<td>65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>42,593</td>
<td>59,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God (Cleveland)</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>24,245</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Evangelical</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>6,803</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Assembly of God</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moravian</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Nazarene</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Methodist</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Bible</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Brethren</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Reformed</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Temple Association</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2,767</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Convention</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,417</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other denominations [52]</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>106,165</td>
<td>-280,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubly affiliated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-140,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


44 The symbols are as follows: C-Catholic, P-Protestant, M-Marginal, I-Independent, and A-Anglican.
Table 2: Growth rates of Christian churches in the Dominican Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Denominations</th>
<th>Affiliation %</th>
<th>Adherents</th>
<th>Annual Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>491,000</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88.55</td>
<td>7,522,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>131,000</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubly affiliated</td>
<td></td>
<td>-3.30</td>
<td>-280,000</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


require a nuanced approach — namely, that Protestants form “social countermodels” to champion for specific causes.

A multitude of authors argue that Protestants are indeed involved in party politics. Focal to Freston’s work is that Protestant churches (exemplified especially by those in Brazil and Guatemala in the 1980s) began combining religious rallies with political speeches. They adopted the Protestant attitude that “brother votes for brother”— in other words, “brothers” of the same faith would (and ought to) vote for their Protestant brothers in elections. Commonly cited empirical examples are Protestant political parties (e.g. National Solidarity Movement in El Salvador and Autonomous Progressive Organization in Venezuela), the former president of Guatemala — General Efraín Ríos Montt, and the former president of Perú — Alberto Fujimori (both of whom claimed to be Pentecostal).

The reasons behind political party involvement vary. Kamsteeg argues simply that Pentecostal Evangelicals create movements not against secular politics but

---

against Catholicism. Padilla offers that Protestants realized during elections that “the mobilization of these humble communities of believers could be as effective in politics as it has been in spreading the gospel”. In a similar manner, Cleary describes that Protestants appraised their access to people in positions of power and their ability to bring about changes in the political system, and then became political.

Other authors analyze Protestant politics outside the realm of parties, seeking to understand how democratic these groups will become. One group sees Protestantism as much more than “Christian politics”; rather, it is a democratic social movement with “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities.” Protestants thus develop “social countermodels” through egalitarian social relationships and democratic principles in religious administration where they can “devise their own social world for themselves.” Willems studied Protestants and Pentecostals in Brazil and Chile and noted that Pentecostalism is a “symbolic subversion of the traditional social order,” for when converts receive the Holy Spirit they then have authority to evangelize. Dodson contends that the power to lay on hands and speak in tongues is egalitarian, participatory, and communal. To use Tocqueville’s phrase, the Protestant community engages in ‘associational activities’ that create participatory membership, thus developing a “culture of citizenship.” Indeed, Protestants seek to change far more than political institutions, according to Peterson, Vásquez, and Williams, citing Peruvian and Salvadoran Evangelicals:

---

47 Padilla, 5.
49 Which produces Padilla’s statement that “there is no Christian politics: there are only Christians serving God and society in the political field” (7). Perhaps the best summation comes from Levine: “neutrality in effect commits one to work within the status quo; activism may require a commitment to change. Both are political positions.” Dan Levine,
51 Bastian, 38.
Democracy is more than just elections, rationalized institutions, and legal procedures. It involves revisions in cultural and personal identity, transformations in local social relations, and greater participation in all dimensions of the public sphere.  

The other side vigorously maintains that Protestantism “does not foster democratic values or encourage the sense of civic commitment that is necessary to democratic politics.” These authors include Bastian and, in particular, d’Epinay, whose writings are based on his experience in Chile and describe the quasi-authoritarian nature of Pentecostal churches (like the former hacienda system) led by a pastor who shepherded a group of believers who withdrew from society and politics. As d’Epinay claimed, Pentecostalism “alienates itself and ‘re-alienates’ its members, since it looks upon itself as alien to the ‘world’ and effectively makes its members strangers to society.” Bastian agrees. He claims that “the majority of Pentecostal churches have pastors who are the chiefs, owners, caciques, and caudillos of a religious movement that they themselves have created and transmitted from father to son” in a sort of nepotistic fashion. But Bastian’s evidence is spotty; he lists only a few large churches with much higher-than-normal levels of institution (e.g. Brazil para Cristo) in a few countries (Brazil, Mexico, and Peru) — unconvincing evidence for a claim that messianism “reappears at all levels of the Pentecostal hierarchy.” Hallum’s critique is most applicable here:

[The local context shapes not only the religious and political activities but the teachings of the pastors and the overall Protestant message as well… the people are not simply objects absorbing a prepackaged delivery but are actively reforming a theology even as they respond.

---

56 Ibid., 215.
57 Dodson, 26.
59 D’Epinay, 130.
60 Bastian, 206.
61 Ibid.
Perhaps the greatest clarity, though, comes from the *Declaration of Jarabacoa*, signed on May 24, 1983 by the Latin American Theological Fraternity (LATF). This group, by the leading of the Holy Spirit called for political action from the Latin American Evangelical community. Yet the LATF affirms what Hallum argues:

> The church is not called to work out specific political proposals, identify itself with any system of social organization, or to form political parties. The church is called to participate in the human struggles against oppression, misery, ignorance… to denounce unjust systems and collaborate with the construction of a more just and fraternal society.\(^{63}\)

The issue of political involvement by Protestants is complex. While empirical examples point to simple involvement in political parties, one sees that Protestants take collective political action not for political gain *per se* but as a method of combating social problems. Through this process, Protestants attempt to create social countermodels of democracies and egalitarian communities.

### IV. Theories of Protestant popularity in the Dominican Republic

Various theories surround the debate over the increasing number of churches and members of Protestant churches in Latin America. These are usually predicated on micro-level case studies from which an author extrapolates country-wide or even general, universalized axioms. I begin with three common explanations for Protestant expansion, and then present an outline of five common theories of religious growth.

*The rise of Protestantism is due to imperialism:* Many authors attempt to connect the rise of Protestantism and recent trends of globalization as a sign of American imperialism. The former accusation—surprisingly still visible—is that “Latin American Protestantism…is a subproduct of political, economic and cultural conquests of past centuries.”\(^{64}\) These authors cite flows of money from the North to the South, convinced that the North is “buying” converts and extorting money — “a religious version of the quest by multinationals for new markets.”\(^{65}\)

---


Bastian, on the other hand, contends that the *raison d’etre* of Protestant societies in has less to do with “‘North American imperialism’ than with the internal political and social struggles in the continent” — a struggle based on “the equality of a participatory and representative democracy.” Moreover, Corten and Marshall-Fratani highlight two assumptions that this argument makes: first, it assumes that millions are unthinking “dupes”; second, these cultural flows are not uni-directional and have no predictable significance in a given context. Hence, this debate contributes little to explaining current trends of growth due to its inability to see Latin Americans as aware and alert.

The rise of Protestantism is due to the increased liberty women find: These authors theorize about the changing role of women as a cause for the growth of Protestantism. The commonly accepted notion is that women find acceptance, safety, a space for community, and even leadership within churches — both within the physical buildings and in the community of fellow believers. Other authors, however, see Christianity in general as failing to include women in egalitarian roles.

Hallum observes that women are attracted to Protestant churches because they “desire to bring stability to the family, to counter the destructive aspects of machismo, and to find support in times of political violence and poverty, all highly rational, pragmatic motivations.” Later, Hallum asserts that the desperation of illness combined with prayer often leads to healing and security. This gives women an “available, effective and affordable” manner to survive physical disease and economic poverty. Thus, women come to churches for spiritual and physical healing. Yet Hallum supposes that women, who are “inherently” social, come to church out of a sheer desire to socialize. This downgrades the status and purpose of women in the church as a mere social activity with no spiritual or personal intent.

Powers attempts to synthesize the positive outlook of Hallum with Jaquette’s pessimism toward egalitarian inclusion of women. She shows that the number of ordained women pastors is decreasing and that the majority of women end up

---

66 Bastian, 216.
67 Coren and Marshall-Fratani, 6-7.
68 Hallum, *Beyond missionaries*, 55.
serving in ministries that do not directly proclaim the gospel. To be sure, “Pentecostals have affirmed women’s ability to speak for God as fully empowered vessels of the Holy Spirit” but have also accepted traditional attitudes about the place of women in society. In other words, women have expanded roles during spiritual experiences, but both men and women are uncertain of what women’s roles look like in daily church life. Roebuck adds to Powers’ analysis, stating that baptism by the Holy Spirit originally took the place of qualifications for ministry (e.g. age, education, and gender). Over the past four decades though, he argues that baptism in the Spirit (especially prophecy and glossolalia) has become a “witness” of God — not a sign of qualification for ministry. Hence, Pentecostals added other qualifications to determine a “calling,” including the commission of already-ordained human figures. Thus, a “male minister had to be secured in order to baptize converts, receive members into the church, officiate at the Lord’s Supper, perform weddings, etc.” Lawless analyzed the themes of the sermons of women pastors and notes that the idea of surrender to God and man recurs most frequently and that women seem consumed with self-denigration to prove their submission to men.

Yet myriad authors contend that women define power differently than men, and they do not feel disfranchised if they do not bear an official title. This notion of “complementary partnership” still grants women agency, though, as they choose to reject elements of liberalism and secularism. Hence, women who are leaders in communal or social roles (but are not necessarily in the

---

70 Jane S. Jaquette’s scholarship has focused upon the position of women within the Latin American context, and in particular the success women have had (or lack thereof) in participating in the democratic movements within Latin America.

71 See the classic biblical text from Joel 2:28-29—“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.” Also, Galatians 3:28—“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”


74 Roebuck, 12.

75 Elaine Lawless, *Handmaidens of the lord: Pentecostal women preachers and traditional religion*, Publications of the American Folklore Society, v. 9 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 93; 111-112. While Lawless’ work errs with inaccurate scriptural references and broad generalizations about the feminist movement within churches, she does make an interesting observation that women see themselves as “handmaidens” of the Lord rather than servants (154).
hierarchy) still feel valued and important through their unofficial influence and their daily interactions with the decisions of the church.

While Roebuck and Powers certainly have shown a “weaker” role of authority for women (which, oddly, can only be defined in comparisons to “stronger,” male roles), the strong success of the movement among women implies that Protestant women do define power differently — or put less emphasis on their authority in lieu of other aspects that they find in Protestant churches. These other aspects are the most intriguing ones, and I shall examine later the ways that Dominican churches draw people — especially women — through social programs.

**Protestantism is attractive because of modernization and economic reasons:** Recently, the debate surrounding Protestantism has revolved around “modernity” or economic “development,” which attempt to link changes in religious behavior with changes in economic behavior. The implication, then, is that people will become Protestant because of their desire to “modernize” and to succeed economically. For example, Stoll argues that Protestants attempt to morally transform Latin Americans with the hope that a strict lifestyle will lead to economic savings — they “earn more, save more, and as a result prosper economically and rise culturally.”76 Also, during times of distress, Latin Americans view Protestants as wealthy in terms of money and resources. In one case study, Annis concludes that the factor in determining upward mobility within an indigenous Guatemalan town was whether or not the families were Protestants. He asserts that Protestant townspeople were “future-oriented”: their children were more likely to attend school, and they worked in upwardly-mobile jobs (e.g. tourism, transportation, or sewing).77 Sherman expands on this theory by contending that a theology of “rebirth” enables believers to grasp hold of a sense of power and hope for changing the quotidian. She claims that Pentecostalism offers “biblical support for such free-market propositions as private property, economic initiative, and man’s creative capacity.”78

Coleman et al maintain the opposite. From their study in El Salvador, they conclude that Protestants “have lower education levels, occupy lower-status

---

occupations, and earn less than Catholics, whether the latter are practicing or non-practicing.” Their data, taken from two nation-wide surveys, reveal that the historical and geographical context of believers is important. One drawback to their work is that — since it traverses a country — it does not account for regional variations. Moreover, considering that the country was in the midst of civil war during the surveys, if Protestants were scapegoats for the strife, their employment opportunities may have decreased. Finally, Protestants — since they tend to be located in poor and marginalized areas — do not start with the same socioeconomic status as Catholics.

In general, national or even regional studies that attempt to prove a Protestant savings or work “ethic” make too many assumptions. They assume the same amount of religious activity, the same teachings and doctrines on daily life, and the same amount of opportunity nationally or even internationally. Furthermore, they ignore religious and cultural factors (such as persecution or opposition) that — for example — could lead to disdain or praise in their worksite. This is not to say that the lure of wealth does not draw a person to religion; rather, accounting for all the variables and proving this on a regional scale is virtually impossible.

Some authors, meanwhile, attempt to provide a new paradigm for analysis. Bonino summarizes Brazilian sociologist Francisco Cartaxo Rolim, declaring that social scientists who define what Protestantism does (in terms of economics and politics) instead of what it is ignore the movement’s core function in fulfilling a societal need for identity and belonging. It is within that paradigm that Villamán describes Protestant attitudes toward modernity or development: “conservative” thinkers attempt to live in “pre-modernity,” putting science and reason at the service of a “true faith”.

In sum, it does seem that the strictness of Protestantism leads to increased levels of investment and wealth through changed behaviors. However, as Bonino and Villamán highlight, arguing that Protestants engage in active church membership exclusively for material benefits yields an incomplete analysis of participants’ behavior. That is, inside the realm of church activity, followers live in “pre-modernity” with only faith — not economics — to guide them.

81 Villamán, El auge Pentecosta, 45-46.
The rise of Protestantism is due to transnational migration and movements: The importance of migrants has played a significant role in the theorization regarding the diffusion of religious ideas across the Global South from the 1970s until today. Globalization has certainly influenced cultural and religious decisions; currently, theorists describe the extent to which globalization both homogenizes and localizes religion (i.e. makes them global and particular to a geographic location).82

Open borders allow for the transfer of homogenized denominations across borders; thus, locals can compare their religious options and join global communities in which they feel most comfortable. This process began immediately after Latin American countries gained independence, argues Nelson, when locals “became conscious of their backwardness” and thus became receptive to immigrants from so-called Protestant countries — “the most progressive and advanced of the time.”83 Levitt, DeWind and Vertovec state that the homogeneity of religious institutions allows for convenience and comfort for the migrant newcomer. This occurs through localization in new geographies, which create “hybrid social remittances”.84 Levitt uses Catholicism as an example of a religious institution that creates uniformity across boundaries, hence facilitating easy connections to previous styles of worship. These familiar elements involve a generic “Latino style”.85 Yet tension occurs when globalization creates homogeneity and heterogeneity. For example, globalization allows the creation of multiple identities and loyalties to religious institutions especially for migrants and refugees.

Missing from these authors is an analysis of how gender, race, and socioeconomic class impact the adoption of religious identities. As Corten and Marshall-Fratani note, “global circulation of the objects of material culture…in no way predicts their significance in a given context.”86 Furthermore, analyses of cross-border connections tend to reduce religion to an economic commodity in which those with a “flexible” production and dissemination will best meet the needs of

82 Corten and Marshall-Fratani, 3.
83 Nelson, Protestantism in Central America. Nelson quotes Juan Rafael Mora, president of Costa Rica from 1849-1859: “We need immigration at all costs and if we really wish to get out of the rut and enter fully into the way of progress, if we wish to get rid of our problems and ignorance, we must hurry and share with North America the guarantees granted to the foreigner” (12).
84 Peggy Levitt, Josh DeWind, and Steven Vertovec, Transnational migration: international perspectives (Staten Island, N.Y.: Center for Migration Studies, 2003), 8.
86 Corten and Marshall-Fratani, 6.
religious consumers. Peterson, Vásquez, and Williams, utilize economic discourse in claiming that “Pentecostalism, like global capitalism, homogenizes, making particularity only a strategy or stepping stone toward the production of globality/universality."87 This analysis ignores both the heterogeneous anchoring that occurs as well as Hallum’s observation that local contexts shape global realities.88 Also, in the case of the Dominican Republic, leadership is virtually always indigenous. For example, Petersen and Vásquez note that “no formal agreements of any kind have ever been established between the Assemblies of God in the United States with any national Assemblies of God fellowship. The relationship has always been strictly fraternal."89 Certainly, religious remittances impact the Dominican Republic yet the analyses seem too abstract for specific case studies. One can conclude, however, that Protestants in the Dominican Republic and the US — while similar — possess autonomy over their moral spheres.

V. Abstract Theories of Religious Growth

Status discontent theory originated in the 1950s with Hofstadter as an explanation for the political activity of conservative ("right-wing") Christians.90 Along with Lipset and Lenski, he reasoned that the moral decline of traditional, Protestant lifestyles in the US had ignited political activism, for “religious resources [are] more easily mobilized for activism the more a religious group feels a threat to the social status that it previously enjoyed."91

This theory applies least to the Dominican Republic because Protestants there never “enjoyed” a time when it used its social status to champion for temperance, prison reform, and the abolition of slavery (like US Protestants in the late 19th

---

88 Hallum, Beyond missionaries, 28.
That is, from the arrival of the first Protestants, the State and the Catholic Church persecuted them — and they were did not grow because of any place in society that they formerly occupied. Moreover, Smith and Emerson — working from Hart as well as from Schmalzbauer and Wheeler — contest the notion that religion is perpetually involved in a “zero-sum struggle” against secular modernity. Indeed, they describe that reading the past as some sort of “golden age” of moral standards creates a sense of perpetually-increasing immorality; furthermore, viewing religion and modernity in a competition over a fixed number of moral “goods” fails to show the ways religions generate new ones, reclaim lost traditions, and use modern tools to strengthen their traditional worldviews.

**Sheltered Enclave Theory:** This theory states that religious groups prosper most when they are sheltered from external, contaminating influences. As Berger argues, since religion is a socially constructed “sacred canopy” and “all socially constructed worlds are inherently precarious,” then religion will face challenges and disconfirmation in times of modernity. Hunter describes one of these challenges as modernization, which threatens religious order due to its functional rationality and pluralism — both cultural and structural. Yet Evangelicalism thrives. The reason, Hunter claims, is because the Evangelical community is more “sociologically and geographically distant from the institutional structures and processes of modernity.”

Unfortunately, this theory, too, yields little help for this study. As Petersen notes, Protestants have been “remarkably realistic in functioning in the temporal world” even as they embrace differences. Indeed, Smith and Emerson conclude the opposite of Berger and Hunter — that Evangelicalism “thrives on distinction, engagement, tension, conflict, and threat…the evangelical movement’s vitality is not a product of its protected isolation from, but of its vigorous engagement

---

92 Ibid., 2-6.
94 Smith and Emerson, 97-102.
95 Peter Berger, *The sacred canopy; elements of a sociological theory of religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), 29
97 Ibid., 60. Admittedly, one could argue that the analysis of American Evangelicals is not congruent to the Dominican Republic. Nonetheless, I include his thoughts to expand the scope of this religious discussion.
with pluralistic modernity."\textsuperscript{99} Protestants in the Dominican Republic are certainly distant in their religious activities (e.g. attending \textit{cultos} up to four times per week, participating in week-long fasts, praying throughout the night) yet these distinctions tell nothing of their demography and geography. Indeed, Protestants attend the same schools, live in the same neighborhoods, have the same jobs, and face the same “modernity” daily as Catholics and non-Christians.\textsuperscript{100} Thus, isolation cannot be a contributing factor.

\textit{Strictness Theory:} Strictness theory emphasizes the micro-level mandates and behaviors that each church issues to its members, arguing that “strict” religions prosper while “lenient” ones diminish. Kelley studied conservative Evangelical churches in the 1960s to find that they were growing while mainline-liberal Protestant churches were diminishing. He explains this trend with a simple formula — “\textit{meaning} = \textit{concept} + \textit{demand}”. His reasoning is that “the quality that enables religious meanings to take hold is not their rationality, their logic, their surface credibility, but rather the \textit{demand} they make upon their adherents and the degree to which that demand is met by \textit{commitment}.”\textsuperscript{101} Iannaccone explains this phenomenon in economic terms — that “strictness” eliminates religious “free riders” (those who obtain religious benefits without exerting effort to contribute).\textsuperscript{102} These groups, thus, “enjoy high degrees of commitment, investment, solidarity, and mutual-rewards.”\textsuperscript{103}

This theory has applications in the Dominican Republic to “strict” (i.e. fundamentalist) Protestant churches. Nonetheless, other churches, which are growing equally well, orient themselves toward “reducing the level of strictness in its organizational culture at all levels.”\textsuperscript{104} Hence, while strictness explains some of Protestant expansion, it does not encompass it all.

\textit{Social Anomie Theory:} Social anomie theory claims that certain social traumas induce people to change their attitudes toward (i.e. demand for) religion—where they attend church, what they want from their religion, and how much religion they want. The most commonly blamed sources of anomie dislocation

\textsuperscript{99} Smith and Emerson, 89.
\textsuperscript{100} Smith and Emerson quote a Pentecostal woman: “You know we’re \textit{in} the world, but we’re not supposed to participate in things that are \textit{of} the world” (132, emphasis mine).
\textsuperscript{101} Dean Kelley, \textit{Why conservative churches are growing; a study in sociology of religion} (New York: Harper & Row., 1972), 52-53.
\textsuperscript{103} Smith and Emerson, 72.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 85.
are modernization and its brother, secularization. These create a “crisis of identity by those who fear extinction.”105 d’Epinay, who studied Protestantism in Chile and working from Emile Durkheim, noted that anomic dislocation occurs most when:

the structure of that society, in the security of which the individual used to find support, is in a state of rupture, which in turn involves the loss of the consensus that regulates the normative orientation and existential definition which give meaning to the life of the individual or group.106

Yet modernization and secularization, argues Gill are used to describe two “diametrically-opposed” situations — anemic Europe and thriving Latin America. This produces the universally-applicable axiom that “Modernization causes fundamentalism in places where people can’t handle modernization all that well, and creates secularization in places where they are all set to embrace modernization.”107 To add precision, Gill advocates for micro-level case studies, which would eliminate “grand theorizing” about entire cultures. Indeed, d’Epinay’s work focuses on cities.108 This is inadequate, as Smith and Emerson note:

cities produce unconventional behavior, not because primary-group ties are weakened and people feel anonymous and anomic. Quite the opposite: cities produce deviance because their ecological size and density promote a host of strong subcultures which generate unconventional beliefs and behaviors.109

Thus, neither cities nor modernization per se invariably catalyze religious growth; rather, they lead to complex identities. This theory seems to apply nicely to the Dominican Republic, where 66 percent of the population lives in urban areas, because the country has endured anomie recently with the end of a dictatorship, rapid inflation rates, and increased social ills.110 Hence, the need for identity and stability seem valid.

106 d’Epinay, 32-33. Emphasis mine.
109 Smith and Emerson, 100. Emphasis mine.
110 See Table 6
Rational Choice Theory: Whereas social anomie theory analyzes reasons for changes in religious “demand,” rational choice theory (also known as religious economy theory) examines the effects of changes in religious “supply.”\footnote{111} It states that monopoly churches are weak and inefficient, and new religious growth thrives through some change or opening in the so-called “religious marketplace.”

Monopoly churches are weak as Pousson succinctly puts it because “As movements become mature institutions, they tend to ‘domesticate’ the Spirit and the kingdom of God.”\footnote{112} Finke and Starke argue that this “domestication” occurs because religious monopolies do not need to conform to demand, thus begetting poorer service and diminished innovation.\footnote{113} Underlying this theory is the contentious assumption that people behave in ways to maximize their own good.

Gill agrees that the origins of Protestant growth stem from a problem in religious “supply”—the fact that “Latin Americans... have a thirst for spirituality” but that “the RCC [Roman Catholic Church] undersupplied spiritual services to vast swatches of Latin American society, primarily those at the lower economic strata.”\footnote{114} Hence, when Protestants missionaries arrived to establish churches, those churches exploded in membership. That is, religious participation increased when people found more variety in religious “products” to meet their wants and needs. Chestnut concurs that — in his terminology — an unregulated religious economy allows religious consumers to choose from “a dizzying array of religious options.”\footnote{115} He even goes so far as to list the three main “selling points” of religion — contractual relationships (e.g. with saints and the Virgin Mary), miraculous occurrences (e.g. healings or divine rapture), and pneumatics (e.g. glossolalia).\footnote{116} As proof that religious innovation occurs when religious freedom exists, Gill cites the Catholic Church, who recognized their lethargy in the 1960s, and responded with liberation theology (to match consumers’ tastes for social activism).\footnote{117} Further evidence is the modern-day Catholic Charismatic Renewal (an attempt to woo Pentecostal “consumers” back to the Church).\footnote{118}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotenumbers
\footnotetext[114]{Anthony Gill, “Protestant Problems? What Protestant Problems?”, 6.}
\footnotetext[115]{Andrew R. Chesnut, Competitive spirits: Latin America’s new religious economy (Oxford [England]: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.}
\footnotetext[116]{See ‘Glossary of Terms’.}
\footnotetext[117]{See Anthony Gill, Rendering unto Caesar: the Catholic Church and the State in Latin America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).}
\footnotetext[118]{See Peterson and Vásquez (2001).}
\end{footnotes}
Yet this story is not so simple, for the arrival of the Methodist Church of England in 1822 in the Dominican Republic did not produce a boom. Instead, that occurred some 150 years later. Something besides increased religious “supply” must have precipitated the growth. According to Gill the key was liberty, which makes religious minorities (if given the liberty to organize) prosper. Then, once the minorities achieved religious freedom, they could provide “goods and services” at lower per-member costs due to their lack of organizational hierarchy. Gill cites the high costs of maintaining ornate cathedrals, paying for priests during seminary, and maintaining celibacy as factors that make Catholicism more expensive.119

It would be too simplistic, though, to assume that Protestant churches grow merely because they add plurality. No, locals demand Protestant “services,” which — according to this theory — have a comparative advantage over Catholic “goods and services.” Smith and Emerson describe these as traits of “entrepreneurial” leaders who promote an immense variety of religious products, a common Christian identity without geographical or organizational centralization, fluid networks of small denominations, and the ability to create new churches, educational centers, missions boards, and programs.120 Gill lists others, such as ownership over one’s faith, showing films in rural areas, and distributing copies of the Bible.121

Peterson and Vásquez complicate rational choice theory. While they agree with Gill, Stark, Finke and others in viewing the Catholic Church as a monopoly, they contend that religious pluralism also prospers within the Catholic Church. Specifically, Catholicism has four models in the Americas — traditional unpopular (centered on Mary and patron saints), reformed Catholicism (influenced by the Second Vatican Council), progressive or liberationist (which opposes conservative regimes), and Charismatic (with small groups connected globally). These four “do not simply compete but enter into complex relations of accommodation and cross-fertilization.”122 The authors explain that there are differences in structural arrangements, hierarchies, levels of autonomy, levels of decentralizations, and differences between “a hierarchical, clerical, and oppressive official Catholicism and an egalitarian, lay-centered, and emancipatory grassroots Catholicism.”123 Protestantism also has varying levels of

120 Smith and Emerson, 86.
121 Gill, Rendering unto Caesar.
122 Peterson and Vásquez, “Upwards, Never Down”, 211.
123 Ibid.
size, bureaucratization, and indigenization. Thus, neither of the two groups are static monoliths.

Bonino raises a second objection concerning the conceptualizations of any religious theory. Identifying the most effective ways to proselytize “seems to depersonalize the work and... person of the Holy Spirit which end up as a sort of programmed and programmable ‘force,’ contrary to the whole ethos and experience of the Pentecostal movement.” He further argues vehemently against viewing religion in terms of social processes:

[T]o somehow normalize a technical methodology as the work of the Holy Spirit seems to me a dangerous tendency. Dangerous in so far as it threatens to transform the missionary mind into an imitation of the operations of the transnational corporations. Also dangerous to the extent that it may subordinate the spontaneous, outgoing, dynamic force of the people of God to the strategies of those who know and can or think and do.124

The most frequent complaint against rational choice theory is its reduction of religious adherents to mere religious consumers. Like any rational choice theory, there is an underlying assumption that people are rational actors who seek to maximize exogenous or endogenous profit (e.g. money, status, creativity, etc.). Yet — and this is the shortcoming of the theory — religious adherents do not engage in lives of faithful devotion in exchange for the promise of riches in heaven. This is far too simplistic and trivializes the lives of millions of people around the globe.

Rational choice or religious economy theory helps to show why some churches succeed organizationally more than others. First, Finke and Stark and Finke, Guest, and Stark’s observation that cities are quite conducive environments for religion — not inimical toward it — applies well to the 66 percent urbanization in the Dominican Republic.125 Second, other theories do not account for the fluidity and decentralization of Protestant churches (instead viewing religious collectivities as blocks). Finally, rational choice theory has the only space for State involvement in promoting one religion over another (the others assume a static or nonexistent State).


Nonetheless, this theory is incomplete. It primarily addresses the organizational and administrative differences between Catholic and Protestant churches. To complete it, I analyze what is happening that makes people seek Protestantism and enjoy their participation there in the first place.

Sub-Cultural Identity Theory: This theory argues that Protestants create social subcultures with positive and negative reference points and thus create identity. Perhaps the greatest proponents of it are Smith and Emerson, whose nationwide, comprehensive look at American Evangelicals honed their ideas. As they states: “Religion survives and can thrive in pluralistic, modern society by embedding itself in subcultures that offer satisfying morally orienting collective identities which provide adherents meaning and belonging.”

The key to maintaining popularity is to establish unique niches or places that no other religion, denomination, or movement can fill.

Smith and Emerson issue several prescient propositions about groups and belonging. They begins with the basic principle that “human drives for meaning and belonging are satisfied primarily by locating human selves within social groups that sustain distinctive, morally orienting collective identities.” Next, they contend that humans create these distinctions by drawing “symbolic” boundaries between themselves and “outgroups.” A few propositions later (Proposition 5), they states that “Individuals and groups define their values and norms and evaluate their identities and actions in relation to specific, chosen reference groups; dissimilar and antagonistic outgroups may serve as negative reference groups.”

Strength comes when groups and individuals create “clear distinction from and significant engagement and tension with relevant outgroups” — but do not become “genuinely countercultural.”

Who are these outgroups? They serve “as sources of norms, values, and standards of judgment, functioning as informal authorities in the process of self-evaluation.” They are “any actual or imaginary individual, group, social category, norm, or object that influences the individual’s covert or overt

---

118 Smith and Emerson, 118.
120 Smith and Emerson, 90.
121 Ibid., 91.
122 Ibid., 105.
123 Ibid., 118-19.
124 Ibid., 105.
behavior,” according to Raymond Schmitt. Negative reference groups are those that embody everything the group does not want to become—how not to behave, how not to think, what not to believe. Theodore Newcomb defines negative reference groups simply as “a group the individual opposes and whose norms he rejects.” A positive one, then, is a group in which the individual desires membership status and whose norms he accepts.

Importantly, the creation of positive/negative reference points as well as ingroups/outgroups tells us nothing of the material condition of the individual or group. Indeed, these authors presuppose and assume that these groups and references are part of some sort of material group (e.g. families, religious groups, clubs, unions, teams, etc). Schmitt comes closest to addresses material existence when he offers that an individual requires an empirical status in addition to a membership status to create reference others. That is, an individual must define himself as a member of the group; also, others must define him as a member. Hence, the membership must be real and in existence. The questions to explore, then, are twofold. First, to what extent do Protestants feel embattled in the interactions with “relevant outgroups”? Second, what are the negative reference points that Protestants create, and who are the “dissimilar and antagonistic outgroups”? Third, to what extent do these groups employ non-material and material tools as well?

VI. Methodology—Collecting Data

During the summer of 2004, I was an intern with Children of the Nations, a Christian organization based in Silverdale, Washington. They are a religious non-governmental organization with three global sites in Sierra Leone, Malawi, and the Dominican Republic. They are also a young organization, participating actively in each country since the late 1990s. However, upon arrival to the country, they connected with a Haitian missionary who was already working in a batey (a Haitian village in the Dominican Republic). Hence, their network of connections is based upon approximately fifteen total years of work in Barahona, Dominican Republic.


135 Schmitt, 59.
Throughout the two months that I was there, I conducted eight formal interviews and made myriad personal observations while teaching, playing, and living with a host family, and attending church in Barahona. These interviews allowed me to contact a diverse group of people in a fairly representative Dominican town—part agriculture and part export-processing zone. The city’s population is somewhere around 70,000 people (although the presence of uncounted Haitian harvesters and rural, uncounted Dominicans makes the actual number difficult to obtain). In addition, I performed statistical collection and analysis once I had returned to the United States. From this work, I gained a better understanding of the institutional and organization situations of Catholics and Protestants. What follows is a description of my methodology (how I collected these findings) and its strengths and weaknesses.

Table 3. People interviewed – ages and occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person Interviewed</th>
<th>Approximate Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject A</td>
<td>Early 30s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject B</td>
<td>Early 60s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Driver/Chauffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject C</td>
<td>Late 50s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject D</td>
<td>Mid 30s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cook/Housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject E</td>
<td>Late 40s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cook/Housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject F</td>
<td>Mid 30s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cook/Housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject G</td>
<td>Mid 40s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject H</td>
<td>Late 60s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Methods

While the majority of my fieldwork involved interviews, I also collected in-country data through personal observations and experiences. I made initial contact with potential interviewees in person, provided an overview of my project, and asked if they would like to be interviewed. I did not record the
interviews; however, I took copious notes and asked the subjects to repeat any unclear information. The interviews were conducted entirely in Spanish.

The questions I used were formed through discussions with my thesis advisor, Professor Jim Wellman. The best description of the interviews would be “semi-standardized” because I had a list of questions but deviated from them as the situation required. However, aside from an occasional clarification, the respondents explained themselves well.

Once in the US again, I looked at several sources for statistical data. The Catholic Almanac (also known as Our Sunday Visitor’s Catholic Almanac) is an annual publication that contains basic statistics (e.g. number of priests, number of infants baptized, etc.) on international Catholic activities for the preceding year. It provided a historical look at Catholic activity from the 1950s to present. Operation World is the Protestant equivalent of the aforementioned almanac. The latest edition of it is from 2001; hence, the data are slightly outdated. Another source that I used was the Directorio Evangélico — the Evangelical Directory — published in 1995. While not entirely current, it provided useful information about various Protestant services and organizations. It also has a section that lists churches and their dates of founding. Finally, I relied on data from the World Bank to analyze rates of urbanization and education.

Limitations

An obvious limitation to my work is that the respondents were located all located in the same town, Barahona. While this city is like many other Dominican cities—rapidly urbanizing, experiencing the clash between agriculture and manufacturing, and full of hopeful unemployment—it is also just one city. Moreover, the size of the sample is small—just eight respondents. Another limitation might have been the interview itself: since I was unfamiliar as an American university student, the respondents may have exaggerated their faith and beliefs or — conversely — underemphasized some feelings they had toward their church or faith.

VII. Findings: Cities, Priests, , and the Holy Spirit

My hypotheses suggested that I would find organizational and sub-cultural reasons for the popularity of Protestant groups. These hypotheses were mostly correct. The qualification to my conjectures is that the Catholic Church has not been a passive entity in the Dominican Republic throughout the latter
20th century. Indeed, the number of Catholics seems to be rebounding (albeit slowly) after centuries of neglect from the Vatican, probably because the number of priests per capita is improving. Membership in the Catholic Church is growing at approximately 1 percent per year [see Table 2]. Below, I explain several findings from my research that give evidence for and explain the success of Protestants in the Dominican Republic. First, I begin with urbanization, material needs, and then move into sub-cultural identity.

Finding 1: Religious freedom allowed for rapid religious growth; this growth often came because of foreign missionaries or churches. Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina was perhaps the most brutal of the Latin American dictators. Taking the title of Generalissimo in 1930 from President Horacio Vásquez, he forced a brutal rule on Dominicans and Haitians alike in the country until his assassination in 1961. The capital, Santo Domingo, became Ciudad Trujillo (Trujillo City); the highest peak, Pico Trujillo. His ordered massacre of some 30,000 innocent Haitians in 1937 was another vivid example of racial tension between Haitians and Dominicans — and his attempts to “whiten” the country.\footnote{See Wucker 1999 and Howard 2001 for a full description of Haitian-Dominican tensions} Finally, in 1961, he was shot dead while traveling in a car by members of his own army.

His death opened the country to increased religious freedom. While Trujillo and the Vatican had signed a concordat in 1954 to give Catholicism special privileges (which still remain), Protestants nonetheless enjoyed more opportunities after his assassination. As shown in the Table 4 and 5 below, the death of Trujillo brought about a rapid expansion of denominations. A mere 18 churches (i.e. denominations) were founded before or during his rule. Meanwhile, at least 41 denominations started and currently operate in the years after his death. The latter number is certain to be an underestimate.

Importantly, many of these denominations have their roots in foreign leaders or churches. The very first church founded — the African Episcopal Methodist Church in 1824 — started with 200 slaves led by an American reverend, Isaac Miller. Iglesia de Dios was founded by Jorge Silvestre, a missionary from the Bahamas in 1939. The Iglesia Cristiana Reformada started when Christian Reformed missionaries visited from Puerto Rico in the 1970s. The first American missionaries, Ray and Gladys Brinks and Neal and Sandy Hegeman, began work among the Haitian immigrants working in the cane fields and marginal areas of urban centers in 1981. At least three churches from the list were started in New York, where their congregations sent missionaries to plant other churches in foreign countries.
Table 4. Dates of Founding for Protestant Churches—before 1961\textsuperscript{137}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name of Church/Denomination</th>
<th>Founder and Origin, if known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>Iglesia África Metodista Episcopal</td>
<td>200 freed slaves and Rev. Isaac Millar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Libre Dominicana</td>
<td>Samuel Mills, North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Iglesia Episcopal Dominicana Comunión Anglicana</td>
<td>Benjamin Isaac Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Iglesia Evangélica Cristiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Asambleas de Dios</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal Movimiento Internacional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Iglesia de Dios</td>
<td>Jorge Silvestre, Bahamas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Iglesia de Dios Incorporada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Iglesia de Dios de la Profecía</td>
<td>Trajano Andrián, Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Concilio Nacional de las Asambleas de Dios</td>
<td>William Laurence Perrawit, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Arca de Salvación</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Templo Evangélico de la República Dominicana</td>
<td>Don Hilario Díaz Bonachea, Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Asamblea de iglesias Cristianas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Asamblea de iglesias Cristianas Incorporada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Iglesia Evangélica Menonita</td>
<td>4 missionaries from Indiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Movimiento Defensores de la Fe Cristiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Iglesia Cruzada Evangélica Missionera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Iglesia Unión Cristiana y Missionera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus far, it is clear that an explosion of denominations occurred in the years following the assassination of Dictator Trujillo. The influence of foreign missionaries and church-planters cannot be underestimated, as they have contributed greatly to this rapid growth.

\textit{Finding 2:} Simultaneous rapid urbanization allowed these new denominations to fill a \textit{material} need for social services while Catholic priests were undersupplied. These new denominations and churches were certainly put to good use in the years following Trujillo’s execution. The rapid urbanization rates in the Dominican Republic were the highest in all of Latin America for twenty years (from 1960 to 1980 until Haiti surpassed the Dominican Republic). The World Bank data, which began recording this statistic in 1960, show a trend across Latin

\textsuperscript{137} Date for Table 4 and 5 are from \textit{Directorio evangélico 1995.}
Table 5. Dates of Founding for Protestant Churches—after 1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name of Church/Denomination</th>
<th>Founder and Origin, if known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Convención Bautista Dominican</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Iglesia Nueva Vida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Iglesia de Dios Unida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Iglesia Tabernáculo Evangelístico Movimiento Misionero Mundial</td>
<td>After a campaign with Rev. Arlen, from USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Iglesia Pentecostal Unida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Iglesia de Dios en Cristo La Senda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Iglesia Alzona Cristiana y Misionera Dominica</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Iglesia Fuente de Salvación Misionera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Iglesia Pentecostal Misionera Círculo de Oración</td>
<td>Ramón Acosta and Nancy Acosta, originating in New York.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Iglesia Hermanos Unidos en Cristo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Iglesia Pentecostal de Jesucristo Internacional</td>
<td>Started in New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Iglesia Pentecostal y Misionera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Asamblea de Iglesias Cristianas Unidas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Iglesia de Dios Misionera Pentecostal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Federación de Iglesias Pentecostales Alpha y Omega</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Asamblea de Iglesias Pentecostales de Jesucristo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Iglesia Bíblica Profética y Misionera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Iglesia de Nazareno</td>
<td>William Porter and Lois Butler, Americans from Puerto Rico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Iglesia Misioneras Asamblea Cristiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Iglesia Apostólica y Misionera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Iglesia Cristiana Domasco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Iglesia Apostólica de La Fe en Cristo Jesús</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Iglesia Cristiana Fuente de Salvación</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Asamblea Evangélica Misionera Pentecostes “Luz en el Camino”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Concilio de la Cristianización Nacional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Iglesia Cristiana Reformada</td>
<td>Ray and Gladys Brinks and Neal and Sandy Hegemon, Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Iglesia Evangélica Pentecostal Cristo en las Antillas</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Conferencia Internacional de Iglesias Hermanos Unidos en Cristo Incorporida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Iglesia Jesucristo Fuente de Amor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Iglesia Pentecostal Arca Cristiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Asamblea Evangélica Pentecostal Emmanuel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Concilio de Iglesias Calvinitas Espíritu de Hermandad</td>
<td>New York in 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Concilio Latinoamericano de Nuevo York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Iglesia Alfa y Omega la Hermosa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Iglesia Evangélica Ebenezeter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Iglesia Evangélica El Tabor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Iglesia Evangélica Misionera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Iglesia Independiente</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Iglesia Nueva Vida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Iglesia Pentecostal Shekinah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of high urbanization rates in the 1960s that slowly decline until the present time. For this analysis, I chose a small, representative sample of Latin America. Cuba and Haiti are both island nations in the Caribbean with tumultuous histories of revolutions and dictators. In the case of Haiti, it shares the island with the Dominican Republic and controlled it during the 1800s from 1795 to 1809 and from 1821 to 1844. Cuba was evangelized starting in 1514 and was predominantly Catholic; however, Fidel Castro declared the country a socialist state in 1961 and banned worship and religious instruction in any place outside of Church premises.

Brazil, Chile, and Argentina are all countries in South America that have colonial legacies as well. More importantly, though, these three countries are the classic examples of Protestant success. Indeed, most of the literature surrounding Pentecostalism in particular centers on case studies of these three countries. Hence, if corresponding trends emerge between the Dominican Republic and these three countries, then we might have a clue as to the reasons behind religious success.

This rapid growth in urbanization drove hordes of people to cities. By 1981, one-half of the population lived in urban areas in the Dominican Republic. In 2001, two-thirds dwelled in cities and urban areas. According to the United Nations, by 2015, about three-fourths will live in cities. Table 6, below, illustrates this rapid shift.

Along with this increase in urbanization came social service organizations as well as transparently Christian businesses. Evangelical radio stations sprouted to broadcast their message of hope and truth in these crowded cities. Stations began such as Alfa Omega, Alerta, Amanecer [Dawn], Enmanuel, La Voz Cristocéntrica [the Christ-centered Voice], La Voz de Sinai [the Voice of Sinai], Mar, Renuvio [Renew], Revelación en América, Revelación de Puerto Plata, Transmundial [Worldwide], and Ven [Come]. From this list, one can see the vast amount of effort put into radio stations and into spreading a Christian message.

138 In 1795, Spain ceded all of Española to the French in an attempt to cover war debts incurred in Europe. The then-Haitian colony returned to Spanish rule in 1809, but was taken over on December 1, 1821 by a group of Haitians who named the colony Haiti Español. Finally, on February 27, 1844 under the direction of Juan Pablo Duarte, Haiti Español gained independence, changing its name to the Dominican Republic—an epoch historians that mark as the country’s First Republic.

Furthermore, one can see the directive implicit in their names — a dawn of
global renewal to which all should come. Evangelical service agencies were
founded to help newcomers in urban areas as well as to assist those still in rural
areas. What is fascinating about these groups is their connections across the
country and their eagerness to work together with other Evangelical groups.
These groups work with children, widows, drug addicts, rural farmers, elderly,
and pastors, and against deforestation, hunger, and poverty. A truncated list
follows:  

Acción Evangélica de Desarrollo: Evangelical Action for Development. National, private,
interdenominational, preoccupied with the transformation of needy individuals and
communities of the country without religious, political, or any other distinction.
Started in 1987. Serves urban and rural places. Implements projects of preventative
health, education, farming, and social infrastructure. Serves 41 communities, some
3,200 families, and some 20,000 persons.

Aguas Vivientes: Works to train rural pastors, promotes health, and advises churches in
community development. APEN: Alliance for the Evangelization of Children AONA:
National Association of Evangelical Churches at the Service of the Community

140 Data for Table 6 and Figure 1 from: Union Nations human development index 2003, and Beinvenido
Alvarex-Vega, “Movimiento Pentecostal Dominicano”, 126
141 Directorio evangélico 1995
*Foresta*: Dedicated to the reforestation, economic betterment, and education of the Dominican countryside.

*Fundación contra el Hambre*: Foundation Against Hunger

*Fundación Filantrópica*: A non-profit organization to assist the widows and elderly in the whole country.

*Jesucristo es mi Patrón*: Jesus Christ is my Leader. Ministry for recovery of drug- and alcohol-addicts.


*Liga Bíblica Mundial del Hogar*: World Bible League of the Home. Interdenominational ministry that supports churches in evangelization plans through the provision of low-cost literature.

*Visión Mundial*: World Vision

Outside of these official organizations, Protestants keep members engaged through unofficial ones. Known as *grupos de célula* (“cellular groups”), these meet at least once weekly. During these times, the members of this small group — they comprise about ten to fifteen people — study the Bible, have potlucks or picnics, pray for each other, and visit one another. Indeed, this idea of visiting sick or elderly members is an integral part of Protestant life. Respondent 7, a pastor of a small church, spends every Sunday afternoon visiting those who could not attend the *culto*. For those who are poor, exhausted, or ill, these signs of affection foster love and personal connections.

Protestant churches also offer schools and — if connected to a foreign denomination — a supply of short-term worker volunteers from abroad to build clinics, perform surgeries, train pastors, etc. The Episcopal Church operates a Center for Theological Education in Santo Domingo, a camp and conference center (Mount Transfiguration), and seven schools across the country with some 3,000 students.\(^{142}\) *Children of the Nations* in Barahona provides surgeries at little or no cost through its own clinic, runs three schools in Haitian *bateyes*, occasionally forms baseball teams, recently built a skill center for technical training, and donates food for feeding centers.\(^{143}\) *Youth With A Mission* (YWAM) plants churches, leads evangelistic outreach through song and

---


choreography, and donates livestock and seeds with the community. After Hurricane Georges and Hurricane Jeanne passed in 1998 and 2004, respectively, Dominican churches gathered together to bring in cooking supplies, to rebuild houses, to provide food, and to donate medicine. Local churches and World Vision were at disaster sites within hours of the catastrophic flooding. Many other organizations are spread across the country, working with the poor, the newly-urbanized, the marginalized, and the addicted.

The Catholic Church, meanwhile, lacks the ability to be so intimately connected to Dominicans on a daily basis. To be sure, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) — a truly honorable organization — is involved and does spend time, money, and resources on Dominicans to improve socioeconomic conditions. CRS began its work in the Dominican Republic in 1961, thus enjoying a longer presence in the country than most Protestant social service organizations. It currently provide meals to children in school, works to reduce HIV/AIDS infections, and provides disaster relief. According to their mission, “The program is rooted in Catholic social teaching, which upholds the dignity of every person and gives priority to the needs of the poor.” Interestingly, though, CRS has one office in Santo Domingo with three expatriate and 11 national staff members. Hence, without diminishing the work they do, CRS is vastly undersupplied in terms of sheer staff members. Further, I argue that CRS does not attract its clients into Catholic cathedrals or groups because it lacks a sub-cultural identity with positive and negative reference points towards others.

Put simply, the limited number of priests makes contact with clergy a rarity in most villages, towns, and cities. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate quite vividly the disproportionate numbers of people to religious and diocesan priests. Diocesan priests work in a geographic area (a diocese) under a bishop, having taken oaths of celibacy and obedience. They meet the spiritual, pastoral, moral, and educational needs of the members of their church. They are sometimes teachers at parochial schools. Religious priests belong to a religious order (e.g. Jesuits or Franciscans) and take the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience. They engage in communal life in monasteries, teach at Catholic high schools or universities, or serve as missionaries in foreign countries.

Figure 1. Urbanization Growth Rates, 1960-2002

Figure 2. People per Religious Priest

147 The Data for Figures 2-4 from *Our sunday visitor’s Catholic almanac* for each respective year. Each country entry for each year contains various statistics—among those were the number of priests and the total population.
Figure 3. People per Diocesan Priest

Figure 4. People per Diocesan and Religious Priest in Selected Latin American Countries
The trends are astonishing. As Figure 2 shows, the number of people to a religious priest in 1970 was about 11,600. This disproportion continued to rise throughout the next four decades, peaking in 1999 with 21,409 people per religious priest. More religious priests have diminished the number somewhat in the past five years. Figure 3 reveals that the number of diocesan priests was incredibly high in the 1970s and 1980s, and then began decreasing rapidly to about one half of its all-time ratio.

How do these proportions compare with other countries from Latin America? As Figure 4 shows, compared to Chile, Argentina, Haiti, and Brazil, the Dominican Republic has experienced an extreme under-provision of Catholic priests. Only Haiti, its neighbor to the west, has a more unequal proportion — although the two countries are roughly equal during the mid-1980s. Chile and Argentina reach a maximum of approximately 6,700 people per priest in 2005. Brazil reaches about 10,300 to finally surpass the Dominican Republic in 2005.

What is the purpose of these priests, churches, and social organizations? I contend that they are the first contact with the physically and spiritual downtrodden. The marginalized countryside and the chaotic city shatter previous livelihoods and cultural practices. These various institutions then help to create strategies of survival. According to Migdal, strategies of survival include:

- mundane needs for food, housing, and the like…in a world that hovers on the brink of a Hobbesian state of nature. Such strategies provide not only a basis for personal survival but also a link for the individual from the realm of personal identity and self-serving action (a personal political economy) to the sphere of group identity and collective action (a communal moral economy).  

Attracting new members, sustaining them, and participating in a vibrant community are all part of Protestant “success.” At first glance, success seems to come from large organizations with surplus funding and abundant staffing. However, I argue that the amount of money spent or the number of staff members — while important — is certainly not crucial to the popularity of a church or social service organization. To be sure, the choices for strategies of survival are limited by “available resources, ideas, and organizational means.”

Yet the contact between clergy and lay leaders with physically and spiritually vulnerable people produces intimate connections that overcome constrained

---


149 Ibid., 27.
resources. That is, the availability of faith and prayer in a powerful God annihilates limitations (especially physical ones) on what that organization has or can do. Furthermore, when those Protestant leaders (volunteers, workers, etc.) are profoundly committed and tied to a local church, they work for a reason — sharing in something to be proud of, participate in, and experience. Thus, these workers cannot help but draw the people they serve into their church body—in other words, their “communal moral economy.” As I argue below, outsiders who receive social services and then accept an invitation to a culto are immediately thrust into a moral world with a new identity and a supernatural God who works miracles, which gives them pause and reasons to commit their lives to him.

Finding 3: Negative Reference Points—Protestants create identities for themselves against antagonistic “outgroups” (Catholics and politics) through delineations (symbolic demarcations against other groups) The Protestant respondents were unanimous about two things during interviews — a dislike of politics and Catholicism. Indeed, the unwavering disdain for those practices was surprising. First, I address dislike toward Catholics, and then disdain for politics.

Catholics/Catholicism and Evangelization: Two main reasons emerged as the reason behind the dislike toward Catholics: Protestants evangelize better, and Catholics are idolaters. Respondents 1, 3, 5, and 7 all attributed the success of Protestants to their ability to evangelize with more success. This evangelization comes in two ways — both through campañas and through door-to-door evangelization. Along with being aware of their success in evangelization, Protestants were proud of who they were not — namely, Catholics.

Respondent 1 stated that “When people are in the street and don’t want to be bothered with evangelism, they say, “Soy católico” [I’m Catholic]. And the evangelizers leave them alone.” Here, being Catholic is an adopted mask or title to escape from evangelization. Respondent 6 concurred that Catholics are not active formers of their faith and — to the contrary are unable to choose their own faith: “Catholics are Catholics because of fathers who taught them. But other people who weren’t a part of the Catholic Church were free to choose their own faith.”

Respondent 4 was quite lengthy in her dislike toward Catholics: “There is one Catholic Church. Many people like to dress in pants, wear earrings, and drink, and they are part of the Catholic Church. They adore and worship idols — images, papers, and saints. They pray by the Virgin Mary, but Jesus Christ is not from her flesh. We must pray to Jesus Christ in the name of Jesus Christ.
Catholics do not believe in the Holy Spirit and His manifestation. They thus remove words from the Bible. Catholics put the Bible into their own words. Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t follow the rules of the Bible either. In Revelation sinners will not enter. Psalms 115 says we must look for God and not engage in idolatry.\textsuperscript{150} Later, the same respondent stated that “Catholics don’t believe in the fainting or the falling of people”—her proof that Catholics are not filled with the Holy Spirit and thus not true followers of Christ.

Several aspects are evident here: first, Catholics lack the discipline and strictness of Protestants in their dress and lifestyle [see “Strictness Theory” p. 570-71]; second, the Holy Spirit is a crucial aspect and sign of “true” Christian life (a church without it will not bring converts); third, the Catholic Bible does not represent the true, inerrant form of God’s word. This is consistent with Wellman’s description of Evangelicals. Furthermore, Respondent 4, 5, and 6 both illuminate the question of idolatry. As Respondent 6 notes, “There is idolatry in the Catholic Church. For example, San Miguel, Don Bosco, and Altagracia [names of surrounding villages].” Respondent 5 brings in a transnational criticism that “Other counties are idolaters with their images. The only one we should adore is God. There is not much idolatry in the Christian churches here.”

In other words, the Protestant churches in the Dominican Republic are unique in their limited idolatry. They are disciplined; they believe in the True Bible and in its True revelation of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. These all reinforce their belief that believers in that country are unique, special, and different.

\textit{Politics:} The issue of politics was another source of disdain for the respondents. As Respondent 5 stated simply: “A true Christian cannot be involved in politics.” Two reasons were evident in the dislike of politics: it is corrupt and it distracts believers from God. Regarding the latter, Respondent 5 stated: “A man who puts his hope in the government is bad. He should put his hope in God.” Or, as Respondent 2 declared, “My religion is better than politics.” Respondent 6 said that even though the sindicato (union) comes every once in a while to her church, “politics don’t offer anything to me. Politicians don’t fulfill any needs. We cannot promise without fulfilling promises.”

\textsuperscript{150} The pertinent part of Psalms 115 reads: “Why do the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’ Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men… Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.”
Not participating in politics was a part of identifying oneself as apart from corruption and from non-believers. Indeed, as Respondent 4 declared, “Christians should live apart and shouldn’t live and interact with the impios [ungodly, irreligious]. Wheat and chaff are separated.” (This is a similar reference to an earlier footnote—that Christians should live in the world, not of it.) As Respondent 6 noted, “the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana [Dominican Liberation Party], the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano [Dominican Revolutionary Party], and the Partido Socialista Cristiano Reformista [Social Christian Reformist Party] do not preach the politics of Christ.”

To what extent, then, should Christian be involved in politics? Well, “not directly” according to Respondent 3. Respondent 4 clarified that “There is no one who should be involved. Christians shouldn’t be involved… [However], we can vote — it is a duty — but we cannot be involved and give opinions.”

Respondent 1, though, was candid in her observation that Christianity and politics “look a lot alike. As Christians, in order to be able to reach the people, you have to preach, move around, and convince people. Politicians do similar activities to get people to vote for them.” The difference, however, is that “Politics is dirty: they [politicians] deceive, rob, lie, and promise but don’t deliver.”

Finally, Respondent 2 combined the two “dirty” professions: “Catholics when involved in politics look for everyone to be friends with—to win votes and to reach a position.” Here the broad dislike for both politics and Catholics became a combined evil with the underlying assumption that perhaps politicians are corrupt because they are Catholics.

Hence, Protestants create negative reference points — people and topics in which they are “better” than others. Catholicism is described as full of idolatry, a faith without meaning and without the Holy Spirit, and a trap for those who were raised in it. Politics, too, is dirty, distracts believers from God, and leads to deceit and empty promises. From these negative references, though, emerge points of pride and boasting.

Finding 4: Positive reference points — Protestants evangelize “better” and are filled with the Holy Spirit. One of the recurring themes throughout the interviews was that Protestants are more committed and better at evangelizing — that is, converting more people to Christianity. That confidence in their ability combined with their frequent experience of the Spirit through numerous cultos creates a positive reference point of what Protestants are. In other words,
while Protestants create negative reference points against their surrounding world — for example, against Catholicism and politics — their pride in their successful and frequent Christian activity creates positive reference points — points of incorporation into something exciting, meaningful, and successful.

In the Dominican Republic evangelization occurs in two ways — on the street or at houses and through campañas. Campañas are Christian campaigns that generally last three or more nights. Several can occur at the same time in the same city, depending on the night. A Protestant church establishes a location for the evangelization drive and then the members pray over the site and the people and fast for several days before the actual events occur. During the lengthy evenings—usually lasting from sundown until midnight or 1 or 2 AM, an outside evangelist or a local pastor preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ; both old and young accept Jesus into their lives and the sick receive healing.\textsuperscript{151} The church also provides music. Members of the congregation are there to pray for people, to witness to them, and to participate in the activities. One of the most anticipated parts of any campaña is the presence of the Holy Spirit and subsequent miracles. Respondent 5 related the story of a campaña, on the waterfront of Barahona in which a child of six told his dream about going to Hell through a tunnel and then being lifted by three angels to go to Heaven. Indeed, several posters throughout the town of Barahona advertised a campaña in mid-August, 2004 with the command: “Ven y espera un milagro” (“Come and wait for a miracle”). According to a poster for another campaña held in April 2004, “the lame walk, the blind see, and the deaf hear.”\textsuperscript{152}

Another technique of evangelization is spontaneous — either passing out information about Christianity on the street to passersby (e.g. tracts or pamphlets) or walking door-to-door to talk to neighbors. Respondent 1 compared her door-to-door evangelization as successful, “like what the Mormons do.” However, she proudly boasted that “Christians” (i.e. those outside of Mormonism) were more successful because “Christians go during the afternoon and evening to convert people. Mormons go early in the morning and aren’t as successful because people are gone working.” Hence, to her the mere difference in time leads to success. Respondent 2 attributed success to the fact that “Christians are friendly because they want to win souls.” Respondent 3 said that

\textsuperscript{151} I asked Respondent 5 why outside evangelists come to the Dominican Republic for campañas. She replied: “Many speakers at campañas are foreigners because ‘a prophet is not accepted in his own country.’ More people also come when the speakers are foreign.” This is a reference to the Gospel of Luke 4:24 in which Jesus uses this phrase.

\textsuperscript{152} This refers to a passage in Luke 7:22 in which Jesus responds to a question from a follower of John the Baptist as a sign of his lordship.
“Evangelicals are always carrying the gospel to people — to the door and on the street” (emphasis mine), adopting a tone of unceasing work for her faith.

Respondent 3 also noted that when people come to church, they begin to follow Jesus. Respondent 7 shared his belief as to why this happens: “In the Iglesia Evangélica, people are challenged to change their lives. The impact of the campañas is that people hear and see a difference in the lives of Christians. People see healings. Anyone who passes on the street will see a difference between the people inside our church and those outside.” The confidence, then, is that changes in lifestyles and the experience of miracles shows passers-by a different, dynamic lifestyle — one different than the Catholic one. As Respondent 4 declared, “Churches are popular because there are miracles, healings, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. They are not so ‘cold’ to the Spirit… God manifests himself as a blessing on my church. Ímpios won’t go to church if they don’t see the difference of a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.”

Thus, two distinct and related factors give Christians pride in the Dominican Republic. One is the successful techniques of evangelization, utilizing campañas to share the Gospel amidst miracles and actively seeking new converts through door-to-door persistence. The second is the presence of the Holy Spirit as confirmation that their beliefs are real, powerful, and true. Indeed, the presence of the Holy Spirit is what draws passersby and substantiates that group’s message.

VIII. Implication and Conclusions: Global Protestant Success?

Protestants in the Dominican Republic are in a position of enviable strength. They are “rapacious wolves” in the eyes of some; “religious consumers” in the metaphors of others. Whatever their moniker, they are Christian adherents who are revolutionizing religion in Latin America and the world. Starting with the African Episcopal Methodist Church in 1824 and continuing with Pentecostal groups in the 20th century, these Protestants have overcome persecution and a powerful Catholic Church to now grow at rapid rates. This is, indeed, a religious revolution.

Why this term “revolution”? Surely there are inferences of takeover, of shifting paradigms and orthodoxies. Undoubtedly, too, there are insinuations of a subversion of religious dominance from Catholicism to Protestantism. Mostly though, the revolution comes from the absolute and unwavering conviction that Protestants — far from being religious consumers or adherents — are fully
dedicating their lives to an unshakeable faith in the God they serve. Attending *cultos* four nights a week, participating in miracle-filled *campañas*, experiencing glossolalia and faith-healings on a daily basis produce power in movement. This devotion certainly is not a new phenomenon across the globe. However, this religious expression is unique to the Dominican Republic in its history and has every sign of enduring for centuries to come.

One of the principal reasons for this longevity is found in the signs and wonders that Protestants experience in their interactions with each other and their churches. Respondent 7 was indeed correct when he said that people notice something different about his church. Indeed, the very energy and dynamism in which Spirit-filled worshippers engage is attractive in its uniqueness. Furthermore, when these followers take that energy into evangelizing (literally, “making other bringers of the good news”) and witness changed lives, they begin to establish positive reference points about who they are and what they do. From that exuberance follows a certain disdain, then, for those who are not — not Protestant, not successful evangelizers, not righteous, not true followers of Jesus Christ, etc. Dominican Protestants easily pick two groups to criticize — politicians and Catholics. By their assertions these two are immoral, dirty, deceivers, and hypocrites. Against these evil-doers, Protestants form countermodels, “clear distinction from and significant engagement and tension with relevant outgroups.”

When daily life confronts these tensions—when food is limited, when farmers are hurting, when drug addictions take over lives—Protestants jump to help with myriad organizations. They help the downtrodden to create new spiritual and physical strategies of survival — meeting the needy in their stomachs and in their hearts. The amount of money and resources that these organizations have and the number of services they provide has little to do with their success in attracting new members. Instead, these organizations—so intimately connected with local churches across the country — draw people to experience and participate in a group that already has a strong sub-cultural identity. Moreover, the belief in a miraculous God that can heal and change lives makes worldly limitations seem trivial. Put simply, the faith of Protestants in the Dominican Republic can truly “move mountains.”

Thus, Protestants are people who are both participants of sub-cultural identities and rational choice theory. They hold two ideologies in tension — the desire to

---

153 Smith and Emerson, 118-19.
meet their material needs at the present moment and their yearning for deep spiritual satisfaction and identity in a vibrant group of individuals. Both theories work together to describe the moral spheres that Protestants populate.

The unanswered questions seem to be twofold — how political will these Protestants become and how much will they continue to grow. In other words, will they become motivated (much like conservative Evangelicals in the US) to take their ideas of morality and apply them to public offices and public law? One of the reasons Protestants have avoided direct political involvement is that they see politics as an occupation for the God-less. Another reason comes from a subtle undertone in their history: Protestants have been persecuted and repressed by the state and government at different points in time. To lose that persecution and suddenly to gain acceptance is also to lose a feeling of constant pressure to conform, a feeling from which Protestants currently build much of their strength. Becoming widely accepted, therefore, is to become complicit with the status quo. It is also to revoke the intensely-held belief that the only way to solve problems is in the creation of ever-increasing Christian moral spheres.

This is evident in Respondent 1 —“The church combats delinquency by evangelizing the youth.” Perhaps the clearest explanation comes from Respondent 2 — “My religion is better than politics.” Indeed, until politics is able to meet the same needs of identity and belonging with miraculous signs, it will be a dirty, worldly activity.

In terms of continued growth, as long as Protestants in the Dominican Republic continue to witness a God that transforms lives, the churches will grow. Speaking in tongues, experiencing faith-healings, being “slain in the Spirit,” and celebrating a supernatural God show outsiders that something special is happening within these moral spheres. Those outsiders then join and commit their lives. And so the Good News spreads.

Daniel Escher is a graduate of the University of Washington in International Studies and Spanish. He is currently a graduate student at Princeton Theological Seminary. He wrote this thesis in 2005 under the direction of Dr. James Wellman, Comparative Religion Program, in the Jackson School of International Studies at the UW.
Glossary of Terms

Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs, or Base Communities). Catholic communities that were popular in the 1960s and 1970s. They were developed with the purpose of forming grass roots Catholic communities, which protested and fought for the poor. According to Levine, “they are small groups, usually homogeneous in social composition (based on class and neighborhood or village), which gather regularly to read and comment on the Bible. Without exception, CEBs originate in some linkage to the institutional church, a linkage that is maintained through courses, the distribution of mimeographed material, conferences, and periodic visits by clergy and sisters.”

Some made alliances with military groups and became violent. They receive their funding from the Catholic Church in various forms — money, land donation, or volunteer manpower. In 1979, the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (Latin American Episcopal Counsel) in Puebla, Mexico proclaimed that they were “motive for joy and hope within the Church. … They have become loci of evangelization and motors of liberation and development… it is one of the sources entrusted to lay persons [who are] cheerleaders of communities, catechists, missionaries.”

Bateyes: villages in the Dominican Republic comprised of Haitian workers—either sugar cane cutters or plantain harvesters. During harvest season, these workers cannot leave the villages — enforced with police by the State Sugar Counsel.[156] Haitians are constructed to be disease-ridden, malnourished, and uneducated descendants of African slaves who believe in Voodoo. Dominicans, other the other hand, are brave warriors, Catholics, and descendants of Spaniards.[156] Joaquin Balaguer, a politician, declared that Haitians are “marked by horrible defects,” “generator[s] of sloth,” and “indolent by nature.” They thus work 11.48 hours per day, 6.4 days a week. This leaves little time for school (one-third are literate) but plenty of time for injuries: 85 percent of workplace injuries in the Dominican Republic occur in the fields. Malnutrition, disease, and child labor are quite rampant since toilets and running water are rare.

157 Sagás, 51.
Campañas: evangelistic “campaigns” sponsored by one or more churches. Lasting two or more days and held at night, they are filled with prayer, music, sermons, and miracles.

Cultos: worship services with “oral and corporal participation of the assembled, corporal contortions, constant responses to the preaching, ecstatic experiences, testimonies of conversion and curing miracles.”

Glossolalia: a manifestation of the Holy Spirit involving speaking in tongues.

Pneumatics: communication with God.

\[160\] Villamán, 27. See also d’Epinay, 45-55, for a broad—albeit rustic—description of cultos in Chile.

**ABSTRACT**

What is currently known as “destruction art” originated in the artistic and cultural work of avantgarde art groups during the 1960s. In the aftermath of World War Two, the threat of annihilation through nuclear conflict and the Vietnam War drastically changed the cultural landscapes and everyday life in the United States, Asia, and Europe. In this context, “destruction art” has been situated as the “discourse of the survivor,” or the method in which the visual arts cope with societies structured by violence and the underlying threat of death. Many artists involved in destruction art at this time were concerned with destroying not just physical objects, but also with performing destruction with various media. By integrating the body into conceptual works rather than literal narratives of violence, artists contested and redefined mainstream definitions of art, social relations and hierarchies, and consciousness. Yoko Ono, who was born in Tokyo in 1933 and began her work as an artist in the late 1950s, addresses destruction through conceptual performances, instructions, and by presenting and modifying objects. Ono’s work is not only vital to understanding the development of the international avant garde, but it is relevant to contemporary art and society. Her attention to the internalization of violence and oppression reflects contemporaneous feminist theory that situates the female body as text and battleground. By repositioning violence in performance work, Ono’s art promotes creative thinking, ultimately drawing out the reality of destruction that remains hidden within the physical and social body.


**Fair Use Notice:** The images within this article are provided for educational and informational purposes. They are being made available in an effort to advance the understanding of scientific, environmental, economic, social justice and human rights issues etc. It is believed that this constitutes a ‘fair use’ of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have an interest in using the included information for research and educational purposes.
Instructions for Destruction
Yoko Ono’s Performance Art

By Whitney Frank
University of Washington, Seattle

Yoko Ono is famous for her avant-garde conceptual music, artworks, performances and, of course, her marriage to John Lennon.¹ She completed some of her biggest and most well-known projects with Lennon during the 1960s and 1970s. Both Ono and Lennon channeled their efforts for world peace into very public artistic, musical, and political endeavors, such as the billboards reading *War is Over (If you Want it)* and the televised Bed-Ins for Peace that started in their hotel room. She continues to campaign for peace — in 2007 she unveiled her *Imagine Peace Tower* in Reykjavík, Iceland: a wishing well from which a giant beam of light shoots toward the sky, symbolically projecting a unifying and powerful message of peace into the atmosphere. Ono is perhaps best known as the source of the Beatle’s breakup and as having compelled Lennon to enter her seemingly strange world of the avant-garde. Details about her marriage with Lennon and study of their artistic collaborations reveal that this is not the case. This misunderstanding of Ono’s life and work suggests that continued research and reevaluation will help further the understanding of Ono and her place within the history of performance art. I examine her work in the context of what is currently known as “destruction art,” which originated in the artistic and cultural work of avant-garde art groups during the 1960s.

After World War II, and in particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, the western world was frequently reminded of both the threat of nuclear annihilation and the everyday violence of the Vietnam. Within this context, art historian Kristine Stiles situates *destruction art* as the “discourse of the survivor”: the only method in which the visual arts can cope in a society structured by violence and the underlying threat of death.² Destruction art therefore becomes an ethical matter, an instance where artist-survivors attempt to expose histories and systems of violence, and reinscribe such experiences into society’s current consciousness. In these terms, art production indeed becomes a matter of survival. Many artists involved in destruction art at this time were not only concerned with destroying physical objects and materials, but also with using various media to create

---

¹ I would like to thank Patricia Failing, professor of Art History at the University of Washington, for her guidance during this project.
performances that confront the very issue of destruction and violence. By integrating the body into conceptual works rather than simply performing literal narratives of violence, artists contested and redefined mainstream definitions of art, social relations and hierarchies, and consciousness.

From the beginning of her artistic career, Yoko Ono defied contemporary art conventions by exploring the power of the concept to convey aesthetic and philosophical meaning. She began studying and working as an artist in the mid-1950s, focusing on alternative models for musical scores. Soon she turned these scores into creative instructions and performances that anyone could do if their mind was open.

Throughout her body of work, Ono addresses destruction through conceptual performances, instructions, and by presenting and modifying objects. Her cultivation of fully conceptual artworks predates not only the development of “conceptual art” in form, and as discourse, but she often engages in proto-feminist commentary as well. Her attention to the internalization of violence and oppression reflects contemporaneous feminist thought that situates the female body as both text and as a battleground. By repositioning violence in performance work, Ono’s art promotes creative thinking, ultimately drawing out the reality of destruction that remains hidden within the physical and social body.

The development of Ono’s conceptual art and her involvement in avant-garde groups are linked with her unusual experiences in her early life living in and traveling between Japan and the United States. Ono was born in 1933 in Tokyo to mother Isoko and father Yeisuke. She grew up in well-to-do society as her parents both descended from wealthy and noble families and her father worked and traveled often for the Yokohama Specie Bank. When Ono was young, she attended exclusive schools both in Japan and the United States—she even went to school for a while with Emperor Hirohito’s sons—and her father encouraged her to follow her passion for musical and artistic training. In Japanese aristocratic culture of this time, there existed an ideal model of the literati or bunjin in which “[refining] the soul” consisted of moving between “elegant pursuits” or various art forms. Though her artistic training was initially very formalized and rigorous, Ono’s aristocratic heritage and encouragement from her parents allowed her to pursue several artistic and musical endeavors from an early age.

---

Exposure and participation in the cultures of both the United States and Japan also influenced Ono’s relationships with artistic production. By 1941, the Ono family had moved between Japan and the United States twice because of Yeisuke’s work. Art historian Midori Yoshimoto considers the stress involved with moving back and forth between two countries to have had a significant influence on Ono’s developing thinking about performance art. For Yoshimoto, “the performance of a life negotiating between the private and public self may have started at that time.”

Living between countries and cultures resulted in a kind of “hybrid identity” for Ono, as she did not fully inhabit either realm, and was pressured to perform extremely well in order to represent Japan in the United States, or to fulfill her duties as a child of aristocrats in Japan. Although she felt encouraged to study music and art, this part of her life seemed to be scripted according to her social positioning as aristocratic outsider and foreigner.

---

5 Ibid.
Several art historians cite Ono’s experience in Japan during World War II as not only insight into her positioning as an outsider within her home country, but also as further development of her philosophical attitudes regarding art. Yoshimoto explains that after the Ono family’s home was bombed and they escaped to the countryside, “Ono experienced hardship in daily life for the first time” because in addition to the stress and fear she felt during the war, “local farmers were not hospitable to [the Onos]…ostracizing them as a rich, Americanized family.”6 In addition to already feeling like outsiders and after witnessing Japan’s devastation and surrender, local children did not accept Ono and her brother into their groups. The two would hide together and spend afternoons imagining a different life; Ono stressed that they “used the powers of visualization to survive.”7 Here is a glimpse at the potential beginning of Ono’s life-long focus on visualizations and concepts as art in them. Not only did she experience life as a constant struggle to perform, but she also utilized imagined actions and objects—indeed, replaced real life with an imagined one—to escape the effects of wartime violence, a strategy that becomes a major theme in her art.

Ono and was not alone in grappling with her position within a confusing postwar society in Japan. Several avant-garde art groups arose in Japan after the war and they brought together themes of destruction, irrationality, and political commentary in their actions, objects and performances. Art historian Shinchiro Osaki situates the development of various radical art groups in Japan in the early 1950s as part of the process of renegotiation and regeneration of art after World War Two. Artists in groups like the Gutai Art Association, Kyūshū-ha, and Group Zero built new relationships between the artist, action, and the body through innovative performance methods that reassessed the superiority of “formalist orthodoxies” of art from Europe and the United States.8 After a violent defeat in war and the extended American presence in Japan, artists resisted conventional art forms such as social realist work popular prior to and during the war. Japanese art groups that began to “emphatically [use] their bodies as the locus of artistic expression” greatly influenced the international avant-garde and specifically in the west where many artists were in search for new forms of expression.9

---

6 Ibid.
7 Munroe, 13.
9 Yoshimoto, 3.
Gutai was officially formed in 1954 and members published a journal to expose the public to their exhibitions and activities. Group Zero formed around the same time and included artists who eventually joined Gutai. Their exhibitions became more like events; the “Experimental Outdoor Modern Art Exhibition to Challenge the Burning Midsummer Sun” of 1955, for example, was held along a river and artists conducted destructive actions and creatively incorporated junk into the surroundings. The theme of construction through destruction was strong in this exhibition: Kazuo Shiraga wielded an axe and built a large log statue and Saburo Murakami ran over and tore a large canvas sheet on the ground. Such actions were radical and unparalleled at the time as the Japanese art scene had not experienced such violent performance work before. Later in 1955, “The First Gutai Exhibition,” held in Tokyo, continued to challenge assumptions about contemporary art with Murakami and Shiraga’s physical and destructive actions.

In addition to struggling against the assertion of Western culture and artistic practice into Japanese culture after the war, avant-garde artists were also fighting a history of government control over the art world. Yoshimoto explains that at this time in Japan, there was a gap between traditional and modern art and the influence of modern Western styles and theories produced artistic hierarchies that changed according to needs of the government and society. For example, before World War II, the government promoted Western artistic developments, while during the war, such art was banned to make way for war propaganda. Young artists after the war like those involved with Gutai thus developed radical techniques to oppose and defy sanctioned art practices.

The Gutai Group’s manifesto emphasizes that artists and materials engage with each other through action. The group explains, “Gutai art does not change the material but brings it to life…the human spirit and the material reach out their hands to each other” and therefore “keeping the life of the material alive also means bringing the spirit alive.” For Gutai members, the artist and materials...

---

10 Osaki, 123.
11 In Shiraga’s performance Challenging Mud, Shigara wrestled with a large heap of clay. In Murakami’s performance Paper Tearing, Murakami burst through layers of paper. Osaki explains that these two particular actions still retain a “near-mythical” status today because they were both shocking and innovative. Gutai (along with other groups in Japan) influenced the development of avant-garde groups around the world. Their performance-oriented work predates, for example, Allan Kaprows’s happenings and the founding of Fluxus.
12 Yoshimoto, 11.
13 Ibid.
seem to share authorship when creating an artwork, suggesting that the both process and the final product are significant. Shiraga’s *Challenging Mud*, performed at the “First Gutai Exhibition,” implies that the clay actively and defiantly responds to Shiraga’s full-bodied movements; both Shiraga and the clay must make efforts to create a muddy form. Stiles suggests this new relationship between the materials, the body, and the spirit became an urgent signifier of human existence — a means to rebirth at a time when war and expansion of nuclear weapons programs brought about mass obliteration of bodies all over the world. Through direct and assertive contact with each other, the artist’s body and the material with which she works are enlivened; the artist does not just seek to manipulate the material in order to create an object to be viewed, but rather to bring out the life of the material through active work which, in turn, indicates that the artist too, is living. In postwar Japan, the mere act of asserting one was *living* after the obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki seemed, for these artists, to be vital to the process of recovery and renewal. The Gutai Manifesto ends with a declaration that affirms a resilient and assertive commitment to life and art: “We shall hope that there is always a fresh spirit in our Gutai exhibitions and that the discovery of new life will call forth a tremendous scream in the material itself.”

The conditions of war and its aftermath affected women artists in a similar way to men, prompting both to question what it meant for them to exist after World War II. Both women and men explored various methods to assert their existence through actions and performance work with materials. Though Gutai and Group Zero did not specifically limit the participation of women in their activities, there certainly was a lack of equal participation in art production within and outside of these avant-garde circles. Ono herself was not part of Gutai or Group Zero, as at the time they were established and became active she was attending Gakushūin University as their first female student in the philosophy department. Then in

15 Ibid., 235.
1952 and after only a year at Gakushūin, Ono and her family moved back to New York and she enrolled at Sarah Lawrence to study music composition and poetry. Though she missed the developing stages of these artistic groups, they set precedence and created interest in avant-garde performance work specifically in Japan, but their innovations also influenced artists in the west. Later in the 1960s, Ono returned to Japan to further explore and execute her conceptual and performance work.

Though Gutai’s membership included several women—more than other avant-garde groups in fact—Yoshimoto emphasizes that the general attitude toward women artists in Japan was that they were “at the very bottom of the social hierarchy” and were therefore scrutinized more harshly than male artists. \(^{17}\) Both their gender and their interest in the avant-garde arts were limiting factors in Japan. Though women’s access to education and institutional began to expand after the war, there were still few institutions of higher education available to them, and women artists were viewed with contempt for “indulging themselves in an artistic hobby.” \(^{18}\) A woman’s role in society had little to do with art—at the university, as a profession, or for recreation—in that artistic production would take away from their duties to the family and state.

Ono’s father Yeisuke was passionate about music and he happily structured his daughter’s early education around rigorous formal training in music, \(^{19}\) but later discouraged her from being a composer because that field was “too hard for women.” \(^{20}\) Ono was restricted to certain types of training and artistic pursuits deemed appropriate to her gender and her social position. Even in the face of inequalities in attitudes, treatment, and access to resources and education that made artistic and economic success difficult for women in Japan’s avant-garde, artists like Atsuko Tanaka and Takako Saito achieved some degree of success. Both, however, moved to New York to strive for greater success.

Saito and other immigrant artists like Shigeko Kubota and Mieko Shiomi moved from Japan to the United States in the early 1960s and became involved with Fluxus, founded by George Maciunas. An avant-garde coalition of artists, composers, and designers, Maciunas monitored the group membership, ejecting those who did not seem to commit to Fluxus ideals. He invited the newcomers from Japan to take part in Fluxus activities and productions, as there was mutual

---

\(^{17}\) Yoshimoto, 12.
\(^{18}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{19}\) Munroe, 14.
\(^{20}\) Yoshimoto, 81.
feeling that Fluxus was a space compatible with the work of groups like Gutai. Though Maciunas was demanding and often imposed his own ideas on group members, Saito viewed Fluxus more so as an opportunity to “[explore] her artistic direction rather than as a full commitment to the group.” The word “Fluxus” itself indicates a state of fluctuation and change and its membership and production changed over time. It is therefore difficult to absolutely define all characteristics typical of the group’s art.

Similar to Gutai’s opposition of past art forms and the influence of modern Western art, Fluxus art is positioned against established notions of artistic genius associated with western Modernism and Abstract Expressionism. Fluxus does this by inhabiting realms somewhere between materiality and thought, where there is no apparent demarcation of what constitutes life and what counts as art. Therefore, Fluxus artists did not create any paintings or other traditional gallery objects, but rather focused on inviting the viewer, the environment, or a group of performers to participate in the creation of art, allowing for an array of outcomes and a multitude of interpretations. They produced films, performances, installations, mail art, books, and boxes of objects in an effort to reveal the “non-existent visible in life” by facilitating experiences that combine the subject and the object. Their experiential work was intended to be non-precious and ephemeral and to have transformational power; if art originates within life, then art like life, will change and fade as life constantly changes and will eventually end.

Ono began creating “event scores” several years before she became involved with Fluxus officially. Around 1956, Ono became acquainted with soon-to-be Fluxus members through her first husband, musician Toshi Ichiyanagi, as well as John Cage, one of the most influential musicians and Fluxist theorists. Frustrated with the restrictions of conventional music scores, Ono began creating work that included poetry and instructions such as *Secret Piece* (1953) in which the performer chooses one note to play and plays it in the woods “with the accompaniment of the birds singing at dawn.” Conventional music scores restrict the inclusion of natural sounds, imagination, and the chance encounters and incidents that, for Ono, make up a piece of music. The instructional quality

---

21 Ibid., 120.
24 Yoshimoto, 82.
of this score make it seem more like an event that anyone can perform, not just a traditionally trained musician.

Her event instructions and her perspectives on music and performance meshed with Fluxus, as artists became increasingly invested in performance activities like Allan Kaprows’s happenings. Happenings became multi-media evenings where any number of artists and audience members participated in scripted or improvised actions. Fluxus was influenced by happenings and was also shaped by Cage’s revolutionary musical work and deep interest in Zen philosophies. Instead of composing music according to traditional methods, Cage utilized unusual means that included chance (as sometimes dictated by the I-Ching), periods of silence, and interruptive noise. In his piece for piano, 4’33’’ (1952), a performer steps on stage, opens the piano, then sits on the bench silently for exactly four minutes and thirty-three seconds, and finally closes the piano and exits the stage. Sounds that happened during the performance made up the composition and could include coughing, the rustling audience, traffic, birds—anything from real life. Cage’s goal for this piece (and his modus operandi in general) was to “[wake people] up to the very life we’re living”. In 4’33’’, Cage turned the audience into active participants as their sounds made up the music. 25 His desire to “wake up” audiences and include their authorship in an artwork derives from theories of Zen and its accompanying aesthetics.

Zen artists focused on individual understanding through meditation, separation from rationality through the use of space and reductive graphics, and the search for universal understandings deriving from individual experience and meditation. 26 Cage and Fluxus artists defied traditional Western artistic doctrines because they were interested in exploring the area between art and life. By transgressing its boundaries and conflating the two — through the inclusion of raw, personal experience — lay the potential to discover universal meanings. Cage’s influence on artists associated with Fluxus and its philosophy should not be underestimated. Ono recognized that Cage’s investment in Zen philosophy and acknowledgement of her Japanese heritage helped her open new paths for artistic exploration. 27

In 1960, Ono hosted performances by Fluxus artists at her Chambers Street loft where artists like La Monte Young, Ichiyanagi, and Jackson MacLow were able

26 Ibid., 36,
27 Yoshimoto, 84.
to present experimental works. According to Yoshimoto the events in Ono’s loft “proved to be quite influential because [they] inspired George Maciunas to organize his own concert series, which became the base for Fluxus.”28 She was therefore an integral part of the development of Fluxus and was in a position of reciprocal, artistic inspiration.

The compatibility between Ono and her newly found community of artists, however, did not guard against experiences of sexism within and outside of the group. During the Chambers Street performances, Ono was regarded by many of her peers as merely the owner of the loft, not an independent artist. Ono believes that she was not taken seriously because she was a woman: “Most of my friends were all male and the tried to stop me being an artist. They tried to shut my mouth.”29 Despite the availability of education, an artistic community, and resources, like other women artist in Japan, Ono struggled with sexism. Furthermore, Ono inhabited the position as a “double-outsider;” in addition to living in between the cultures of Japan and the United States, she holds double-outsider status within the U.S. because she is an Asian woman. Just as her “friends” had tried to discourage her from making art, the press was also as unfriendly, regarding her attempts to assert herself in a male-dominated field and her later relationship with John Lennon as overly aggressive and opportunistic.30 Ono defied societal conventions that regulated the behavior of women of color in the United States. She did not hide her heritage or ascribe to cultural stereotyping and was determined to showcase her conceptual art works despite negative press.

Stiles observes that Ono’s life between and outside of cultural groups informs her art, manifested in the manner Ono constructs the body and mind as a dichotomy. Through her conceptual instructions, she creates events as analogs for passing from one experiential sphere to another, from one conceptual plane to another. In them, she sought aesthetic melding as a process and means for perceptually transcending the boundaries of material phenomena in order to gain an epiphany, thereby transforming conditions of Being.31 Recalling the time in Ono’s childhood when she and her brother played imaginative games to escape

28 Ibid., 85.
29 Ibid., 86.
their life in the countryside during World War II, Ono creates conceptual artworks to transcend societal boundaries that restrict thinking, living, and art production. Anyone can execute her instructions, if only the mind can allow the imagination to run free; the body will inevitably follow. Her works provide a means to change the self and society because they require creatively thinking outside of society’s conventions and then inventing one’s own.

Ono began creating instructions and performances in New York during the mid-1950s. She had felt she had more freedom to investigate these methods outside of college and therefore left Sarah Lawrence. Alongside Fluxus and work by other avant-garde artists, Ono developed her own style of performances that she called “events”—an effort to differentiate them from the happenings that were becoming popular at the time. Ono’s own description of her early events as more like a “wish or hope” than strictly an evening of performance, which may seemingly have little to do with the concept of “destruction art.” Wishing and hoping are optimistic activities that involve excitement, good feelings, and luck. However, wishing or hoping often originate from devastating circumstances that cause a person to desperately wish for improvement, as there may perhaps be no plausible means for an individual to change the circumstances.

Ono’s work—her texts, and her objects and her performances—have origins in negative experiences of her past—and it is in this context that her work exemplifies what art historian Kristine Stiles refers to as “destruction art,” which “is the visual corollary to the discourse of the survivor” and “the only attempt in the visual arts to grapple seriously with both the technology of actual annihilation and the psychodynamics of virtual extinction.” Not only does Ono incorporate physical and conceptual destruction in much of her work, but themes of healing, connection and communication between people and nature and imagination also position her body of work under the realm of destruction art.

Stiles positions her model of destruction art within a social and historical analysis to explain the aesthetic tendencies of destruction artists. Specifically relating to Ono’s experiences, Stiles views the violence of World War II and its protracted aftermath in the Cold War era as examples of how society, worldwide, fostered a “genocidal mentality.” During times of international conflict, nearly everything in a nation is restructured: the economy, educational system, industry, advertising, and employment could all be altered to meet the demands of war.

---

This total restructuring of life was more extreme than ever: new technologies such as state-of-the-art air planes and atomic bombs were used in World War II, redefining modern warfare and the lengths to which violence could reach. Stiles emphasizes that the experience of such tremendous violence results not only in societal systems that focus on “the destruction of all life,” but also cultures that exhibit “dissociative behavior” like “psychic numbing…disavowal, and denial” to cope with an all-pervading sense of destruction.

For Stiles this “genocidal mentality” necessarily denotes the destruction artist’s status as a survivor and includes a range of survivor experiences regarding literal and social death and destruction. She describes their artistic processes as creation via destruction, which becomes a means of reducing the “psychic stress…to combat the threat to survival” that pervades everyday workings and the structure of many societies in the post-World War Two and nuclear eras. During this time, the threat of annihilation through nuclear conflict in the aftermath of World War Two, and the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s greatly changed the cultural landscapes and everyday life in the United States, Asia, and Europe. In addition to major international conflicts, survivor-artists deal with destructive or violent events from their personal lives as well.

The combination personal history with social commentary was expressed within this genre by the use of diverse variety of media, style, presentation, and level of violence. A comparison of Murakami’s work with that of Ono’s illustrates the possible modes of expression found in destruction art. In Murakami’s At One Moment Opening Six Holes (1955), he rapidly punched through large paper stretched over frames, while Ono’s work Pencil Lead Piece (1962) requires the participant to imagine that pencil lead fills her or his head, then destroy it and finally, tell someone about the destruction she or he experienced. Both of these works differ greatly in their suggestion and expression of violence. Though many of Ono’s pieces either require participants to destroy something or an object itself might already be destroyed, Ono focused her events and instructions primarily on the imaginary destroying of objects, ideas, institutions, and sometimes even people. In Painting to Hammer a Nail (left), viewers used the hammer attached to a wood panel to hammer in nails in any way they wanted. This act would typically be viewed as destroying a piece of art, the act of hammering also signifies creation in the building of an object, and thus Ono creates a new and collaborative artwork. Similarly, Smoke Piece (1964), asks participants to “Smoke everything you can. Including your pubic hair.” This piece

33 Ibid., 74.
34 Ibid., 75.
is about conceptual destruction of both the material surroundings and the self, and like *Painting to Hammer a Nail*, the creation of art is possible through the destructive act. Whether relaying a traumatic experience from their past or embodying destruction from another sector of society, Ono and Murakami act as survivors, both through their testimony of their performances. Stiles explains that through presentation of questions regarding destruction, artists “[bear] witness to the tenuous conditionality of survival,” which therefore makes them act as or become survivors themselves. By interrogating the means of destruction and survival, artists in effect, produce new ways to combat or deal with violence, sharing this knowledge through their artwork. Both *At One Moment* and *Pencil Lead Piece* attain creation through the destruction, imaginary or actual. Like his fellow Gutai members, Murakami “intended [his] actions to result in the creation of paintings.” Though Gutai’s destructive actions resulted in innovative artworks, they differ from Ono’s work because they were mainly solitary acts that had explicit endings. Ono, however, did not intend for her works or events to have a static presentation or ending, but rather she approaches art-making “as a practice, an unfinished process of concept transmission.” Her openness and creativity allow for collaboration, a variety of outcomes, and the spectator’s use of the imagination. Ono’s employment of these strategies indeed makes “wish and hope” an accurate description of her work and events. By expressing a concept through simple actions or instructions, she facilitates creation through the destruction, which often results in affirmation. She allows participants to turn a public performance with violent undertones or actions into intimate introspection that art historian Alexandra Munroe calls “mental freedom.”

---

35 Ibid.
36 Osaki, 125-6.
37 Munroe, 13.
38 Ibid.
Discovering and experiencing this “mental freedom” is a vital part of Ono’s destruction art. This freedom can be realized through her artworks that directly deal with the violence and destruction permeating society in overt and subtle ways, as they encourage participants to open the mind to new and seemingly impossible possibilities. By working as a collective, Ono and her participants create connection and understanding that facilitates liberation.

Though Ono’s family was able to avoid much of the violence Japan experienced during World War Two, Ono came of age in the aftermath of the war, a time that involved radical changes, confusion, and conflict. Initially in Japan, the devastation of war created a “post-surrender psyche of exhaustion, remorse, and despondency, an outpouring of relief, optimism, and liberation” flourished and eventually produced “a spirit of freedom and openness unprecedented in modern Japanese society.”

Acknowledging the openness that developed is not to ignore the protests against the postwar Americanization of Japanese society that occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, but rather to emphasize the pervasiveness of the experience of war and how remarkably Japanese society overcame such devastation and fostered creativity. In regards to the conditions of life during an era of unparalleled globalization, Ono herself asserted that the world “need[s] more skies than coke.”

Destruction artists or “survivors” utilize experiences—some personal, some affecting society at large—and direct them towards and out from the physical body. According to Stiles, the survivor discourse of destruction art entails “present[ing] the „imagery of extinction” localized in the body” as artists “recapitulate the technological conditions, effects, processes, and epistemologies of terminal culture” she describes as maintaining a “genocidal mentality.”

Through demonstration and by spreading awareness, destruction artists use their bodies as a means for understanding and recreating the experience of violence and hope to influence society to enact positive changes to curb destructive activity. Localizing destruction performances in the body emphasizes not only the literal effects of violence on the individual body but it also alludes to how society violently conditions and organizes individuals and groups. Performances can be overtly brutal to match outrageous violent events such as the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or they can be more contemplative exercises in understanding destructive activities in the realms of the personal and political.

---

39 Munroe, 15.
40 Yoko Ono, Imagine Yoko (Lund, Sweden: Bakhall, 2005), 101
41 Stiles, “Survival Ethos and Destruction Art,” 76.
Ono’s *Blood Piece* (1960) for example, is both explicitly violent as well as intimate, as she instructs participants to paint with their blood:

**BLOOD PIECE**

*Use your blood to paint.*

*Keep painting until you faint.* (a)

*Keep painting until you die.* (b)

Painting with one’s own blood is simultaneously a deeply personal act, as the artist uses a foundational substance of life to paint, and an extremely violent act as death is the final stroke of the painting. Ono of course, did not intend for people to literally complete this instruction; but she herself originally composed *Blood Piece* with her pricked finger.  

This piece also relates to Fluxus values and practice because with her instruction to paint with one’s own blood, Ono illuminates the absurdity of being so serious about art production that one is willing to die for it—a seriousness projected in Western modern art and the source of Fluxus’s counternarrative. *Blood Piece* is a macabre demonstration that shows how anyone can become an artist since the tools are already within each person. In this case, it is not natural talent running through an artist’s veins that makes them worthy of recognition, but rather the blood, a basic feature of life all humans share, is an artistic medium worth exploring. While Fluxus values insist upon obscuring the boundaries that separate life from art, Ono uses the body and its interior functions in her instructions to “[direct] interplay between internal concepts (manifest in words) and external actions (the actual events…)” so that living things and life experiences can be used to illustrate artistic work.  

In this case, Ono locates artistic practice and an encounter with violence within a life-sustaining element not to express the view that life and art are the same, but rather to demonstrate the transformative powers of violence: the artist is no longer living by the end of the painting. In a related instruction, *Beat Piece* (1963), Ono asks participants to simply “Listen to a heart beat.” Though there is no element of violence here, Ono again focuses her audiences on a basic component of life through intimate contact, drawing attention to the meaningful  

42 Ono, *Grapefruit.*

43 Barbara Haskell and John G. Handardt, *Yoko Ono: arias and objects* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1991), 19.

potential of the body itself. *Beat Piece* demonstrates Ono’s insistence that since life is experienced as a fusion of sensations, her art must conversely focus upon isolating sensory experiences. She requests that participants stop all other actions to focus solely on this often overlooked but continuous phenomenon to facilitate an isolated sensory experience central to the body. Ono isolates a beating heart from other physical events and if for only a short while, separates the participant from any other activity to concentrate on this action. She again demonstrates how people can utilize the body for artistic performances as it is constantly in action whether or not the mind is conscious of it.

Ono often envisions life and death as a continuous circuit played out again and again over time and throughout her work, she explores how individuals as social beings experience and remember violence and death. The premise of Stiles’ conception of society’s “genocidal mentality” suggests that although collective social experiences like war impact the social structure of culture in a general way, individuals will inevitably be impacted and react differently to one another. Ono’s art calls for interaction and confrontation with the self and society and therefore raises awareness about violence that may be hidden within societal institutions or is experienced by only certain cultural sectors. *Blood Piece* prefaces Ono’s later involvement with Lennon in peace actions concerning the Vietnam War, as the letting of blood recalls the practice of sacrificing life for a national cause. Their world-wide Christmas billboard campaigns, “War is over (if you want it),” demonstrate the role of individuals within larger circumstances: here they emphasize that people can make the decision themselves to stop something as destructive as war. The public and noticeable quality of billboards emphasizes Ono and Lennon’s point that individual actions become more powerful as more and more people take action. Unlike the message Ono and Lennon proclaim in their billboards, people engaging in war must follow orders and protocols and have little room to make individual decisions outside of the rules. War itself is supposed to unite people against a common enemy and at the outset of conflict; participants certainly know that some will die. As in Ono’s instructions for destruction, soldiers volunteer knowing there is a possibility of being killed and must continue fighting even while others die or until they get injured or die themselves. One purpose for engaging in a destructive activity like war is that it will eventually facilitate peace—another instance of creation via a route of destruction. Death in war is therefore valorized, viewed as a selfless act made for national interests. In *Blood Piece*, death would be a result of obsessive and

---

subversive behavior, a gross overestimation in the name of art practice. The outcome becomes absurd in both scenarios.

Though destruction art and Ono’s pieces are often located in the body, the body in and of itself does not constitute the artwork. In her January 1966 meeting address, “To the Wesleyan People,” Ono discusses philosophies of her art and continually emphasizes the interconnectivity of different aspects of life. Ono further discusses her continual endeavor to facilitate isolated sensory experiences, “which is something rare in daily life,” because she believes that “art is not merely a duplication of life. To assimilate art in life is different from art duplicating life.” Her performances and instructions may include aspects of daily life, such as writing, a heartbeat, or conversing with others, but these actions are not merely glorified replications of routine events. Although she composed instructions that seem straightforward, they require participants to step outside of the routine and focus on one action or concept in order to experience a new level of awareness. Blood Piece and Beat Piece do not simply draw attention to aspects of life and the body “for art’s sake,” but they push the participant to further contemplate the potential radiating meanings of a close encounter with the body. Like destruction artworks in general, Ono’s pieces “operate both as a representation and a presentation, an image and an enactment of effacement that recalls but also gives substance” to experience, personal understandings, feelings, and all things hidden within the body. It can be exceedingly difficult to express feelings regarding experiences of violence, especially if the violence is institutional rather than an overt event or if it makes the person feel shame. Thus, such experiences become forgotten and disappear into the body—either that of the individual or of the collective—or the bodies and identities themselves disappear.

Instead of keeping violent experiences hidden and thus, allowing them to vanish from the landscape of discourse and consciousness, Stiles explains that destruction art “reinscribes the psyche of the social body with a memory of the finite which must function as an affective agent in the reaggregation of a survivalist consciousness.” Here, the term “finite” refers to memory and recognition of the experience of destruction and its causes and effects. Through use of the individual body and physical actions, Ono relates collective memory and experience to that of the individual. For example, Ono’s Shadow Piece (1966), performed at the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) in London in

---

46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
September 1966, and illustrates the relationships among individuals, society, and violence. Onto a long cloth she traced the bodies of twenty participants in an area that was bombed during World War II and their outlines left eerie reminders of citizens who died in the war. Stiles directly connects this performance with the “imprints of bodies left on the sidewalks of Hiroshima after the bomb,” explaining that the drawn figures become “negative double[s]” of the actual bodies of those that died.\textsuperscript{49} War is a social and international conflict and is mainly discussed in large terms, as in how many thousands can be committed to or died in a campaign, how much money each player spends, and how supplies are produced in factories and moved en masse. In \textit{Shadow Piece}, Ono pares down the discussion to specifically focus how war impacts individuals. Through body performance, Ono gives an imagined voice to those who died and can no longer share their experiences, keeping them from disappearing from the social body. Destruction art like \textit{Shadow Piece} pulls up histories of devastation and violence—recently occurring or otherwise—and recreates them in the present, which repositions them in current consciousness. Ono emphasizes this point when she discusses how art can directly focus on past events in order to enhance consciousness in the present when she states:

\begin{quote}
The mind is omnipresent, events in life never happen alone and the history is forever increasing its volume. The natural state of life and mind is complexity. At this point, what art can offer...is an absence of complexity, a vacuum through which you are led to a state of complete relaxation of the mind. After that you may return to the complexity of life again, it may not be the same, or it may be, or you may never return.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Ono acknowledges several important points related to destruction art theory in this statement. First, though events in history technically occurred in the past, they are not suddenly lopped off of the tail of historical time to make room for new events to occur. Rather, she implies that new events occur with respect to past histories, which makes life and thought complex. Furthermore, she suggests that events in history are witnessed and remembered by some people, though not all. Referring back to Stiles’ initial analysis, destruction art serves as a means to recall hidden violations against humans and relocate those histories in performance or actions with the body. According to Ono, once such histories become clear via the focus of an artistic event, participants could potentially be changed forever. By calling attention to the tendency to forget or overlook past experiences, \textit{Shadow Piece} becomes a statement against war and the excessive

\textsuperscript{49} Stiles. “Being Undyed”, 168.  
\textsuperscript{50} Ono, \textit{Imagine Yoko}, 110.
death it brings; it is an appeal to the memories of individuals and society to remember such suffering so that it could be stopped from happening again. In this case, the death Ono refers to is most likely linked to Japan and World War II, but the destruction continued on in the Vietnam War as more people were reduced to mere shadows by napalm.

Ono’s version of destruction art shows how violence invades and combines the public and private spheres — or as in the case with Shadow Piece, the individual and society. Announcement Piece I (1962) demonstrates her awareness of the inevitable relationships between the past and present and also with the living and dead and she again situates individual actions within a larger social group. The instruction reads as follows:

ANNOUNCEMENT PIECE I

Give death announcements each time you move instead of giving announcements of the change of address.
Send the same when you die.51

Ono’s prompt to repeatedly produce “death announcements” functions as an attempt to “reinscribe” the present with the experience of death—death itself only lasts a mere moment and therefore always occurs in the past. However, the very act of giving a death announcement to a friend is also a comical activity; it seems as if Ono is taking a jab at how seriously society engages with death. If Ono indeed believes that a “genocidal mentality” structures reality, then one creative way to escape it is through humor. Here, she makes society’s obsession with destruction seem ridiculous.

Destruction artists also combat this “genocidal mentality” by directly drawing attention to modes of violence and devastation as well as to their appropriate place in current discourse. A member of the Gutai Group believed that as a citizen of post-war Japan, he could deal with the experience of extreme violence and “keep the spirit alive” by “keeping the life of the material alive;” destruction performance and actions were therefore a method of reconciliation and renewal.52 Similarly, in Announcement Piece I, Ono stresses that the experience of death is tangible, unexpected, and is not necessarily limited to physical demise. Moving and the “change of address” could be metaphors for moving within social

51 Ono, Grapefruit.
categories, such as when people hide part of themselves in an attempt to pass for white or straight, or when groups are targets for violence and marginalization. What dies in this case, is identity or social status and it then becomes vital that the deceased announce their loss and need for assistance. This is not unlike the experience of Japanese citizens during World War II, where cities were completely destroyed and American soldiers, culture, and values influenced how Japan developed its culture and government after the war.

Though the goal of destruction art is to incorporate lost memories, histories, and experiences of violation into current consciousness, a literal reinscribing of the past in terms of writings is at odds with destruction art practice, according to Stiles. Language and writing miss the expressive quality of performing destruction as well as its potential to be transformative. Stiles explains that destruction artists resist extensive use of language because linguistic expression is an abstract representation of events that necessarily displaces or fails to capture essential qualities of an experience; in this way, language “unwittingly contribute[s] to the perpetuation of the destructive epistemology of Western culture.”

Written accounts of violations and death separate the event from the present moment, making them seem distant and less real. Performance, on the other hand, simultaneously encompasses broader contexts and specific moments in time, as well as private and public experience. Situating the body (the personal and private) in the public sphere of events transforms the act because it is “self-consciously realized in the public arena as collective social intervention and political action.” Here, the body provides a concrete signifier of the seemingly intangible experiences and histories as its physicality or its absence demonstrates the transformation of consciousness. If only for fleeting moments, the body becomes the “text” and bodily performance—by using something that everyone has—unites participants and makes tangible ephemeral and concealed experiences. Furthermore, the experience and expression of pain fundamentally destroys the imagined separation between the body and communication through art. Pain necessarily destroys language because it evokes a “reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned.” The performance of pain and destruction may be prompted by writing, but grasping the pain itself as a concept, feeling, and experience, requires a renegotiation in a new space where body, text, and history are fused.

53 Stiles, “Survival Ethos and Destruction Art”, 82.
55 Stiles, “Survival Ethos and Destruction Art”, 89.
To reach this imaginary space, Ono explains that people must shed the “artificial,” the “man-made framework” of life that floods our consciousness with made-up truths; she therefore reasons that only by “[assigning] the most fictional rules...may we possibly transcend our consciousness.” Assigning rules seems to be the opposite of imaginative and open performance, and it may seem as if she is merely grounding her artworks under more constrictions. Her intentions with these rules, however, are to counterbalance the seemingly arbitrary laws and codes of conduct that force experiences like violence and understanding of society’s “genocidal mentality” to hide within the collective and individual unconscious. In this way, Ono’s rules and instructions themselves become artistic action, democratic performances that challenge assumptions about everyday life and provide a means for achieving new senses of reality. Allocating rules like her simple, repetitive, and fanciful instructions draws stark attention to the physical actions and the sensations and thoughts that they provoke. Deeply rooted emotion and memories may burst or trickle to the surface through these actions, potentially calling for creation of new and potentially life-changing communication, discourse, and action by those who participate.

Ono focuses her work on the rendering or expression of concepts in order to achieve a different level of consciousness for herself, participants, and audiences. By resisting the conceptualized forms of consciousness—which she refers to as “fabricated”—that dominate society and following her own made-up rules instead, Ono believes that “conceptual reality finally becomes a concrete reality [through] an enactment of an intrusive, and therefore destructive, outside force.” Recognizing and destroying fabrications that rule life allows new understandings of realities—and new realities themselves—to flourish. For example, Ono’s Kite Piece I and II (1963) demonstrate her opposition to the museum’s domination of art as well as the possibility of breaking free from this tradition and developing new artistic concepts. Like Fluxus practice, for Ono the museum was a space to be redefined or destroyed. In Kite Piece I, Ono asks participants to “borrow the Mona Lisa” and fashion it into a kite, then fly it so high that it disappears into just a dot. This action changes the function and status of the Mona Lisa as one of the most popular and revered works in Western art history and Ono suggests that it has potential to do more than just hang in a

---

56 Ono, Imagine Yoko, 115-117.
57 Ibid., 119.
58 Gutai members carried out a similar performance in which they flew an abstract expressionist painting over a Tokyo department store. In both the Gutai action and Ono’s instruction, the artists created defiant actions in order to position themselves as free from the dominance of art tradition. The outrageous suggestions in the Kite Piece instructions match the radical nature of Gutai’s action.
gallery. The act of flying it like a kite is whimsical and celebrates its freedom from traditional and restrictive environment and allowed to become more than just an object at which to simply look.

*Kite Piece II* has similar instructions, but this piece is more ritualistic than the first version. First, Ono instructs participants to “collect old paintings such as De Kooning, Klein, and Pollock” on the same day each year. Then they must be made into kites and flown and once they are high in the sky, the strings are cut to let them float. 59 When she calls work by Abstract Expressionists old, she was making a distinction between avant-garde conceptual work she and her contemporaries created and the formerly ground-breaking abstract canvases. Though they were at one time more radical than formal academic work and indeed, opened the field for the inclusion of action and new visual forms, work by De Kooning and Pollock remain trapped on the canvas. Though Ono implies that these paintings could remain part of the collective consciousness as they hover overhead, in her view (a view shared by Fluxus), the nature of this art is too subjective. It derives from “the accumulation of „distortion‟ owing to one‟s slanted view,” or a “fictional order” on canvas. By offering conceptual and introspective performances that require group action, Ono presents a way to escape this fabricated reality. 60 Thus, the museum and the canvas’s place within it are arbitrary inventions and Ono invites the idea that a Pollock painting can be more than just a *Pollock*; in the *Kite* performances, people can simply visualize a different reality and together, make the visualizations real. Through shared authorship, there are a potentially endless number of ways that art can be envisioned; the museum and the canvas are just two of many possibilities.

Both installments of *Kite Piece* emphasize destructive and imagined action as the means to constructing new realities and in this case, new understandings and relationships with art production. Ono connects with the goals of avant-garde groups working in Japan in her effort to open up the field of art production to include new varieties of performance, actions, music, paintings, et cetera. Osaki contrasts the developments of the Japanese and American avant-garde of the 1950s, explaining that in Japan action and “physical expression had an [overwhelming] superiority” and though Pollock made paintings with violent movements and gestures, they instead became “highly valued for their visual quality.” 61 The canvases of artists like Pollock and de Kooning often included

59 Ono, *Grapefruit*.
60 Ono, *Imagine Yoko*, 119.
61 Osaka, 154.
explosive imagery and emotion, but the end result was still a formalized art piece hanging on a wall.

Though Gutai artists technically endeavored to make “paintings” and used this term to describe their work, they redefined what painting was, insisting, through works like Murakami’s *At One Moment Opening Six Holes*, that action and explicit bodily expression should be manifest in painting. Despite the action of painting and their expressive and often electrifying visual gestures, Pollock’s paintings were static once they were finished. Paintings by Gutai artists on the other hand, were meant to embody physical expression and were often enigmatic and ephemeral, therefore making it difficult for critics to define “within the framework of formalism.”62 Similarly, Ono attempted to release contemporary conceptions of art from their bonds to the museum and “fabricated” rules about the production of art, suggesting that an artwork does not have to have a discernible end. Instead, her own rules make a new and more authentic consciousness available for anyone willing to simply read her instructions and visualize or carry out the results.

Through collaborative actions and use of the body in performance and as a text, the introspective qualities of Ono’s work provide paths to reaching concreteness through theoretical abstraction. Her instructions and performance pieces present participants with concrete directions for imaginative and sometimes impossible actions, such as “Give death announcements each time you move.” Other pieces are completely unfeasible and Ono intends for participants to just imagine carrying out the actions, like destroying a museum. Whether or not the action must be in part imagined, or can actually be carried out, the instructions prompt participants to consider new and imaginative interrelations between the self and society. Even imaginary concrete actions can enable participants to reach a greater plane of consciousness where it is possible to destroy a painting by Klein or Pollock without getting arrested. Theoretical destruction potentially leads to a redefining of life and thought, which can return participants back to the concreteness of everyday life—although, Ono cannot determine whether or not they will live it differently than before. In her *Sense Piece* (1968), she proclaims that “Common sense prevents you from thinking. Have less sense and you will make more sense.” Despite the propensity to accept conventional ways of thinking and living, these tendencies can be overcome through creative and seemingly irrational visualizations of society and the self.

---

62 Ibid.
Dynamic openness and merging of the body and mind through Ono’s imaginative and conceptual performances like Kite Piece or Blood Piece constitutes what performance art historian Sally Banes describes as the “effervescent, grotesque body.” This understanding of the body, developed in a number of sites within the 1960s avant-garde, challenges traditional restrictions that classify bodily functions as too disgusting for society to openly discuss. According to Banes, the effervescent and grotesque body is “literally open to the world” and has “permeable boundaries;” qualities that allow it to “[poke] holes in the decorum and hegemony of official culture.” This conception of the body fits with Ono’s conceptual treatment of the physical and imaginary. In both cases, the body is used to undermine society’s conventions, is free to mingle with other people and things, and can access deeper recesses of life that have been forced to remain locked in the body. Banes’ observations coincide with Stiles’ analysis because Stiles positions destruction art as simultaneously ethical and subversive; artists use the body to openly critique violent and oppressive ideologies, histories, and societal practices. Ono’s frequent focus on the need for intimate communication and connection with others indicates that her version of destruction art is indeed an ethical venture. Like Announcement Piece I, Ono’s score for Conversation Piece (1962) addresses the need to share intimate experiences like suffering through outward action and bodily performance. The instructions read:

CONVERSATION PIECE (or Crutch Piece)

Bandage any part of your body.
If people ask about it, make a story and tell.
If people do not ask about it, draw their attention to it and tell.
If people forget about it, remind them of it and keep telling.
Do not talk about anything else.

This understanding of the body as open and flexible would allow others to present and discuss physical wounds, connecting the external and internal experiences of pain. Stiles writes that Ono employs bandaging techniques to

---

64 Stiles, “Survival Ethos and Destruction Art”, 77.
65 Ono., Grapefruit.
“articulate her psycho-physical pain...[and] the unspeakable conditions of interior life;” therefore the body becomes a personal and historical text and using it in performance is a way to “repossess and recover a sense of the concreteness of personal experience.”66 Because it will draw attention and prompt commentary, the bandaged body or body part is in effect a badge that helps bearers share their intimate experiences. Ono stresses that continued conversations are vital for reconciliation; sufferers of physical and emotional stress might forever live with painful memories, but others around them might forget the painful experience or be unaware of its continued significance. Participants can even make up a story about the bandages, which suggests that outsiders to specific traumatic events can embody the victims’ experiences and perform them in order to raise awareness. The bandage points to interior histories and places them onto the skin where they can be examined and shared. Collaborative action and performance becomes a way to deal with deeply rooted and disturbing issues; instead of hiding them inside the body, using the “grotesque body” in performance to bring pain to the forefront allows it to disseminate out from the individual body where it becomes part of a social experience and memory.

Ono’s fusing of the private and public, mind and body, materiality and concept are further manifest in her series of seven instructions called Card Piece. In this series, Ono uses the German term Weltinnenraum, roughly translated to mean “inner world,” to call attention to the interior world of knowledge within each person:

CARD PIECE I
Walk to the center of you Weltinnenraum
Leave a card.

CARD PIECE II
Cut a hole in the center of your Weltinnenraum.
Exchange.

CARD PIECE III
Shuffle your Weltinnenraums.
Hand one to a person on the street.

Ask him to forget about it.

CARD PIECE IV

Place a stone on each one of the Weltinnenraums in the world.
Number them.67

Stiles describes this space as “self-contained consciousness” made up of “aspects of the self knowable through language” and is “the boundary of mind between that which can and cannot be accessed through logos, but nevertheless pervades the body at the level of cellular knowledge.”68 Stiles points out that language cannot fully access this interior space because, as previously discussed, language is too logical and abstract and this space itself not completely known to the possessor. The motif of the Weltinnenraum further illustrates Ono’s commitment to creating seemingly irrational rules as a means for recovering truths and for experiencing a more authentic reality. Many of her works are playful and Card Piece is set up very much like a game in which she constructs imaginative scenarios with simple language in order to penetrate the Weltinnenraum. She directs participants to frankly engage their interior selves through a “walk to the center of [their] Weltinnenraum[s]” and “leave a card” there as marker of its presence and perhaps a reminder or where it is found.

Further engagement with themes of violence, social interaction, and healing provoke participants to deeply encounter the Weltinnenraum. The next steps in this game require participants to cut and swap Weltinnenraums with others, mark every one of them in the world (probably again by leaving a card or other marker to denote their locations), bet their lives on them in a game of rummy, and open them up to the outside elements. Ono acknowledges that sharing one’s intimate experiences with others can be painful and risky because participants must cut out a piece of themselves and then give it to a stranger. This mingling of inner knowledge, however, is part of the greater healing process and in effect, raises awareness even if the receiver forgets about it. Stiles explains that forgetting about the received interior piece signifies that it has become part of that person’s

67 The remainder of the Card Piece text is as follows: “Card Piece V: Play rummy with the Weltinnenraums. Play for money. Play solitaire with your Weltinnenraums. Play for death; Card Piece VI: Find a card in your Weltinnenraum; Card Piece VII: Open a window of one of the houses in your Weltinnenraum. Let the wind come in. 1964 spring.”
68 Stiles, “Being Undyed”, 145
Weltinnenraum, as that space is not objectively knowable.\textsuperscript{69} It follows that in the sixth instruction, participants must suddenly “find a card” in their Weltinnenraums, as there is a continuous process of discovery: the frequency and qualities of merging Weltinnenraum pieces is indiscernible. Though Ono strives to facilitate authentic encounters with inner spaces, such encounters themselves are not rational by society’s standards. Therefore she cannot use rational language or forms like traditional narratives to illustrate interpersonal discovery and intrapersonal connections. Locating knowledge deep within the body contradicts conventional Western conceptions of intelligence and learning that rely on a rational mind. As the sole locus of intelligence, the mind is supposed to accumulate information and logically analyze it according to strategies learned in school. Ono criticizes this system of knowledge in her essay “The Word of a Fabricator” (1962), as she points out that this system is simply made up and can therefore be resisted and changed. For Banes, artists in all fields of the avant-garde used the body for means of expression because they understood the very fabric of bodies as containing knowledge:

\begin{quote}
[The 1960s avant-garde] relied on the wisdom of the body—on the heat of kinetic intuition in the moment—in contrast to predetermined, rational [The 1960s avant-garde] relied on the wisdom of the body—on the heat of kinetic intuition in the moment—in contrast to predetermined, rational.\textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}

Banes emphasizes that the body is simultaneously a point of information, expression, and defiance for the 1960s avant-garde. These artists created works in which people moved their bodies and used their imaginations, employed spontaneity, and felt the “heat” or passion that is inevitably part of interacting and intimate bodies. In Ono’s Card Piece, participants must use intuition and imagination to find and interact with Weltinnenraums and then carry out actions with this technically unknowable space. These instructions, like most of Ono’s works, could completely remain in someone’s mind as they could simply visualize the actions. Or, people could symbolically and creatively act out each instruction. Both methods—imaginary or physical performance—suggest ritual, spontaneity, and require the interaction between bodies and minds.

Ono’s insistence upon making up her own rules to follow in life and art practice closely relate to the Gutai group’s manifesto. They too insist upon forming their own styles and methods of art and define themselves against formal aesthetics of

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 146.
\textsuperscript{70} Banes, 211.
the past, desiring to draw out authentic knowledge from materials themselves. According to the manifesto, the artists believe that in the past, the materials used to make art-objects were “loaded with false significance by human hand and by way of fraud” and they charge artists with hiding under “the cloak of an intellectual aim” in order to present materials that “take on the appearance of something else.”

Academies of art create and regulate the art world with rules that seem arbitrary to artists like Ono and those in Gutai. Paralleling the way Ono follows her own made-up rules via performances and instructions, Gutai also insists upon their aesthetic aims and methods to combat society’s intrusive and limiting regulations. They claim that “Gutai art does not change the material but brings it to life. Gutai art does not falsify the material” but rather “leaves the material as it is, presenting it just as material, [and] then it starts to tell us something and speaks with a might voice.” Instead of making materials out to be representations of other things as indicated above, Gutai artists directly invoke the spirit of the material by emphasizing its essential qualities in performances and actions. The focus on achieving authenticity, which is difficult in daily life, is important for both Gutai and Ono.

*Smoke Piece* is another example of the exchange between body and mind, concept and action. This work is more destructive than *Card Piece*, as essentially everything, including the body, should be smoked. Smoking everything—not just burning it all—also suggests a sense of pleasure in this destruction, that there is satisfaction in physically taking in objects and people. The implication of drug use in *Smoke Piece* also fits with the burgeoning culture surrounding the abundance of psychedelic drugs at this time, as drugs like LSD were viewed as means to reach a more spiritual plane of knowledge and as an escape from reality. However peculiar Ono’s work seems, the message probably has less to do with the motif of drug use and more so with a transition of knowledge source from the rational mind to the body. Perhaps whatever a person smokes melds with her *Weltinnenraum* and therefore becomes a part of her body knowledge. There it settles in the unconscious, only to be known and expressed through more performances.

The avant-garde’s introduction of a new, unguarded, and “effervescent body” in the 1960s was not without problematic aspects. For example, another development of the new body was an exceptional openness to sexuality, but this sexuality did not have equal implications for women and men. The longstanding

---

72 Ibid.
discrepancy between genders of authors, subjects, and representations of women was not suddenly remedied by the development of the “effervescent body,” but was in fact further complicated. Banes points out that during the 1960s, there was no feminist analysis in place to critically examine art history and avant-garde artists presented the female body in different ways: from elaborated versions “of the idealized female nude, to complexly ironic explorations of the classic figure, to the rejection of the female figure as the passive subject of the artist’s gaze altogether.”\(^\text{73}\) Not only was this avant-garde sexuality often a potentially dubious rehashing of normative gender roles, but only certain sectors of society (namely the avant-garde art circles and members or proponents of youth culture) were deeply engaged in this new rhetoric surrounding the body. Moreover, the growing presence of women in art circles signified that women’s roles were changing, that they were increasingly becoming authors of art, rather than just its subject. Despite the increasing authorship of women and the increasing openness to sexuality in avant-garde circles, Ono often experienced the restrictions and difficulties women artists encountered in Japan and the U.S., demonstrating how inequity and discrimination were still overt and tangible.

Ono’s body in particular was a source of difficulties because she was a woman of color. Though artists like Cage helped foster sincere interest in teachings of Buddhism and other Eastern systems of knowledge, Ono was still pressured by societal conventions in the U.S. regarding her gender and her race. Stiles describes the intersecting oppressions of racism and sexism as “Ono’s double-articulated cultural space—the space of Woman and ethnic Other.” Ono was also publicly viewed as the “other woman, the adulteress who wrecked [John] Lennon’s marriage[s]” to his wife Cynthia and to the Beatles.\(^\text{74}\) The media and public generally criticized Ono for her assertive and unconventional personality. Ono’s artwork challenged what was expected social behavior for women, particularly women of color. Stiles writes that the public framed Ono’s relationship with Lennon as an assault responsible for the Beatles’ break-up and believed that she changed him from the heroic mop-top to a strange hippie. But in reality, their relationship was loving and stimulating, which caused a change in Lennon’s attitudes and behaviors. Ono remarked that she had to show Lennon how he was ingrained in an oppressive society that rewarded his body politic; she blamed society for blinding him to women’s experiences and explained that after he observed how “society [attacked her],” he began to engage more closely with

\(^{73}\) Banes, 224.

\(^{74}\) Stiles, “Unbosoming Lennon”, 23.
feminist politics. Though the public generally derided Lennon’s relationship with Ono, Stiles emphasizes that their intimacy provided a space where different bodies unequally positioned within society could connect with and absorb each other’s experiences and feelings in an equitable way. Their appearances nude, such as on their album cover for *Two Virgins*, as well as their bed-ins further promote this mutual “surrendering” to each other through a revealing of sexualized but equitable encounters with naked bodies.

Stiles maintains that much of Ono’s work before the 1970s has proto-feminist qualities. In many of Ono’s pieces that relate to or explicitly include destruction, she challenges issues of identity politics, racism, and sexism. Stiles explains that most of destruction art made by women starting at this time indeed “explores the problem of the obliteration of identity and the decentering of the self,” though women artists often incorporated destructive acts in their art, they more often than men investigate the violence of oppression and present their results in less explicitly violent ways. Women’s interest in producing art that often includes more subtle expressions of destruction and violence reflects experiences of oppression that are institutionalized or are socially normative.

Ono’s performance *Cut Piece* combines explorations of the space between concept and material with what appears to be a feminist presentation of her concept of the “stone.” The stone relates to the concept of *Weltinnenraum* but refers to a person’s inner space as a whole. She first performed *Cut Piece* in Japan and her actions were basically the same in each performance, though it could be performed by men or women and was later performed by other Fluxus artists such as Charlotte Moorman and Jon Hendricks. The performer sits down on stage, places a pair of scissors next to him or her, and remains still while audience members cut off pieces of clothing and take them away. Regarding this performance, Ono remarks that, “People went on cutting the parts they do not like of me [and] finally there was only the stone that remained of me that was in me but they...[still] wanted to know what it’s like in the stone.” Through the action of having her clothes cut off, Ono aesthetically represents the unveiling of her true essence of being, a place not accessible by language or the creation of a tangible object but through a tearing away of outside layers symbolized by her nicest clothes. Lennon and Ono later revealed their nude bodies; here, Ono

---

75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
78 Stiles, “Being Undyed”, 158.
79 Ibid.
essentially allows herself to be stripped of society’s coverings and shares her most intimate self with the audience—not just her skin, but what lies deep beneath it. Ono and Lennon emphasized how appearing nude together is freeing and uniting when they said that it shows how “we are all naked underneath and we are all one” and that the body is “nothing to be ashamed of, be free.” Not only does the concept of the “effervescent” body call attention to the knowledge deep within it, but also the power it has when it is bared to the world.

Though Ono herself emphasized the concept of the stone and inner space and knowledge in Cut Piece, the performance is generally regarded today as an early feminist work. Her use of the stone and Weltinnenraum to symbolize knowledge located deep within the body—and especially in bodies pushed to the margins of society—relate to the development during the second wave of feminism of the concept of “writing the body” pioneered by French feminist theorists Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. They situate the body as a source of information, creation, and expression in order to contest the privileging of the mind over the body and in an effort to include women’s creations and bodies in the production of knowledge. Along these lines of feminist theory, Cut Piece can be further understood to reveal how feminists would unpack and analyze societal influence in order to get at more authentic information about women and their experiences. Previously to Cut Piece, Ono employed the theme of sharing intimate self-knowledge (the Weltinnenraum) in Stone Piece. She instructs participants to find stones, break them into a powder, and then either throw it into a river or send it to friends. She also stresses that they are never to explain to anyone what they did. Here she reiterates how it is impossible to rationally describe or portray a person’s essence or inner space, but nonetheless she or he should find ways to share it with others. Similar to the instructions for Card Piece in which performers share and play cards with their Weltinnenraums, Stone Piece requires sharing of intimate inner knowledge that is reached through a destructive act: they symbolically give away a part of themselves by breaking a stone and grinding it into powder, its essence.

For Ono, the act of giving necessitates an uncovering of the self and this is sometimes painful. In Cut Piece for example, the act of cutting is intrusive and even violent and seems especially so in the case of cutting off someone’s clothes. This invasive and intimate action implies that finding the inner area of the stone could be painful as it requires removing protective outer layers to reveal the true

---

inner turmoil of one’s being. Stiles also connects this performance with themes of the objectification of women as well as revealing the “lesions society leaves on the human body.”\footnote{Stiles “Survival Ethos and Destruction Art”, 88.} A person is inevitably shaped by contact with other people and culture and Ono’s comments regarding \textit{Cut Piece} emphasize that women in particular are objects scrutinized, formed, and controlled by sexualized violence. Even the 1960s avant-garde in many ways continued to exploit and limit women’s bodies as objects of art. Ōno’s willingness to let others expose her body through a violent action draws attention to the sexism inherent in this process, but also emphasizes the power of deeply sharing oneself with others and with guards down, or “surrendering” as Ono and Lennon described it.

Another piece that explicitly confronts how women are treated as sexualized objects is Ono’s \textit{Striptease for Three} that she first performed at a three-day long concert in Kyoto, \textit{Evening till Dawn}, in 1964. This piece has two options: either a curtain rises to reveal three empty chairs on stage and lasts five minutes, or the performer sets three chairs on stage and removes them after thirty minutes. The title raises expectations for a performance in some way resembling an actual strip show, but instead Ono leaves the audience to confront their expectations of seeing performers—most likely women—take off their clothes. One recalls how one audience member, a High Monk who seemed dissatisfied, asked her why she called this performance a striptease if there were no performers or music. Ono explains that her show was about the “stripping of the mind” and that “if it is a chair or stone or women [on stage], it is the same thing.”\footnote{Ono, “Imagine Yoko”, 107.} No matter what was on stage, the audience would still have expectations for the performance to somehow involve women stripping. Ono asks the audience to strip their minds and investigate the reasons why this is the main association made. Like in \textit{Cut Piece}, \textit{Striptease for Three} also implies that one must take off layers of knowledge informed by society in order to reach a deeper self-understanding. This time, the violence is not as blatant as in \textit{Cut Piece}, but is inherent in the sexist structuring of women.
Ono further investigates the topic of violence against women in her film *Rape* (1969), in which she collaborates with Lennon. For seventy-seven minutes, the camera relentlessly follows a young woman through town, down an alley, and eventually to her own home. The film powerfully depicts a constant chase and intrusion, a violation of privacy as the woman becomes increasingly upset and paranoid. Though rape is not depicted literally, the implication of social control over women’s lives is evident in the intensity of the chase and the visible fear of the woman. In her anthology of instructions *Grapefruit*, Ono addresses her film,
stating that, “Violence is a sad wind that, if channeled carefully, could bring seeds, chairs, and all things pleasant to us.”\textsuperscript{83} By the end of the film, the violence in \textit{Rape} practically destroys the woman’s ability to function. Ono suggests that violence is something to use with caution, but is usually employed with little regard for the broader consequences. Similarly to \textit{Cut Piece}, this film depicts an invasion of space and liberty, but instead of revealing and sharing an inner space in the end, Ono brutally portrays how violence against women damages their lives.

In Ono’s installation \textit{Half-A-Room}, she destroys notions of domesticity as well as household items and furniture. The domestic setting has long been portrayed as women’s natural environment and place in society and it is where issues of sexuality, economics, and labor converge. Along with Banes’ description of the new “effervescence body” and sexuality comes a reconfiguring of domestic life and roles. Ono’s room contains white furniture and other objects all cut in half and arranged like an austere showroom display. Munroe describes Ono’s early objects, including \textit{Half-A-Room} as “radically reductive” in order to “[juxtapose] an idea against a visual situation to provoke a kind of telepathic poetry of irrational truths…where material stands for content.”\textsuperscript{84} Ono presents these everyday items stripped of their normal function: a person can no longer sit in the chair, wear the hat, or use the cabinet and the room seems empty, even sad. Perhaps the traditional set-up of domestic life for women should no longer be automatically viewed as functional or natural.

By halving the items, Ono reveals the “psychic and physical” bisection of everything and nothing that is “a condition of human existence.”\textsuperscript{85} This relates back to her concern with the spaces between concepts and materiality, the body and thought and inner knowledge. Though these items are physically incomplete, viewers inevitably will imagine the rest of them, rendering them whole in their minds. By arranging the items in a domestic setting, she further emphasizes the application of the dichotomy of existence/absence in real life. Women are supposed to be fulfilled by domestic life, but this work suggests that home life alone is not enough to make someone complete. Just as her superficial layers were symbolically stripped off by way of others cutting off her clothes in \textit{Cut Piece}, thus exposing her deep core of being, Ono searches for true aspects of human life in this environment. The halving of these household items suggests a

\textsuperscript{83} Ono, \textit{Grapefruit}.

\textsuperscript{84} Munroe, 30.

means to escape the limitations of domesticity, for as her body of work makes apparent, creation of new ways of living, thinking, and interacting result from performances and understandings of destruction.

Yoko Ono’s destruction art is imaginative, confrontational, and groundbreaking. She asks participants to creatively envision realities where people can smoke bodies and die multiple times. And during postwar life that was dominated by another war and tense social conflict, Ono’s conceptual work provided positive affirmations of life and techniques for envisioning reality in new ways. Ono’s work does indeed fit with Stiles explanation of destruction art as an ethical endeavor, but rather than only representing violence with violent actions, she turns it into a point of thoughtful inquiry and discussion, contrasting subtle destructive undertones with outrageously destructive instructions (such as smoking your own pubic hair or painting with your blood). As she tackles issues of sexism, victimization, and war, she does not lose her sense of humor and creates works that are often light-hearted, comical, and even sweet—all the more emphasizing her unique viewpoint within contemporary art.

Her conceptual work is innovative because through simple instructions that may seem strange or trivial on the surface, she penetrates deeply personal and powerful spaces within individuals as well as the social body. Each person who encounters her art could have countless reactions and interpretations, which is in part why it continues to be influential. The instructions, paintings, objects, and
performances are open-ended, personal, and though I have discussed how much
they are born out of specific cultures and histories, people do not necessarily
have to engage with those specifics in order to engage with the artwork. Ono
frequently challenges assumptions about the body, what lies beneath it, and how
it is positioned in this world, but the process of understanding these questions
will not simply be finished once someone comes up with a new theory. Ono and
her artwork break through bounds of time and place, for creativity, personal and
cultural investigation, and destruction are elements of life immemorial.

Whitney Frank is a 5th-year senior majoring in Art History and Women Studies. In her work, she
concentrates on avant-garde art and politics of the early and mid-20th century, researching connections
between creative expression and analysis of identity formation.

ABSTRACT

In the United States, hundreds of thousands of Christians trust their hearts and souls to the belief that the world is on its final chapter. In their understanding, this chapter that spells out the last days is available to them in a proverbial ‘advance printing.’ This notion, known as dispensationalism, is a potent force within modern American Christian circles. Dispensationalists adhere to the belief that God’s foreordainment of the end times is available to them in the form of Biblical prophecy. Clearly such a belief deeply affects an individual’s outlook on life on a personal level, but by extension these same beliefs have the potential to affect larger national and global spheres. Just such a thing is happening now, in the United States, where a large number dispensational Christians are looking to the political arena as a venue to exercise their beliefs. In other words, these Christians base their political actions (the votes they cast and the lobbies they endorse) upon their prophecy belief, hoping to influence and direct U.S. foreign policy to fulfill Biblical prophecy. I ask, is this happening anywhere else? Is this a distinctly American phenomenon? America, occupying the position as the (arguably) eminent superpower in the world, has a certain responsibility to uphold, and allowing extreme and fatalistic worldviews to influence decision making at the highest level of government not only raises concerns but compromises that responsibility. To answer this question we look to Australia. The similarities run deep between America and Australia, making it a logical choice to use as a test study. Both countries share deep cultural roots that begin with their conceptions from British colonialism, lending both an analogous cultural background. Both are populated with a core demographic of white Anglo-Saxon Christians, with large immigrant populations from Southern and Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. Both share a colorful history largely centered upon a ‘frontier’ mentality.


© 2009 intersections, Keith Gordon. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of intersections and the author
The End of (the Other Side of) the World
Apocalyptic Belief in the Australian Political Structure

By Keith Gordon
University of Puget Sound, Tacoma

At first glance these passages may seem little more than anachronistic rhetoric or devout poetics, but the simple fact of the matter is that many people—people living in our modern and contemporary times—take these ancient imperatives to heart and, consequently, reshape the way in which they view the world around them. With these and countless other stern warnings echoing in their heads, a great number of believers anxiously anticipate the return of Jesus Christ. Beyond his mere return, there is also anticipation for all of the events that surround his Second Coming: the Rapture, the coming of the Antichrist, the Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, and dawn of the Millennium. To someone outside of ‘the know,’ these terms have little bearing or significance, except what is disseminated through the channels of the media and popular culture. But to believers, these are more than just words and phrases: they are inevitabilities—unavoidable and necessary events that have been foreordained by God Himself and passed down to a select few in the form of Biblical prophecy.

This anticipation has the potential to reorder a believer’s entire view of the world. As a result global events are no longer random or inconsequential; they start to take on another meaning, a meaning that pertains to something greater.

---

1 This paper was researched and written between June and August 2006. In the intervening years John Howard and his Liberal Party Coalition lost control of the Australian government to Kevin Rudd and the Labor Party, a change that is indicative of the shifting (i.e. liberalizing) mood of the Australian political climate. Likewise in America the political climate has also drastically changed since the writing of this thesis, with the new administration unlikely to seek the favor of radical Christians or to pursue the foreign policy aims of the previous administration. Nevertheless, it is certain that the dispensational beliefs and political agendas laid out herein are still very much alive and well in the United States today.
and more divine. If the belief that God has foreordained the coming end (and listed the signs in the Bible in the form of prophecy) is faithfully held, then the events of the world can be reread through the filter of that very belief. A war in Israel is more than just a war; it very well could be the precursor to the end of the world. And the faithful, equipped with their prophecy and armed with knowledge of all signs, attentively interpret current events in the hopes that they indicate that eternal salvation is finally at hand.3

This sort of apocalyptic thought and interpretation is of undeniable significance to the world in which we live. In the United States, hundreds of thousands of Christians trust their hearts and souls to the belief that the world is on its final chapter. In their understanding, this chapter that spells out the last days is available to them in a proverbial ‘advance printing’. This notion, known as dispensationalism, is a potent force within modern American Christian circles. Dispensationalists adhere to the belief that God’s foreordainment of the end times is available to them in the form of Biblical prophecy.

Clearly such a belief deeply affects an individual’s outlook on life on a personal level, but by extension these same beliefs have the potential to affect larger national and global spheres. Just such a thing is happening now, in the United States, where a large number dispensational Christians are looking to the political arena as a venue to exercise their beliefs. In other words, these Christians base their political actions (the votes they cast and the lobbies they endorse) upon their prophecy belief, hoping to influence and direct U.S. foreign policy to fulfill Biblical prophecy. Since the order of events that surround the end of days has long been dispensed, the various prerequisites for Jesus’ return and ultimate salvation of the righteous are not only known, but active maneuvers can be taken to ensure their timely and efficient fulfillment. And what better vehicle to fulfill these final, preordained events than the most powerful government in the world? Acknowledging the gravity of such a situation begs many questions, but there is one which is the chief concern of this paper. Namely, the question is: Is this happening anywhere else? Is this a distinctly American phenomenon? America,

---

2 One need only read the Book of Revelation to understand the scope of Biblical prophecy. Thick with mythological illusions, the book essentially maps out the events of the final days. Along with other key apocalyptic passages in the Bible, such as Ezekiel 37-39, Daniel 7:13, and various passages within the synoptic Gospels, a modern believer of the coming Apocalypse has at his or her disposal a complete prophetic framework, full of signs that supposedly indicate the events surrounding the Second Coming and the end of the world.

occupying the position as the (arguably) eminent superpower in the world, has a certain responsibility to uphold, and allowing extreme and fatalistic worldviews to influence decision making at the highest level of government not only raises concerns but compromises that responsibility. To uncover whether this is an isolated phenomenon indicative of some inherent particularity to the American mindset, or a widespread feature of Protestant Christianity active in other Western nations, is of the utmost importance if we are to understand the potential contemporary apocalyptic belief has on our world.

To answer this question we look to Australia. The similarities run deep between America and Australia, making it a logical choice to use as a test study. Both countries share deep cultural roots that begin with their conceptions from British colonialism, lending both an analogous cultural background. Both are populated with a core demographic of white Anglo-Saxon Christians, with large immigrant populations from Southern and Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. Both share a colorful history largely centered upon a ‘frontier’ mentality. Though other factors would shape them into the distinct societies they are today, their similar pasts provide an immense cultural foundation upon which both societies are built.

And yet, as we shall see, the cultural foundations are, in actuality, not at all as analogous as a cursory glance might reveal. There are deep differences within the cultural psyches of both cultures, differences that manifest themselves most evidently in the practice of extreme religion. Though superficially both countries are witnessing an increasing interaction between religion and politics, in Australia those with religious agendas receive little more than token nods from an economically-focused government seeking as many votes as possible. Moreover, of the little interaction, none of it is inspired by any sort of apocalyptic thinking. It is that innate difference deep within the cultural psyches that makes the United States a hotbed for apocalyptic thought and political activism whereas in Australia the apocalyptic climate is palpably dormant.

This dormancy provides perhaps the most telling and relevant clue into the nature of American culture and its various predispositions that allow for the unique and powerfully unsettling combination of dispensationalism and politics. Despite much current focus on the interaction between religion and politics, and despite a long history of interaction between the two that produced results more substantial than in contemporary times, Australia simply does not breed the same kind of religious-political activism or engagement, much less engender any kind of apocalyptic sentiment.
Hellfire and Brimstone

The question ‘When will the world end?’ has plagued mankind ever since the concepts of time and death were consciously realized. Though articulated in countless fashions across many different cultures, the question remains the same, inextricably bound to its cousin question ‘What happens after death?’ For the death of the world is really an extension of the captivation felt at the loss of human life. To think upon the death of the world is, for all intents and purposes, to think upon one’s own ultimate destruction, shifting personal anxieties (and the associated beliefs employed to assuage those anxieties) onto a conception of the world, where person becomes world, and world person. It goes without saying that an individual’s beliefs about their own purpose in life will shape their view on the afterlife, and consequently these beliefs will also shape their notions about the end of the world. An atheist, for example, who believes he has no purpose beyond being a mere genetic happenstance—a collection of enzymes and molecules and nothing more—might conjecture that after death his consciousness merely expires with his cells, and subsequently his concept of the end of the world likely involves the destruction of the world occurring, rather unceremoniously, in several billion years when our growing sun finally overtakes Earth. A Hindu woman, believing that she will be reincarnated after her death, might think upon the end of the world without fear or trepidation because she knows that it will be the work of Shiva, who has destroyed the world myriad times and will destroy it myriad more so that it can be reborn, like herself, through Brahma.

Likewise, when fundamentalist Christians turn their thoughts towards the end of the world, their conclusions are invariably shaped by their religious convictions. Their conception of salvation and judgment as inseparable features of the afterlife are reciprocally connected to their ideas concerning the end times. These Christians have at their disposal a tradition that provides them with a deep and ancient framework, shaped over 2,500 years of social and political turmoil, for framing these eschatological beliefs. This framework, long since detached from its historical and practical roots, mingles the deep personal need for salvation with speculation about the end of the world and final judgment. The end of the world becomes very personal, and in many ways loses any semblance of tragedy.

---

4 Eschatology is the branch of theology that is concerned with the end of the world or of humankind. It is distinct from the apocalyptic because the Apocalypse entails some sort of revelation, destruction, judgment, or salvation, whereas eschatology simply refers to the speculation of the end of time. Apocalypticism is a form of eschatology, but not all eschatological thinking is apocalyptic. Dispensational eschatology, however, is overwhelmingly apocalyptic.
In the dispensational scheme, the most important aspect is the rapture of the chosen, an event that marks the beginning of the end, whereby all righteous and faithful Christians are whisked up to heaven to enjoy eternal bliss, the fruit of their salvation. Those who miss the rapture deserve their fate, and therefore the end of the world is to be heralded with rejoicing, because it is a time when just deserts are doled out. The righteous are saved and the wicked suffer.

But where do these ideas of eschatological salvation and judgment come from? And how have they come to be so engrained amongst conservative evangelical Christians in the United States? It isn’t very surprising that the bedrock for much of this belief lies in the Old Testament. All of the imagery and prophetic declarations so intimately bound to dispensational apocalypticism can be traced back to the earliest seeds of Jewish eschatology$^5$—though, as we shall see later on, the function and impetus of these images has changed drastically over the course of time.

Jewish eschatology has its roots in the fertile soil of the Babylonian exile, that definitive and painful period in Jewish history that would forever alter the course of that religion.$^6$ It is hard to imagine the trauma an exiled Jew must have felt during this period. To them, the exile represented more than a military defeat and a forced dislocation: it represented a severing of the sacred and ineffable bond with their God. The destruction of the Temple and the violent end of the Davidic line effectively amounted to a divine dismemberment, because those two features of the Jewish culture were directly representative of the Jewish people’s chosen place in the eyes of God: Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, “Concerning this house [the Temple] that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments, then I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.”$^7$

David was more than a king; he was a sacred bond between the Jewish people and their God, a link that was maintained both through the Temple and the presence of a king of David’s blood.

---

$^5$ This eschatology takes shape in a number of apocalyptic texts, found within both the Old Testament and the pseudepigrapha. These ‘Jewish apocalypses’ came in many forms, were written across a wide period of time, had varying degrees of importance and circulation, and were tantamount in influencing, directly or indirectly, later Christian apocalyptic thought.


$^7$ 1 Kings 11:11-13.
It was in the vacuum of exile that the Jewish people began to feel a need for salvation. Prior to this time, their sacred covenant was embodied in the glory of the Temple and the Davidic king. Their closeness to God was felt with every breath, and exercised in every ritual. But after those bonds were cut, the Jews were left without any tangible connection to their God. Not only did they seek some way to reaffirm their divine connection, they also sought a force to battle the oppressive force that held them captive. It is understandable that they would feel powerless and forsaken, and seek some higher power to act on their behalf, and likewise expect the return of a Davidic king (a belief based in part, among numerous other passages, in 1 Kings 2:4 where God tells David that “there shall not fail you a successor on the throne”) and the restoration of the temple to reestablish their favored place with God.  

It was in this context that the first apocalyptic writing in the Jewish canon emerged, a text that would establish a precedent of speculation and expectation about the events at the end of the world. The Book of Ezekiel, written during the time of the Babylonian exile, deftly expresses the salvational need of the beleaguered Israelites. One encounters in chapter 37 a strong hope that Israel will be resurrected from its current condition, likened as a pile of dry bones, by the return of a Davidic king. But the author of the text goes a step beyond merely articulating his people’s messianic expectation; he also incorporates the novel notions of cosmic righteousness and ultimate judgment wrought upon the wicked.

These themes prove to be fundamental to Jewish and Christian apocalypticism. The emphasis is no longer simply on the return of the Davidic king, but has adopted an eschatological flavor in its anticipation of heavenly intervention and final judgment for those who would oppress ‘the chosen people’. This addition represents an internal struggle on the part of the writer and his cohorts—people struggling to come to terms with why such a hard fate had befallen them. Their entire religious and social system revolved around the belief that they were God’s chosen people, and in time the logical rationalization of the hardship

---

8 Hanson, 70-73.
9 See specifically chapters 37 through 39.
10 A hope drawn from 1 Kings 11:11-13.
11 See Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39.
morphed from feelings of abandonment to a belief that their faith was being tested. By employing the themes of cosmic righteousness and ultimate destruction of the wicked, the writer of Ezekiel (and nearly every Jewish apocalyptic writer after him) was not merely responding to a time of crisis and oppression with imaginative expressions of sadness and rage; he was conveying, essentially, the message that God was still just and wise and on the side of Israel, and that despite these hardships, the Jews would be ultimately rewarded—and their enemies ultimately punished—if they kept their faith in God and abided by his mandates. Hence nearly all Jewish apocalypses can be understood as messages of encouragement, hope, and faith in times of great oppression.13

These ideas, first laid down in Ezekiel, were built upon by a string of writers facing successive social and political hardships. The Jews faced a long series of oppression under foreign powers, from the Babylonians to the Seleucids to the Romans. All of these eras produced distinct apocalypses, each one incorporating the already extant material with novel extrapolations. Perhaps foremost amongst these extrapolations was a departure from messianic expectation through the creation of a heavenly intercessor in the Book of Daniel. The writer of Daniel, facing the crisis posed by the reign of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, also sought to bring hope to his cohorts in a time of great persecution.14 Though influenced by the pattern of messianic expectation and the need for salvation established in Ezekiel, the writer of Daniel added a new element by referring directly to a heavenly intercessor: “I saw one like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship...and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.”15

The messianic overtones are undeniable, expressing both a return to tradition and a desire to be saved from the suffering inflicted by foreign kings, but the use of the term ‘son of man’ is a distinct and crucial departure from the tradition of messianic expectation. Though messianic expectation would never be conclusively agreed upon within the Jewish faith,16 the depiction in Daniel of the ‘messiah’ coming down from heaven—equipped with divine powers—created a new expectation of salvation coming directly from God. By surrounding him

---

15 Daniel 7:13-14
16 Charlesworth, 13-14.
with vivid cosmological imagery, the writer gives the salvific figure a shape, providing a focal point of salvation—a tangible character that could be looked to in times of need, expressed not only as a heavenly hero but also as a symbol of Israel’s return to God’s favor. 17 In these apocalyptic circles, no longer would salvation come from a mortal human returning to the throne of Israel; it would come in the form of a heavenly warrior dispatched by God at the end of days to set right all the wrongs. 18 This eschatological pondering was a natural result of seeking hope and solace in a time of intense oppression, when feelings of divine abandonment led some Israelites to the idea that the current suffering was part of God’s plan and that salvation must be coming soon. 19

These Jewish apocalypses were absolutely instrumental in the formation of Christian apocalypticism. 20 Early Christians 21—faced with the death of their leader, dissatisfied with the larger Jewish community, and struggling to define themselves—found them in a difficult predicament and consequently looked back to Daniel and the other extant apocalypses to find hope and direction in a time of turmoil. 22 Though it is relatively uncertain as to whether references to the coming of the Son of Man in the synoptic gospels refer directly to the return of Jesus Christ, and even more uncertain as to whether Jesus declared himself as such, 23 the correlation between the term (loaded with eschatological weight) and Jesus’ return certainly became a mainstay of later interpretation. Some scholars argue that Jesus may have not perceived himself to be the Messiah at all, 24 but that rather he was an eschatological prophet employing the imagery

19 This is directly related to the theme of many ‘historical apocalypses.’ These apocalypses presented a systemized and ordered view of history, schematically depicting the history of the world as completely controlled by the will of God. All of the preceding history was interpreted as building towards a turning point, where afterwards God would impart his final judgment and the righteous would be saved. Generally the writer saw his contemporary times at or just before that turning point, thus providing hope by trying to show that the suffering was not in vain (on the contrary, it had been forever planned by God) and that redemption was coming soon.
21 Who, we must were remember, were Jews at the time of Christ.
24 Charlesworth, 6-12.
and narrative of Daniel. With this interpretation, put forth by A. Yarbro Collins, Jesus is not himself the Son of Man, the Messiah come to earth, but rather a prophet who speaks about the coming of the Son of Man, turning to the established eschatological tradition in a time of crisis. But, as Collins notes, “if Jesus had already associated his activity and teaching with the heavenly figure in Dan 7:13, it is more understandable that some of his followers would have identified the two after Jesus' death.”

If this theory is valid, it can be asserted that Jesus' followers adapted the eschatological Son of Man imagery to fit their needs in their time of crisis, creating a soteriological solution to the problems of a crucified leader, ostracism, struggles for identity, and persecution. This solution, however, has since become removed from its cultural and temporal moorings, moving away from a response to social issues and venturing into the realm of unquestioned dogma. In other words, the depiction of Jesus' imminent return (based upon the existing eschatological framework of the Son of Man) was originally employed to give hope to a beleaguered group—but over time, as that group grew in strength, the original function was lost while the imagery and the belief remained, becoming crystallized, not as a product of its time and location, but as a prophecy handed down from God to the chosen.

So we come to understand that the original function of the apocalypse as a literary genre was to find hope and solace in the face of great oppression. We also see the shift that took place with the Christian adaptation, wherein the literary device became a theological hinging-point. In part because of this shift, but also due to the mere passage of time and continuous reinterpretation of rather obscure passages, modern apocalyptic belief has become entirely dissociated from its original function. The original impetus was to give inspiration and hope through the use of these images, but now the images have taken on a life of their own. They are no longer a means to an end, but an end in and of themselves. The images and descriptions of ultimate judgment are no longer employed to alleviate the feelings of hopeless and despair in the face of blind oppression, but rather are held as prophetic and inevitable truths direct from the mouth of God.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the most extreme form of apocalyptic belief among modern American Protestant Christians: dispensationalism. Created by John Darby, an Englishman preaching towards the middle of the

---


26 Within Christian theology, soteriology [which is derived from the Greek sōterion (salvation)] is the doctrine of salvation as effected by divine agency (Jesus).

27 Paul Boyer, 87.
nineteenth-century in both the British Isles and America, dispensationalism is a particularly fatalistic and deterministic brand of Christian apocalypticism. Espousing a premillennialist\(^{28}\) philosophy, dispensationalism places special emphasis not only on anticipation of the coming end but also on direct prophecy interpretation.\(^{29}\) The name itself comes from the notion that God divided time into certain *dispensations*, or epochs, and that the world is now nearing the end of the final dispensation. These dispensations were written before the world began, and are completely unalterable. Every event in history has followed exactly as it was *dispensed* by God at the beginning of time. By believing in such a rigid and logical scheme of history, followers of dispensationalism turn to prophecy with a certain fervency and faith absent in most other forms of eschatology. Because history is so rigidly preordained by God, the sequence of events at the end of time must be equally as rigid—and if they are rigid and foreordained, then they are knowable ahead of time. All one needs to know of the events are certain clues, clues which drip from the pages of the Bible. Hence, a dispensationalist need only turn to the prophecies of the Bible to decode current events so that he or she might figure out when the end of the world is at hand.\(^{30}\)

This form of belief clearly draws much of its conceptual strength from the Jewish historical apocalypses, but as aforementioned, the impetus and function has drastically changed. A dispensationalist, believing these apocalyptic texts to be the decodable word of God,\(^{31}\) looks to them as absolute literal truth instead of inspirational allegories. Consequently, the understanding of the imagery employed by these ancient apocalypses has also completely changed. Much of the imagery and symbolism present in both Christian and Jewish apocalypses was originally designed to be allegorical or representative of the contemporary political and social turmoil in which they were written. In Ezekiel, the prophecy of Gog of Magog (a dastardly king from the north whose attack of Israel would precipitate the coming of the end times) was an allegory for the Babylonians.\(^{32}\)

\(^{28}\) Premillennialism is a branch of Christian eschatology that concerns itself primarily on speculation about the exact time of Christ’s return. It is a mainstay in all Christian theology that Christ will return to earth and establish his kingdom, one that will last a thousand years (the Millennium). Premillennialism holds that Christ will return before the Millennium and actively establish it, whereas postmillennialism hold that the establishment of Christ’s kingdom is the mission of the faithful on earth, and that Christ’s return will happen after the Millennium.

\(^{29}\) Boyer, 87-88.

\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) It should be noted that only a small number of dispensational thinkers actively turn to any apocalypse beyond Revelation. These thinkers, however, represent a ‘core’ of preachers, televangelists, theologians, radio hosts and writers who not only actively interpret from a wide range of apocalyptic material but whom, more importantly, disseminate these beliefs to their congregation and to the general public. Many everyday dispensationalists acquire their beliefs not through their own study but from this small core of thinkers (see Boyer chaps. 4-9.)

\(^{32}\) Boyer, 154-155.
Daniel, the depiction of the four beasts represented the successive oppressors of the Jews: the Babylonians, the Medians, the Persians, and finally the Seleucids. Moreover, some scholars believe that the depiction of ‘one like the son of man’ descending from the clouds was an amalgam of Near Eastern symbolism, possibly alluding to the archangel Michael or to other some other heavenly character that would provide meaning and context to the piece. Both of these elements of Daniel would be of the utmost influence upon the writer of the Book of Revelation, who would incorporate both the symbolism of the beast and of the son of man.

Much of the dispensational scheme is built upon the imagery and prophetic narrative laid out in Revelation; indeed, it has become a ‘roadmap’ to the events surrounding the end of time. All of the key elements of dispensationalist belief—the Rapture of the faithful, the mark of the beast, the Tribulation, the battle of Armageddon—are drawn from the Book of Revelation. However, this distilling of prophetic information is taken literally, completely denying any acknowledgment of ancient allegory based upon historical conflict and oppression. For instance, the so-called ‘mark of the beast’ 666—which originally refers to the Roman Emperor Nero, who was oppressing the Early Christians at the time Revelation was written—is now interpreted by modern dispensationalists as a moniker for the Antichrist, a crucial player in their scheme of final events. Much time and energy is spent in dispensational circles trying to discern who exactly the Antichrist is and when exactly he will appear. This speculation is important, in their eyes, because the arrival of Antichrist will immediately follow the Rapture, where the faithful will be taken up to heaven. Therefore, in the dispensational worldview, by following the clues and signs laid down in Revelation, a believer may be able to foretell the ascension of the Antichrist and thus be better prepared for the impending Rapture. The ancient imagery has thus become entirely distorted from its original purpose, being warped into a literal interpretation that supposedly prophesizes ultimate personal salvation.

33 Collins, 94-95.
35 Boyer, 36-45; 257-261.
36 Ibid., 43-44.
37 Ibid., 272-279.
38 A scenario that perfectly illustrates the person’s individual anxieties (in this case anxieties about salvation endemic to evangelical Christians) being extended onto speculation about the end of the world.
However, for as much as the function of the texts and the understanding of their imagery have changed, one aspect of modern apocalyptic belief has remained unchanged: that of the insider/outsider dynamic. It takes no great stretch of imagination to understand that many apocalyptic circles throughout history have felt alienated and distanced from the greater society. Indeed, it is the very nature of the belief, for one must be deeply dissatisfied with contemporary circumstances to eagerly desire the destruction of the world. This dissatisfaction and willful separation creates in the minds of the apocalypticists a special sense of superiority, a sense that they hold divine knowledge that is withheld from the masses and given only to an elect few. Naturally, these elect few are the members of the apocalyptic circle. They believe that they are the bearers of truth in a world of deception. But with this ‘sacred’ and secret knowledge comes the necessity to guard it, giving rise to an intense distrust of anyone who is ‘outside’ of the circle and who is thus unworthy to be privy to the secret knowledge. History provides numerous examples of these insular, distrustful apocalyptic communities, ranging from the notorious Qumran community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 2nd century BCE\textsuperscript{39} to the Branch Davidians that perished in the government raid in Waco, Texas in 1993.

Vital to the development of the insider/outsider dynamic is the concept of purity. Purity is absolutely crucial to apocalyptic circles because it provides visible boundaries through which one can discern who is an ‘insider’ and who is an ‘outsider.’ Mary Douglas has proposed that purity is innately bound to the concept of boundaries, arguing that construction of external boundaries, such as the boundaries of a group or society, are an extension of an innate human preoccupation with the boundaries of the body.\textsuperscript{40} The most universal human fear is that of the unknown, and margins serve as a boundary between the known (safe) and the unknown (dangerous); people innately fear that which is unknown to them, that which is outside of their boundaries, be it in terms of community or body.

To go so far as to state the obvious, things are most vulnerable at their boundaries. As the first line of defense, these boundaries are at risk; anything that crosses the boundary has potential for doing harm. In terms of the body, a knife or arrow that crosses the boundary of the skin will do great harm to the flesh and organs. Rape is an act of power because it entails a harmful violation of a boundary. Even food that enters the body can be poisonous or can be choked

\textsuperscript{39} Collins, 144-147.
upon. Conversely, anything that exits the body is also imbued with a harmful power. Phlegm and feces may spread disease, and blood, as the vital fluid, harms the body when it crosses the margin of the skin and flows out. Anything that enters or exits the body—anything that crosses the margin of the body—is dangerous and powerful, with the capacity to harm. These preoccupations with bodily margins in turn become symbolic for the concern over group or societal margins. Concerns over purity are a natural outgrowth of this preoccupation with boundaries. That which is “inside” is seen as pure, whereas anything “outside” is seen as impure. What is inside must be kept inside to retain purity, while any outside element must not be allowed to cross the boundary and thus compromise that purity.

The boundaries emphasized by purity, and the associated insider/outsider dynamic, form the very core of apocalyptic belief. It is this core that has led so many apocalyptic groups to remove themselves from society, seeking to express their purity through withdrawal in order to legitimize their procession of secret and divine knowledge about the end of the world. By removing themselves from society and all its iniquity, these apocalyptic “insiders” are seeking not only to prove that they hold a secret and powerful knowledge denied to the wicked, but prove also their purity and therefore their worthiness to possess this knowledge. Bound with this notion of purity and worthiness is the expectation of salvation: because they have been bestowed this secret knowledge and have remained pure in spite of the sinfulness of the world, they are certain to be saved from imminent destruction. They will be judged as the righteous.

And yet for as endemic as seclusion is among apocalyptic groups throughout history, modern dispensational Christians in the United States are engaged in activity that, at first glance, appears to be quite to the contrary. As opposed to being small, isolated, and insular, the vast host of dispensational believers in the United States is growing increasingly vocal and increasingly active. They seem bent on sharing their “secret knowledge,” in this case the dispensational interpretation of Biblical prophecy. A single search on an internet search engine will yield thousands of websites dedicated spreading the dispensational scheme, detailing the impending end and the suffering that awaits nonbelievers if they do not accept Jesus immediately. That the Left Behind series, a fictionalized

---

41 Ibid.
account of the Rapture and Tribulation based entirely on a dispensational framework, has already sold over 60 million copies with more and more sold each day is further testament. 43

Despite these outspoken activities the fact is that, at their core, dispensational Christians retain a strong insider/outsider dynamic. The notion of purity is still intensely strong, although it has morphed to be expressed not through seclusion but through activism and engagement with the world. Dispensational Christians in the United States are identical in nearly every way to the classic, insular apocalyptic group—except that they are a large group of individuals actively seeking to swell their numbers, and that they seek to engage in the world as opposed to withdraw from it. For as counterintuitive as this seems, it makes perfect sense when one considers that dispensationalism is, and has been, popular almost exclusively among the evangelical denominations. 44 It is the very nature of evangelical Christianity to be outspoken and proactive; to ‘evangelize’ by its very definition means to ‘spread the good word.’ Therefore an evangelical Christian with an apocalyptic worldview finds his or herself with a deep tension: how to retain purity (usually done through withdrawal and seclusion) while simultaneously preaching and proselytizing? The answer for many is an intricate synthesis: an insider/outsider interpretation of salvation.

And there can be no doubt that among evangelical American Christians the preoccupation is on salvation. Whereas all Christian denominations preach salvation, there is a particular emphasis within the evangelical Protestant camps upon personal salvation through Jesus Christ. These ‘born-again’ Christians believe that through complete acceptance of Christ one attains salvation through a spiritual rebirth. This conversion or affirmation of belief is literally the cornerstone of their faith—and, in many ways, is a right of purity. It is a step across the threshold that divides the outside world from the world of Christian faith. Those who are ‘inside’ are pure and primed for God’s salvation. 45 Those who are ‘outside’ are doomed to damnation. This evangelical, insider/outsider notion of salvation meshes seamlessly with dispensational belief. 46 Those who

44 Boyer, 89.
45 It is with this statement that a discerning reader might raise an eyebrow. The purity of those inside the faith is largely theoretical and idealized, as illustrated most notoriously by the actions of Jerry Falwell and other evangelical leaders who have fallen into scandal. This is only one of the deep tensions that underlie dispensational belief; the others will be discussed at greater length later on.
46 It should be noted at this point that by no means does this entail that all evangelical Christians adhere to dispensational ideology. On the contrary, there are certainly a great number of evangelical Christians
are inside are privy to the secret knowledge provided by the prophecies in Bible and will therefore, because of their purity, be whisked away to salvation in the Rapture. Those who are outside, however, will miss the Rapture and will be subject to all the pain and torture of the Tribulation. 47

This combination of evangelicalism, salvation and dispensationalism creates a powerful sense of righteousness and a strong differentiation between those who are ‘inside’ and those who are ‘outside,’ allowing active engagement in the world while simultaneously maintaining spiritual purity. And, consequently, this combination engenders a natural and nearly unavoidable disposition to conservatism. Going back to a notion of purity, we must consider what form purity takes for a modern evangelical Christian. The dividing line is much more than mere theological belief; it has become, and perhaps always has been, entangled in social issues. Evangelical Christians demarcate their boundaries, those who are ‘inside’ and who are ‘outside,’ not only by faith but by a rigid code of morality. Though this morality is rooted in the Bible, it takes shape in the social arena. The opposition to gay marriage, abortion, Darwinism, and the division of church and state are all stances on social issues that serve as boundary-markers.

Dispensationalism is seamless with this system of belief. Those who will miss out on the Rapture are the sinners, which in the world of conservative evangelicalism are homosexuals and their supporters, abortive mothers, their supporters and facilitators, atheists, and—indicative of how the conservative social and political agenda has become synonymous with Christian righteousness—liberals, 48 to name the most obvious. Though it is impossible to definitively say whether their conservatism predisposes them to dispensational thought, or whether dispensational thought somehow leads them to conservative beliefs, there is an undeniable connection between the two.

At the same time, however, there is a deep tension between conservatism and dispensationalism—one that is largely ignored by those who hold these beliefs. On the one hand, conservatism seeks to oppose those things that are perceived as degrading forces acting harmfully upon society. Yet on the other hand, in some

---

47 Boyer, 88. The websites listed in footnote 39 will provide the same.
sense dispensationalism actually is eager to see these degrading forces at work, because they are sign that the end is near and ultimate salvation is close at hand.\(^49\)

The tension is deepened by the fact that one tenet (at least ideally) of Christian purity is charity and compassion, and consequently that purity might be jeopardized if one were to eagerly greet the amplification of suffering in the world as a sign of impending salvation. But regardless of the difficulties posed by such a belief, these tensions only seem to exist in scholarly observation and not in the people who hold them.

We therefore see that political and social conservatism, dispensationalism, and evangelical Christianity are intricately interrelated, each building upon and buttressing one another. And this potent combination is having a profound effect. The large bloc of evangelical Christian voters was instrumental in both the 2000 and 2004 elections, ardently and vociferously supporting a conservative government that is in tune with their social and moral agendas. Though these agendas tend to take center stage, there is another trend growing within the conservative evangelical camp that looks to matters beyond social ills. There are a considerable number of conservative evangelicals, whose motivation for engaging the government is rooted in apocalyptic expectation, hoping to somehow influence American foreign policy so that it might assist in fulfilling dispensational Biblical prophecy.\(^50\) There are evangelical organizations in place whose sole purpose is to actively pursue courses of action\(^51\)—through collective prayer, lobbying, and letter writing—that will assist in the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.\(^52\) And this is much more than a grassroots phenomenon; it reaches into the very top level of our current administration. When asked in a recent interview with Deborah Caldwell about the role of an independent Israel and its significance to evangelical prophecy, Richard Land, president of Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the public policy entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, and member of the U.S Commission on International Religious Freedom,\(^53\) and close friend to President Bush, stated:

---

\(^{49}\) Boyer, 299.


\(^{51}\) Largely concerning that the State of Israel remains independent and in the hands of the Jews, which, according to dispensational prophecy, is a prerequisite for the Rapture.


\(^{53}\) Land was appointed by Senator Bill Frist to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in 2002.
I think it is a sign of the end-times… Yes, we’re one step closer to the endtimes than we were before Israel came back into the land, because my understanding of biblical prophecy is that Israel is established in the land at the time that the events of the Second Coming take place. 54

In a 2004 interview with PBS’s Frontline, Land said that “there’s no question this is the most receptive White House to our concerns and to our perspective of any White House that I’ve dealt with, and I’ve dealt with every White House from Reagan on.” 55 Though by no means should it be assumed that President Bush, his administration, or U.S. foreign policy is conclusively influenced by dispensational belief, it is nevertheless very telling that someone as involved in high-level government as Richard Land should publicly make such bold declarations. When presented with the fullness of the situation, one wonders at the possibility of ancient and anachronistic prophecies directly influencing contemporary world politics. As allegories they are intriguing and awe-inspiring, full of frightening and powerful images. As literal interpretation, they have the power to indelibly reshape the worldview of those who believe; and those who believe seem to be gaining more and more influence within the American government. So we are obliged to ask: why is this happening? What is it about American culture that makes such a situation even possible? To answer these questions, we must look outside of the United States and try to get a perspective on the matter. We must look to a country similar enough to be used as a test case, to discern whether dispensational belief and conservative politics produce a similar result in multiple nations, or just in America. So we look to Australia.

The Land Down Under

We look to Australia for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that Australia and America share remarkable cultural and social commonalities. Both share a colonial past and strong cultural foundations built upon British influence. Both are English-speaking, prosperous, first-world countries. Both countries have strong Christian backgrounds. 56 Both countries share a frontier history, colored by settlers, gold rushes, and shameful conduct towards indigenous peoples. Today, both countries are equally inundated with a consumer-driven media culture, watch the same television programming, and eat the same kind of food. 57 But beyond this laundry list of similarities, which only grazes the surface, there are other factors that draw our attention.

54 Caldwell, “Why Christians Must Keep Israel Strong”.
56 Though both contemporarily support a wide variety of immigrant faiths, the foundational religion of both countries is undeniably Christianity.
57 Based upon author’s observations.
Recently, Australia has seen a shift towards conservative politics within its government. Conservative social agendas have become a rallying cry for a right-wing government that has successfully held power for ten years in a traditionally progressive country.\(^{58}\) Moreover, there has been increasing speculation that this conservative government is mingling faith and politics more than any other government before it.\(^{59}\) In his 1975 inaugural address, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser mentioned God once and made no mention of family. In his 1996 inaugural address, John Howard, current Prime Minister, made 134 references to family and “numerous references to God and Christian principles.”\(^{60}\) This induction of faith-based politics has strong parallels with what is happening in the United States—George W. Bush in his inaugural address stated that “we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in our image.”\(^{61}\) When Howard said at a later date that “we [US and Australia] share the same values” and that “the values are very important,”\(^{62}\) one can assume that on some level he was referring to Christian values of family and God shared by both governments. When the cultural similarities and the emergent intermingling of faith and government are taken into consideration, Australia becomes the ideal place to ask our questions. Here we have a right-wing government incorporating religion into its politics, much as is happening in the United States. So now we must look to discover if apocalyptic thought is a motivating factor among Australian Christian’s involvement in politics.

In order to answer that question, first let us consider the deeper connection at work between the two countries. A leading Australian social analyst states that early in the country’s history it was commonplace to view Australia as a “little” America. There was a desire to follow America, since it was seen as a role model for all the other British colonies both before and after the American Revolution.\(^{63}\) Though this emulation, which began in the mid 19th century, soon lost its imperative quality as Australian culture started to coalesce into something uniquely Australian and its citizens no longer felt the need to seek definition from without, it nevertheless established a precedent of affection and


\(^{59}\) Amanda Lohrey, “Putting faith in politics,” The Age, June 17, 2006.


\(^{62}\) Garran, 105.

cooperation between the two countries. Australia, though confident in its own unique culture, still had tendency to turn towards comparison, whereby the American standard was held as the model and could be used as a measuring stick for Australian success.\footnote{64}

With this in mind it is hardly surprising that Australia has long been a close ally to the United States. In World War II, the Australians turned to the United States for protection against the seemingly interminable advance of the Japanese through the Pacific. Robert Menzies, Australian Prime Minister during the War, organized his foreign policy based upon his confidence that the U.S. would protect them from any Pacific threat,\footnote{65} a confidence which illustrated the naturally close relations between the two nations. While certainly the U.S. protection of Australia was largely strategic, undoubtedly there was a certain emotional involvement as well; the Americans were protecting people like themselves: white, English-speaking Christians. More recently, and much more relevantly, Australia has been a staunch U.S. ally in the “war on terror” and the associated military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, with Howard declaring that the terrorist attacks of September 11th “were done to us as much as they were done to our American friends.”\footnote{66}

Though this support may be viewed as a mere continuation of a long history of friendship, it is also indicative of the shift towards conservative politics in Australian politics and the close relationship between the Bush and Howard governments.

In recent years the Australian political system has lurched to the right, moving away from a long tradition of more moderate politics. Led by Prime Minister John Howard, the Liberal Party has enjoyed control of the Australian government since the 1996 elections. Though named the Liberal party, the party itself represents the right-wing of Australian politics, created in the 1940s by Robert Menzies to oppose the left-wing Labor party’s control of power.\footnote{67} Though right-wing politics have always been the mainstay of Liberal party doctrine,\footnote{68} this current Liberal party government has embraced conservatism to

a new degree; John Howard has on several occasions boasted that he is “the most conservative Prime Minister in Australian history.”

Many in Australia feel that this sudden shift is closely related to an emulation of conservative ideology developed in the Reagan era and perfected in the George W. Bush era. Though the aforementioned cultural proximity leads many to believe this, and while certainly there are very close relations between the Howard and Bush governments, one cannot assume that the shift towards right-wing politics in Australia is based solely on emulation of the United States. The move towards conservatism within Australian politics, though decidedly significant considering Australia’s history of liberal progressivism, is equally attributable to a small but persistent right-wing minority. This minority—though in some instances more extreme or disillusioned fringe elements of the minority have drifted into moments of radicalism—generally represents the wealthy, upper crust. Some scholars view this as a continuation of a trend established in the years after the abolition of the penal colony, where a large group of wealthy landowners initially resisted the shift towards democracy and other liberal social changes for the sake of their prosperity and various holdings, turning instead to right-wing conservative ideology.

Though the Liberal party has been in power for many years since its creation in the 1940s, no Liberal government has so thoroughly embraced conservative right-wing politics as the current one. There has always been a certain ebb and flow of right-wing influence upon the Liberal party, and even during times of influence the right-wing elements tended to be removed from the mainstream, but at present Howard and his current government hold positions that are much more in tune with the right-wing minority than any previous Liberal government. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser attests that Howard’s government is a direct “departure from the original Liberal party as founded by Robert Menzies.” Whereas before Liberal governments were somewhat moderated in their conservatism by the more liberal sentiments of the middle-

---


70 Author interview with Peter Nagle.

71 Such as the fascist New Guards of the 1930s, the White Australia policy (which promoted immigration from White Europeans), and the One Nation movement of the 90s (in which Pauline Hanson, endorsed by the Liberal Party, led a political campaign against multiculturalism and immigration).

72 Moore, 10.

73 Ibid., 12-13.


75 Moore, 2.

76 Author correspondence with Malcolm Fraser.
class, the current government has managed to gain control of the middle, pushing the left-wing Labor party further to left. The ‘mainstream’ has shifted to the right in Australia, much as it has in the U.S.\textsuperscript{77}

In many ways this shift was a result of growing fear and uneasiness among the middle class. It has been the tactic of many right-wing governments to construct a worldview that presents “the public” or “the state” imperiled by some outside entity.\textsuperscript{78} Beginning in the 90s, Australia was faced with several dilemmas, including an economic downturn and increasing reliance on Asia. There was a great deal of concern among middle-class people, who felt that their livelihood was threatened by forces outside of Australia. Howard capitalized on these fears, securing the position as Prime Minister on the back of a wave of dissatisfaction over Keating’s\textsuperscript{79} emphasis on unity with Asia, proposing a new era of Australian economic strength and independence.\textsuperscript{80} Howard also built upon the fears of the middle class by forcefully opposing immigration, stating his intentions to retain jobs and prosperity for Australians and not for foreigners.\textsuperscript{81} This rhetoric was the first move in the right’s takeover of the Australian middle-class. September 11th also provided Howard an opportunity; building on post-9/11 fears Howard ran for and won his second term as Prime Minister under the slogan “Putting Australia’s Interests First—Certainty Leadership Strength.”\textsuperscript{82} Around this time Howard also secured more popularity and more power—and thus more freedom to move further to the right—by turning away a boatful of Indonesian refugees, a move popular due to wariness over the influx of Asian immigrants and resentment from the 2002 Bali bombings in Indonesia in which 88 Australians were killed.\textsuperscript{83}

These fear-based power plays are indicative of the strongly oppositional nature of conservative ideology;\textsuperscript{84} the very nature of trying to ‘conserve’ is to oppose whatever elements are seen as degrading. For instance, the Liberal party at its birth was remarked to be “more anti-Labor than pro-anything-else.”\textsuperscript{85} While on the one hand this oppositional, conservative stance taken by the Howard government can be viewed as a continuation (albeit a rather divergent one) of Liberal party doctrine, it is, on the other hand, intimately connected to a strong

\textsuperscript{78} Moore, 3.
\textsuperscript{79} Labor Prime Minister, 1991-1996.
\textsuperscript{80} Garran, 50.
\textsuperscript{81} Rupp, 174.
\textsuperscript{82} David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, \textit{Dark victory} (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2003), 174.
\textsuperscript{83} Marr, 175-176.
\textsuperscript{84} Moore, 4.
\textsuperscript{85} Boreham, 22.
faith-based morality. Though it is unclear whether Howard and his government’s motivation to appeal to Christian morality is born from genuine devotion or from an attempt to garner votes, it is undeniable that this government is embracing that morality, illustrated by its strong opposition to acts such as gay marriage. Indeed, many pundits believe that the Howard government is using God and Christian morality as a way to facilitate the ‘resurrection of the political right’ in Australia. As we have seen, conservatism and Christian morality go hand-in-hand.

For as much attention has been given to Howard’s government’s relationship with Christianity, this is merger is not unprecedented in Australian history. In fact, Australian political history is dotted with various forms of Christian activism and influence. One of the first—and certainly one of the most consequential—exchanges between conservative Christianity and politics emerged in another time of fear and uncertainty. Born out of the anti-communist fears of the 1950s and 60s, ‘The Movement’ was a right-wing Catholic organization spearheaded by B.A. Santamaria. Santamaria, protégé of the famed conservative Archbishop Mannix, had embraced right-wing ideology from the time of his youth. In 1934 he wrote a sizable dissertation on the nature of fascism, concluding that “fascism arose as a national movement against socialism to replace incompetent government.” Though this is not to say that he openly endorsed fascist views, it is nevertheless clear that Santamaria accepted fascism as an acceptable alternative to what he saw as the catastrophic failures of socialism and communism. It is very telling that Santamaria would have these thoughts in 1934, just as Australia was still in the throes of the Depression. During this period, upwards of one-third of all Australians lost their jobs and the entire nation was gripped with widespread poverty, loss of homes, and fragmented families. This environment engendered among many working-class Australians a sense that the capitalist system was flawed, and that a feasible alternative could be found in socialism.

Santamaria was a university student during this era, and he witnessed the Labor party (which at that time was the dominant party in Australia) move more and more towards socialism. Acutely aware of the failings of capitalism, but also instilled with an inherent distrust of socialism, Santamaria instead opted for a

86 ABC Newsonline, “Tribunal to hear anti-gay election pamphlet case”.
87 Marion Maddox, God under Howard: the rise of the religious right in Australian politics (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2005), 260.
88 Bruce Duncan, Crusade or conspiracy?: Catholics and the anti-communist struggle in Australia (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001), 16.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 9.
form of “totalitarian Catholicism,” a system in which a person’s whole life and personality must be developed in a Catholic way.\textsuperscript{91} Though this belief was the impassioned idealism of a young university student, it nevertheless demonstrates Santamaria’s inclination to see religion as instrumental in the political sphere. By the 1950s, Santamaria and his Movement had become an instrumental force in Australian politics. Propelled by anti-socialist sentiment and a strong Catholic morality, the Movement sought to expunge the Labor party of all communist elements, identifying them as “impediments” to the Catholic ideal.\textsuperscript{92} After all, the Labor party was made up, primarily, of working-class Catholics of Irish decent, and Santamaria’s movement wanted their political party to reflect Catholicism, not communism.\textsuperscript{93} The actions undertaken by Santamaria and the Movement precipitated what has become known as The Great Split in the Labor party.

In 1954, the Labor party split into to two entities, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) and the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The DLP’s split from the ALP was a direct result of the Movement’s involvement within the party. Under the banner of anti-communism, Santamaria and the DLP ardently opposed the ALP and their so-called “communist” sympathies. In the 1960s, the DLP launched “Operation Roadblock,” a program designed to (and ultimately successful in)\textsuperscript{94} keeping the ALP out of power until it purged its communist sympathies.\textsuperscript{95} Though their influence waned in the early 70s, the Movement continued on, defending family values in the 70s and the “Australian Way of Life” in the 80s; it is still battling unions today.\textsuperscript{96} The Movement certainly represents one of conservative Christianity’s largest direct forays into politics.

Though it too represents another direct foray of Christianity into politics, the current alliance between Howard’s Liberal government and right-wing Christianity differs significantly from that of Santamaria and the Movement. Whereas today most Christian involvement is in the Liberal party, in the past practically all of the Christian involvement in politics centered on the Labor party. The main players were the Catholics, who generally consisted of poor working-class families that naturally fell into allegiance with Labor.\textsuperscript{97} But as

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{92} Moore, 98.
\textsuperscript{93} Duncan, 17.
\textsuperscript{94} The labor party did not gain power until 1972 under Gough Whitlam (and even his Prime Ministership was shortlived, 1972-1975)
\textsuperscript{95} Moore, 98.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 99.
\textsuperscript{97} Author interview with Peter Nagle, June 23, 2006.
Labor moved more and more to the left, the party’s stances on controversial social issues began to disharmonize with the values held by the conservative Christian elements within the party. Eventually party ties had to be broken and conservative Christianity found its new champion in John Howard and the Liberal party, with its increasingly right-wing approach and openness to Christian values.98

While it is undeniable that conservative Christians have switched sides and now embrace the Liberal party, it remains unclear as to exactly how much influence they have over the party. Although the government’s rhetoric is geared toward appealing to Christian values and morality, there are many who wonder how much of it is a purely instrumental stance for the purpose of garnering votes; or superficial fear-mongering as opposed to deep-seated convictions. As more and more analysts look at the situation, the more it becomes evident that the current government is using this Christian rhetoric to revitalize and strengthen their power so that they might continue their mad-dash to the right.99 Whereas Santamaria was certainly acting from a place of conviction, it would appear that Howard and his government are talking about faith but hungering after a conservative economic agenda. It appears that the market is Howard’s God.100 And upon closer inspection, it becomes plainly evident that few of the current major Christian connections to Howard’s government appear to have much direct influence.

One of the most visible of these connections between Christianity and politics is the Family First party. Founded in 2002, the Family First party is dedicated to the preservation of family and a wholesome way of life.101 Though careful to avoid any religious references in their official documents, it is well-known that the Family First party represents a camp of conservative Christians dedicated to defending their values against abortion, gay marriage, and pre-marital sex.102 After winning a seat in parliament in 2004, many people began to consider the possibility that Family First might grow into a potent political force, one that could apply pressure and get its initiatives enacted. But Family First has been unable to make any other headway or affect any substantial influence. In fact, it

98 Ibid.
100 Maddox, 25.
would appear as if the Liberal party and its coalition partner, the National Party,\textsuperscript{103} simply use Family First as a bartering chip, an extra vote with which to press their agenda.\textsuperscript{104} Moreover, as one analyst describes it, the senatorial presence of Family First is more of a token nod to Christians than an actual political force:

The coalition’s outright Senate majority after July 2005 relegates minor parties even further into the margins. The significant point about Family First’s rise is that it shows how much more acceptable religious politics has become after three years in Howard’s government.\textsuperscript{105}

Another rather substantial player in the Christian political scene is the newly emergent Hillsong Church. Loud and flashy, this Pentecostal church has exploded in recent years, suddenly boasting a large devoted congregation of upwards of 80,000 people, greatly outstripping the declining growth rates of the mainstream Catholic and Anglican churches.\textsuperscript{106} Hillsong has become so popular and renowned that Peter Costello, John Howard’s Treasurer and the next in line to be Prime Minister, addressed a congregation of over 23,000 gathered in a Sydney sports arena in 2005,\textsuperscript{107} the same Peter Costello who said that all of Australia’s problems could be solved by returning to the Ten Commandments.\textsuperscript{108} Although Hillsong expresses no clear political agenda, clearly the government is taking special notice of this group whose supporters, like those in many evangelical denominations, tend to be conservative. But Hillsong church, even though it is one of the fastest growing churches in Australia, still only boasts 3 percent of the total Christian population in Australia.\textsuperscript{109} The overwhelming majority still belong to the Catholic and Anglican churches, making it unlikely for Hillsong to assert any solid political muscle despite heavy courtship from the likes of Peter Costello.

\textsuperscript{103} A small, conservative party representing farmers and country populations.
\textsuperscript{104} The Religion Report, “Amanda Lohrey on Religion and Australian politics”.
\textsuperscript{105} Maddox, 74.
With nearly fifty percent of the Australian population belonging to the mainstream Catholic and Anglican churches, it is easy to understand that if any church would have political clout, it would be these. Moreover, the Anglican Diocese of Sydney is one of the most conservative in the world, adopting a strong evangelical approach to social interaction.\(^\text{110}\) This conservative predisposition makes for an easy alliance with Howard’s government, and despite waning attendance these two mainstream churches still dominate the political lobby.\(^\text{111}\) Interestingly, these lobbies tend to shy away from the social issues that grip Protestant and non-denominational evangelical groups. Though Catholics and Anglicans share the same strong sense of Christian values, their lobbies have only engaged in securing socializing benefits such as subsidies and tax exemption for their schools.\(^\text{112}\) This relationship proves to be symbiotic: the Liberal party is willing to foot the bill because of the incredible amount of constituents afforded by these mainstream churches, support that had previously been given to the Labor party.

Though the government tends to be outspoken about its opposition to social issues like gay marriage and abortion, this rhetoric appears to be simply aimed at building support as opposed to anything along the lines of direct action; clearly it has no problem supporting the Catholic and Anglican churches so long as their lobbies stay away from those controversial social issues. Only once has the government enacted a decision about a controversial social issue based upon the influence of a religious lobby. In 1996, the government gave into a campaign to overturn a bill that permitted voluntary euthanasia in the semi-autonomous Northern Territories.\(^\text{113}\) The bill received extensive debate both within and outside of government, with people falling on both sides of the issue. Twenty-one out of fifty-six senators mentioned God while arguing their opinions on the matter.\(^\text{114}\) When the bill was finally overturned, there were those who felt that the religious lobby had unduly pressured the government, emphasizing the beliefs of the few over those of the many.\(^\text{115}\)

That success aside, there have been few other instances of successful political initiatives undertaken by the Christian lobby. There is a particularly sensational

---

\(^\text{110}\) Growing up without God: Our horizon for evangelizing and disciplining young Australians (Sydney: Anglican Press Australia, 1997), 18.

\(^\text{111}\) Author interview with Chris McGillion, June 22, 2006.

\(^\text{112}\) Amanda Lohrey, “Putting Faith in Politics”.

\(^\text{113}\) Maddox, 53; see also “Fight to Die,” Sydney Morning Herald, September 27, 1996; and “The Day Australians Found Their Voice,” Sydney Morning Herald, March 29, 1997

\(^\text{114}\) Maddox, 55.

\(^\text{115}\) Ibid.
takeover being staged by an extreme right-wing element of the New South Wales Liberal party, but its connections to religion are slim at best. Though spearheaded by David Clark, an ultraconservative Catholic and member of Opus Dei, the factional warfare between his far-right-wing “Uglies” and the “Moderates” of the NSW Liberal Party is attributable much more to designs of power than any sort of religious motivation.\textsuperscript{116}

Beyond these marginal instances, the conservative Christianity has had little other successful influence over Howard’s government, despite all the rhetoric that would lead one to believe otherwise. The intermingling of faith and politics that at first appears so entrenched is really very superficial. It is a heated topic in Australia largely because of the past history of strongly secular government, but when boiled down it appears that conservative Christians have little power beyond controversy brewing.\textsuperscript{117} And for all of the government’s declared faith, many are beginning to recognize that it “cynically uses religion and religious groups to further their agenda when it suits them, and is then dismissive of these religious groups when it doesn’t.”\textsuperscript{118} So at first glance it would appear that Australia and the United States share a great deal of similarity, but upon closer inspection one sees that situation is Australia is really quite different. Christians do not have the same political muscle as they do in the United States. And, most importantly for our question, there is absolutely no trace of any apocalyptic motivation.

In every instance, Christian involvement in Australian politics seems to be utterly devoid of any apocalyptic or dispensational motivation. The idea perplexed everyone to whom it was posed; it seemed to be absent entirely from the Australian mindset.\textsuperscript{119} Though we will address cultural factors for this lack of apocalypticism later, first let us address the theological reasons why Australian Christian political activism is lacking it. First and foremost is the role of Catholic and Anglican influence. These two mainstream faiths both subscribe to a postmillennial theology, one which places the emphasis not on Christ’s bodily return but on the duty of all Christians to establish Christ’s kingdom on earth through charity and good works. As one Anglican minister told me, “the kingdom will be established through faith, not destruction of the world.” He added that “the kingdom of God already operating among us” and that “the

\textsuperscript{116} Author interview with Ann Davies, June 21, 2006
\textsuperscript{117} Jill Rowbotham , “Piety not much of a vote winner,” The Australian, June 17, 2006
\textsuperscript{118} The Religion Report, “Amanda Lohrey on Religion and Australian politics”.
\textsuperscript{119} Author’s observation.
Church ought to be a parable of that.” This sort of postmillennial thought pays almost no attention to the Book of Revelation, dismissing both prophecy and apocalyptic expectation. This minister also went on to say that he “never considered mixing politics and eschatology” until he encountered conservative Christians in the United States. “We don’t have many dispensationalists here,” he said. When he did encounter someone who held an apocalyptic belief, it was usually a rogue student challenging him at the seminary or a small, reclusive group of disaffected people. He added that “even most conservative group I know of doesn’t ever connect politics and apocalypticism.”

With only 4 percent of the population belonging to conservative, evangelical faiths, there simply isn’t the foundational support for dispensational belief. The only apocalyptic group I encountered, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, was very small and part of a larger international network founded in the United States. The group is dedicated to the preservation of Israel as an independent state, basing their mission upon an interpretation of biblical prophecy that states Israel must be in the hands of the Jews for Jesus to return. Though the Australian members of ICEJ predominantly come from conservative Pentecostal and Baptist churches and are staunch supporters of Howard’s government, no direct political action was being undertaken to try and influence policy. It appears that this group is a dizzying minority among Australian Christians, and even so its beliefs are not as extreme as its counterparts in the United States.

The simple conclusion is that Australian Christianity and its political intentions are devoid of apocalypticism. Though certainly the role of Anglican and Catholic theology plays a significant role in the omission of dispensational thought, there is a deeper cultural feature that makes the Australian cultural psyche uncultivable ground for apocalypticism.

---

120 Author interview with Colin Dundon, June 30, 2006.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 As mentioned before, dispensationalism is almost exclusive to conservative evangelical denominations.
124 www.icej.org
125 Author correspondence with Bruce Garbutt, March 13, 2006 and July 5, 2006.
As far as generalizations go, the saying above is perhaps the most apt in describing, in a single sentence, the complex relationship between the American and Australian cultures. In a direct and succinct fashion it informs us of the very bedrock of the two countries’ distinct cultural psyches. Beneath the superficial similarities of the two countries—which might lead the un-scrutinizing eye to dismiss Australia as a close and familiar cousin of America—lies an immensely different understanding of the role of the individual and of how a society should interact with the greater world. Though cut from the same British colonial stock, the American and Australian worldviews were indelibly shaped by that one staggering distinction, the one thing that would distinguish the two societies’ psyches no matter how similar their cultural past or how comparable their contemporary politics may be. What is that one thing, that one separating factor? One need only look to that gleaming generalization noted above.

But, as many of us are all too well aware, generalizations can be dangerous things. By distilling a complex situation with an even more complex history into one simple and well-packaged summary, one commits the crime of omitting a great number of details and silencing countless voices. Like a blind charge of cavalry generalizations get straight to the point but miss a great deal of particulars. Can we expect a cavalryman to take note of the color of the wildflowers churned beneath his horses’ hooves, or the certain charm of the town off in the distance, much less expect him to give deference to those whom he is charging? Likewise generalizations, in their mad dash to concision, overlook much of the subtlety and complexity of their target, culling specifics for a nice, clean, black and white rundown.

That is not to say that generalizations are worthless. Far from it. It has long been engrained in the American cultural folklore that a well timed cavalry charge can save the day (would the Western genre even exist if it weren’t for the last-minute, bugle-blaring, bellicosely blue-coated charge of cavalry?). So too can a well timed generalization save an otherwise stagnant piece of scholarly discourse.

---

126 This little saying was related to me in the course of my interviews. No official citation is available, though it can be assumed that it is a relatively well known standard in the expansive pool of Australian witticisms and not necessarily gleaned from a specific source.
And it would appear that the simile extends itself even further—it would not be a stretch to suppose that, like the cavalry charge, generalizations are endemic (dare I say indispensable) to the American ethos.

Indeed, the American fondness for the mythical cavalry charge is born from the same cultural phenomenon that gives birth to a penchant for generalization. Bearing in mind the paradoxical hypocrisy of an American writer employing a generalization to describe how Americans have a tendency to generalize, let us indulge the notion for a moment. Perhaps there is something unique to the American mindset that does indeed lend itself to generalizations, to a certain black-and-white outlook on the world. Something that makes the cavalry charge so epically appealing. What is a generalization, after all, except a distillation of all of the facts into one streamlined pseudo-truth? What is it beyond a conscious removal of all those contradictory and difficult aspects of a problem in an attempt to turn an otherwise morally and culturally relative situation—one that demands not only wider understanding but also a certain degree of self-reflection—into an easily digestible answer that requires almost no relativity whatsoever? One can easily accept a black-and-white generalization while simultaneously disregarding all the grays that might fall in between.

The original forefathers of America, the Puritans, had no inclination, even from the very beginning, to accept a scale of gray in their mindset. America was to be God’s Promised Land. In the Puritan’s world of utopist idealization, there is utopia and dystopia—black and white (or in this case America and Great Britain). Moreover, there was absolutely no compromise in their worldview. So unwilling were they to compromise, and so absolutely sure of their righteousness, that they took flight from their homeland to start anew on the other side of the world. Their beliefs were, in many ways, founded upon one great unflinching generalization: that their beliefs and way of life were to be spent in utmost purity, and that the lives of all of those outside of that purity were contaminated with sin. And hence the proclivity to leap to generalize, to extremes, and to see things in black and white, was bred into the American worldview from the outset.

Though the Puritans would eventually be assimilated into the burgeoning mainstream American culture, their beliefs and their attitudes lent an undeniable

---

127 It should be noted that I am by no means claiming that all Americans share exactly this mindset; rather, I am speaking in broad terms about the receptivity of American culture to certain ideas and worldviews as reflected by icons and symbols.

128 Boyer, 68.
flavor to the new society. Their black and white worldview became archetypal, deeply influencing the next great American cultural icon: the Cowboy. At first glance the Cowboy and the Puritan seem to be completely disparate and unrelated, but they are in fact the two most fundamental American cultural identities—they form the very pillars upon which the entire American persona stands. While Puritans and Cowboys seem to occupy the exact opposite ends of the spectrum, they are in fact one in the same. They are both born out of the same cultural phenomenon, that inherent refusal to compromise or to accept the grays of a situation. Both are equally assured in their righteousness, and are both equally obsessed with bounty—the only difference is that the Puritans sought spiritual bounty, whereas the Cowboys sought material bounty. Though this difference gives the two icons the appearance of being entirely polar opposites, it only obscures the truth that, at their core, they are one in the same.

What belongs to the Cowboy archetype, after all? Wide open spaces, complete freedom, charges of cavalry and vigilante justice, among many others. These iconic ideals prove to be the exact same as those of the Puritans, only redressed in brazen frontier materialism instead of staid and dour spiritualism. Is not the call of wide open spaces the same call the Puritans felt for their promised land? A land of endless bounty, a land of milk and honey? The cry “Go West Young Man!” that sparked the sensation of Manifest Destiny and sent hundreds of thousands of brave pioneers out to make something for themselves is analogous to the call that drove the Puritans across the Atlantic; it is the hope for something better out in the great unknown. It is courage, it is bravery—but it is also underpinned with a certain sense of righteousness and entitlement. In other words, the bold ventures undertaken by both the Puritan and the Cowboy to capture their respective bounties were girded with a belief that their actions were righteous and that they had every right to act and believe the way they did, either out on the plains or in the Promised Land. A sense of freedom mixes freely with this righteousness, an idea so axiological and paramount to the

---

129 This does not refer to the occupation of cowboy, i.e. one who herds horses or performs in rodeos. Rather, it refers to an archetypal symbol, an iconic mindset or worldview associated with the American frontier and Manifest Destiny. I employ the ‘Cowboy’ to demonstrate the reflexive quality of the symbol, one so endemic in American culture that it clearly reflects an aspect of our cultural psyche. Until recently, the Cowboy and the associated ‘Western’ genre was quintessential Americana, distilling and reflecting certain core values back to the American people, values such as righteousness, good vs. evil, justice—values that differ very little from the Puritanical, religious values upon which the United States was also founded. In this way, we see that the ‘Cowboy’ and the ‘Puritan’ are foundational symbols that give shape and direction to the American cultural psyche.

130 From here on, the term ‘Puritan’ will be used not to describe the actual Puritan settlers of New England, but rather their archetypal mindset, like the Cowboy.
American psyche: whatever you desire is for the taking, and not only are you free to take it, *you have every right to take it.*

Take for example vigilante justice, one of the classic mainstays of the Cowboy archetype. Nothing is more iconic than a Cowboy taking justice into his own hands. It is his prerogative to exercise almost anarchistic freedom (circumventing the established laws) to see that ‘true’ justice is fulfilled. Not only does this smack of the Biblical “eye for an eye,” it is directly reflective of the Puritan/Cowboy sense of righteous entitlement.

That a Cowboy can (and is expected to) be so confident in his righteousness that he can take justice into his own hands indicates an extreme, deeply-engrained generalization. Vigilante justice is a distillation of a complex situation down into an easily digestible, black and white answer: I’m right, he’s wrong; I’m alive, he’s dead. Simple as that.

Also important to the Cowboy archetype is the refusal to compromise, a trait inherited from the Puritan archetype. After all, why is there any reason to compromise when there is so much open space? If there is a quarrel or dispute, and it isn’t settled by violence or vigilante justice, one party can simply pack up and move on with every assurance that there are other places to go. American history and folklore has no shortage of families willing to pack up everything and move along for the promise of something better.

Thus we begin to see one aspect (by far the most important aspect for this examination) of the American cultural psyche take shape. It is a reluctance to accept the grays of a situation, the reluctance to compromise or to back down from an established point of view. In other words, it is *the reluctance to be self-critical.* Fundamentally, neither the Puritan nor the Cowboy worldview allows for any self-criticism or moderation. Puritans were incapable of being critical of themselves, because righteousness and self-reflexivity are inherently contradictory. Moreover, moderation had no place in their stern and severe lifestyle; “idle hands are the devil’s tools” illustrates an unbending, extreme zeal to attain purity, a zeal that left little room for moderation. As for Cowboys, their sense of righteousness, purpose, and entitlement likely eradicated all self-criticism. Instilled with the fire of Manifest Destiny, the frontiersmen had no reason to be self-critical; they were supposed to be there, the land was theirs for the taking and a moment’s hesitation or criticism would only mean somebody else might beat you to the bounty just over the next hill. And certainly moderation never crossed their minds, not with the seemingly endless bounty
the frontier afforded—one would be hard pressed for a clearer example of this extreme lack of moderation than the eradication of the buffalo. And as we have seen, neither is inclined towards compromise; both hold an indelibly black and white outlook on the world, even if they do look in opposite directions.

With the two most crucial pillars of the American cultural psyche espousing this worldview, it is little surprise that dispensationalism was a huge sensation in America when it arrived in the 19th century.\(^{131}\) Though there are many persuasive theories as to how the social climate of the time made dispensationalism appealing,\(^ {132}\) there can be no doubt that the Puritan/Cowboy mindset provided amply fertile soil in the minds of many Americans. Indeed, nowhere is this hesitance to be self-critical more clearly illustrated than in the distinctly American zeal for dispensational thought. Dispensationalism by its very nature cannot allow for any self-criticism, any doubt, any shades of gray. It is built solely upon generalizations and black-and-white conclusions. The logic is as follows: If every last little bit of history, past present and future, has been dispensed by God, then everything has been decided and is unchangeable. And if everything is unchangeable, then all is knowable. And if everything is knowable, then a person who knows what has been dispensed cannot be wrong. Since all dispensationalists believe that they know what has been dispensed based upon what they interpret from the Bible, this logic leads them to an infallible righteousness in their belief. So infallible is this belief that self-criticism simply cannot coexist with dispensational thought. There can be no shades of gray because God has placed everything exactly as he planned, and certainly no true believer could conceive that there is any indecision or imprecision in God’s nature. There can be no moderation or compromise—either you believe and will be saved, or you don’t believe and will be damned.

Hence we see that the dispensational mindset and the Puritan/Cowboy mindset not only are compatible, but actually build off one another. It is perfectly logical that America should be the hotbed for dispensational thought for that very reason. And it is quite telling that nowhere else has dispensationalism taken such a firm hold. Even though its creator was British, dispensationalism never took root in England, at least not to the same degree. This was, in large part, because of its proximity to Europe and its affection for the ideas of European diplomacy. The 19th century was time of great diplomacy in Europe. All of the nation-states

\(^{131}\) Boyer, 87-88.

\(^{132}\) Such as an evangelical camp who, embattled with liberal theologians over the divine inspiration of the Bible, were grateful to receive Darby’s “strong emphasis on biblical authority and his literal reading of the prophetic text,” (Boyer, 88-89).
scrambled to create as many alliances as possible because one simply couldn’t escape from one’s neighbors. The European continent was simply too small and too diverse, so the countries were compelled to deal with one another. Though this mindset ultimately led to two world wars, it nevertheless did not contain the unwillingness to compromise necessary to foster widespread dispensational thought.133 And as we noted before, there is almost no presence of dispensational thought in Australia. As a British colony it certainly received the seeds at the same time as the United States, but the Australian cultural psyche proved to be nothing but barren soil. And, much like in America, the answer as to why can only be found in the foundational iconic symbols of the Australian psyche: convicts and kangaroos.

For as absurd as it may sound, these two symbols represent an indelible force that has shaped the Australian culture since its inception—and, though one a man and the other a marsupial, they participate with sanguine equality. Both represent an inherent inferiority or reticence built into the very base of the Australian cultural image. Though few would ever think of Australians as ‘quiet’ or ‘modest,’ this diffidence is largely subconscious, woven into the cultural fabric from the very outset. Unfortunately, the terms fail us here. Inferiority is too strongly negative, while reticence and diffidence invoke images of timidity and caginess. And, to be sure, Australians are about as open and outspoken as people get. It is, more aptly, a willingness (almost a compulsion) to be self-critical, to accept moderation. It is the ability to recognize the limitations of their beliefs without letting that in any way weaken them. It is a willingness to admit mistakes without sacrificing the strengths of belief, and recognition and acceptance of other points of view.134 Because of this, Australians shy away from universal truths and stark black and white proclamations, because they acknowledge the limitation of belief. This self-criticism is a limiting and moderating force acting within Australians. They have no fear of admitting limitations or errors. You can sense it just talking with them for five minutes. It is in their mannerisms, their humor, and their whole outlook.

This inherent self-criticism is a direct product of the Convict/Kangaroo mentality so fundamental to the Australian cultural psyche. From the very beginning, Australian culture has been cast in the shadow of these stereotypical conceptions. As a penal colony, Australia was always deemed inferior and backwards by Britain and other free colonies. Though free settlers would follow

133 America, on the other hand, never found it necessary to engage in diplomacy. The Monroe Doctrine is a clear example of America’s inherent unwillingness to compromise.
134 Author interview with Colin Dundon.
the first convicts, and the children of convicts were born free and with an
independent spirit, Australians could never fully escape the stigma of their penal
foundations. Moreover, Australia was seen as a wild land, a land of oddities.
Dozens of bizarre animals and plants were shipped to England, where the
spectacular oddities of that strange colony delighted crowds of refined Britons.
Thus Australia was seen as an odd and distant land, full of convicts and
kangaroos. Though this conception diminished as the penal colony faded into the
past and Australia established itself as a first-rate democracy, it nevertheless had a
profound influence upon the Australian cultural psyche. A cultural foundation
built upon a conception of one’s homeland as a land of oddities and outcasts is
bound to be one that has a certain degree of self-criticism and self-awareness.
Though not exactly shame or embarrassment, the Australians certainly do not
regard themselves as superior; it is rather a subtle self-deprecation and an
acceptance of things not perfect. This foundation allows for a large degree of
moderation within the Australian cultural psyche. Because they were liberated
from the outset of any pressure for perfection, they were also liberated from the
stark black-and-white judgments necessary for such belief in such perfection.
Simply put, Australians are more open to shades of gray and moderation because
the lingering stigma of the kangaroos and convicts instilled in them a self-
criticism that is not conducive to bold generalizations. Consequently, this
inherent self-criticism is also poisonous to dispensationalism, hence its incredibly
low prevalence in the country.

And this brings us back to our original quote. That is precisely why, for all of the
similarities between the two countries and the apparent correlations between
their two contemporary governments, one finds an almost complete absence of
dispensational thought in Australia and an almost over-abundance in the United
States. As a penal colony, Australia never had the pressure to succeed and thus
never fostered the same zealous superiority and penchant for generalizations that
makes such fertile ground for dispensational thought. The United States, founded
as a religious utopia, was forged under intense pressure and expectation, so
much so that it created a deep sense of righteousness that eliminated traces of
self-criticism, thus opening the door for dispensational belief.

135 White, 12-15.
136 Ibid., 16.
It would appear that dispensationalism is a uniquely American phenomenon. Although it will take considerably more investigation to uncover whether there are obscure pockets here and there among other cultures, it is plain to see that in the Western world, America is the eminent host to the vast majority of dispensational believers. Australia, one of America’s closest cousins, offers a great many parallels, but yet is itself devoid of dispensational thought, leading one to the conclusion that there is something particular in the American cultural psyche that makes dispensational thought so appealing. As we have proposed, this particularity is innately bound to the founding of the United States by religious zealots whose beliefs created an atmosphere of extremism and superiority that gave birth to a strong tendency to generalize and resist any form of compromise. By inherently resisting compromise, the American cultural psyche was simply more primed to accept dispensationalism on a wide scale; certainly both Britain and Australia have a smattering of believers, but nothing like the throngs of Americans who wholeheartedly believe and who actively engage their daily lives based upon dispensational thought. What effect this preponderance of prophecy believers will have upon the American government is unclear, but there can be no doubt that their beliefs are very potent and very deep.

**ABSTRACT**

The myths of the past that once defined South Africa’s national identity were shattered on May 10, 1994 with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela following his victory in South Africa’s first fully democratic election. Now, no longer does a colonial power or an oppressive minority control South Africa’s destiny. South Africa’s future is now in the hands of all South Africans, and the myths of the past are either inappropriate or insufficient to the expression of this new identity. Since those historic elections the question of which myths would emerge to define the new South African identity, and how they would come to be represented within the South African landscape, has remained largely unresolved. This is not to say that there are no myths, and no monuments, in the new South Africa. But it remains as yet unclear which heroes, which events, which ideas will coalesce to form the core of South Africa’s new national identity. The stories that will become those myths for the new South Africa are still under negotiation; still swirling around, waiting to materialize under a consensus that says, “This is who we are.” It is safe to say, however, that just as Myth and Monument played an important role in shaping the past identities of South Africa so, too, will they have a significant influence on the reshaping of that identity in the future. I will attempt to bring clarity to these issues by examining some possible directions that myth-making, monumentation and identity formation in South Africa might take.


© 2009 *intersections*, Steven C. Myers. This article may not be reposted, reprinted, or included in any print or online publication, website, or blog, without the expressed written consent of *intersections* and the author.
Traces of Identity
Myth and Monument in the New South Africa

By Steven C. Myers
University of Washington, Seattle

On the slopes of Table Mountain, north of Cape Town, South Africa lies Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens. It is arguably one of the most beautiful and exotic spots in all the world. The Cape peninsula is home to a unique floral kingdom comprised of hundreds of species found nowhere else on earth. Myriad varieties of lovely, delicate flowering plants abound. Visible among the native foliage is a line of gnarled trees identified as Wild Almond, the remnants of a barrier over three hundred years old. They were planted there in 1660 by Jan van Riebeeck, leader of the first Dutch settlers to arrive at the Cape. The purpose of these trees was simple: to separate white from black.¹

Not far away stands an enormous monument, a 100-foot staircase flanked by marble lions, complete with a bronze sculpture of a mounted warrior, spear upraised, atop a 15-foot pedestal. At the crest of these stairs stands a huge colonnaded edifice. It is for all intents and purposes a neo-classical temple, worthy perhaps of Caesar; indeed the entire structure is dedicated to a would-be latter-day emperor. Cecil John Rhodes had a vision to extend the British Empire in Africa “from the Cape to Cairo.” His memorial faces north, looking out across the Cape Flats; as if on a clear day one might actually see all the way to the Nile and beyond. Rhodes, no doubt, would have had it no other way.

Figure 1. Van Riebeeck’s Hedge (left), and the Rhodes Memorial (right).

¹ Allister Haddon Sparks, The mind of South Africa. (New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), xiii.
Nearly 1,500 kilometers from Cape Town, on a hill outside Pretoria, stands perhaps the ultimate monument to the Afrikaner in South Africa. The great colossus can be seen from all directions as you near the city; it is the massive Voortrekker Monument, built in honor of those Afrikaner pioneers (voortrekkers) who left the Cape Colony by the thousands during the “Great Trek” of 1835-1837. The monument is 40 meters high, on a base 40 meters square. The central focus of the monument, visible from all interior levels, is the Cenotaph or “empty tomb” — the traditionally celebrated by Afrikaners as Covenant Day, commemorating the victory of a group of voortrekkers over a vastly superior force of the Zulu nation. Every year on that day, precisely at noon, the sun shines through an opening in the roof of the monument onto the center of this Cenotaph. This shaft of light illuminates the words "Ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika" literally translated: "We for thee, South Africa."

These places are monuments to the “old” South Africa. Each is a physical manifestation of a particular myth of South African identity, an identity of South Africa’s past. Van Riebeeck’s hedge represents the first unsuccessful attempt — as all such attempts have been ultimately unsuccessful — to separate black from white in South Africa. The Rhodes Memorial gives a grandiose physical presence to the myth, long since eroded, of a British Empire upon which the sun never set. And the Voortrekker Monument is the embodiment of the myth of the Afrikaners as the chosen people of Africa, with the destinies of all the other African peoples placed unto their keeping by God. All of these groups — and all of these myths — once held sway in South Africa and each tried to mold the country in its own image. Each, in its turn, left an indelible mark upon the nation’s character just as they left their physical traces upon the landscape.

All cultures have such myths; stories preserved over generations, which they tell and re-tell to themselves and to others, that express who they are, how they came to be, and what their place is in the wider world around them. Ancient Rome, for example, had the story of Romulus and Remus. The natives of northwestern North America have tales of Thunderbird and Whale. Even the United States has such myths (think, George Washington and the cherry tree, or Paul Revere) that underlie its national character. These stories occupy an important place at the heart of a peoples’ identity.

The myths of the past that once defined South Africa’s national identity were shattered on May 10, 1994 with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela following his victory in South Africa’s first fully democratic election. Now, no longer does a colonial power or an oppressive minority control South Africa’s destiny. South
Africa’s future is now in the hands of South Africans, and the myths of the past are either inappropriate or insufficient to the expression of this new identity.

Since those historic elections the question of which myths would emerge to define the new South African identity, and how they would come to be represented within the South African landscape, has remained largely unresolved. This is not to say that there are no myths, and no monuments, in the new South Africa. But it remains as yet unclear which heroes, which events, which ideas will coalesce to form the core of South Africa’s new national identity. The stories that will become those myths for the new South Africa are still under negotiation; still swirling around, waiting to materialize under a consensus that says, “This is who we are.” It is safe to say, however, that just as Myth and Monument played an important role in shaping the past identities of South Africa so, too, will they have a significant influence on the reshaping of that identity in the future.

In this paper I will attempt to bring clarity to these issues by examining some possible directions that myth-making, monumentation and identity formation in South Africa might take. I’ll begin with a brief look at identity group dynamics in South Africa to establish a context for my argument. For that argument it will be necessary next to define what is meant by Myth and Monument, both as categories – as forms of communication – and as particular instances of those categories [i.e., myth(s) and monument(s)]. Within that discussion there will be several examples, including an in-depth examination of the myth of Nelson Mandela.

There follows an exploration of the parallels between post-war Germany and post-apartheid South Africa. At first glance, the analogies between the two seem to suggest a similar course of development in their national identities. However, I will argue that fundamental differences exist between the two experiences that militate strongly against such an outcome. I will next consider an incident from the apartheid years—the of the Gugelthu Seven—that illustrates how those differences have play out in South Africa through the creation of a remarkable new monument erected in their memory.

Having looked at one new monument in South Africa, I’ll try to answer the question: Why aren’t there more? Where are all the monuments to the “new” South Africa? I will propose one explanation that may shed some light on why they have been seemingly slow to materialize. Finally, I’ll explore in-depth an example of this proposition that I believe brings together many of the issues
taken up throughout this paper and reveals how they are being dealt with in South Africa today.

Identity, South African Style

These are critical issues for South Africa, because identity plays an enormous role in the resolution (and/or perpetuation) of conflict. This is especially true in South Africa, where the multiplicity of potential identity-group affiliations is staggering. For generations the lives of the people of South Africa – the jobs they could hold, where they could live, where they could travel, even who they could love – were based on their racial classification. And not out of social custom, but under a system of laws and regulations that dictated nearly every aspect of South African life. Every person’s prospects and expectations were a consequence of the color of their skin. Such a system of institutionalized racism is impossible to dismantle entirely in a mere dozen years. For most South Africans today, their prospects – and most tellingly, their expectations – continue to be predominantly a matter of race.

Under apartheid there were three overarching racial identity categories in South Africa, white, black and “coloured.” Although today these categories are vestiges of the apartheid era, these remnants continue to shape much of the debate regarding the economic, social and cultural restructuring of South African society. Thus, they continue to exert considerable influence over the conflicts surrounding these policies.
Within these three main identity groups there are numerous sub-groups to which one might have an attachment. Among the white minority there are the Afrikaners (the descendants of the original Dutch settlers in the Cape Colony) and the English (who began arriving in numbers around 1820). One or the other of these groups ruled South Africa for 300 years prior to the 1994 elections. Though they have relinquished political power, their economic and social advantages remain largely intact.

The coloured group, under apartheid, included no less than seven separate categories of persons including Malay (whose ancestors mostly came to South Africa as slaves between 1660 and 1840), Indian (primarily descended from the thousands of indentured laborers who came from the subcontinent in the 19th century to work the sugar plantations of Natal), and Chinese, as well as those of mixed-race heritage. Today, as they did under apartheid, this group occupies an uncomfortable middle ground, actively participating in the life of the nation, but with little or no influence over the direction of that life.

The black majority in South Africa consists of at least ten major tribal groups (which helps explain South Africa’s eleven official languages) of which the Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho, and Tswana are the largest. Since the end of apartheid much (though certainly not all) of the influence of tribal identity has been subordinated to the interests of the African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party that seeks to represent the entire population of South Africa. All of these groups add another layer of complexity to the process of identity formation in South Africa.

As I noted, many of these identity groups are remnants of the apartheid classification system that still exert influence on present-day social and political conflicts. Because, although the elections of 1994 altered the political system, much of the social, cultural and physical landscape of apartheid remains in place. Communities are still largely segregated – and physically separated – along racial lines. Despite the emergence of a nascent black middle-class, there exists a widening chasm between the rich (overwhelmingly white) and the poor (primarily black and coloured). These ongoing conditions reinforce the pre-existing cycle of poverty and lack of economic opportunity that was a primary component of the apartheid system. Their perpetuation creates an environment in which the younger generation of black South Africans has largely come to accept this state of affairs as, rather than as oppressive. Thus, the continued use of such categorizations (even in the service of economic restructuring) is seen by some as re-entrenching the underlying assumptions of apartheid beneath a veneer of democracy.
Amin Maalouf suggests that such complex, multi-layered notions of identity are the norm rather than the exception. One’s identity, he says, “is made up of a number of elements...for the great majority these factors include allegiance to a religious tradition; to a nationality – sometimes two; to a profession, an institution, or a particular social milieu.” However, the list of potential identity factors is not nearly so limited. Maalouf continues, “A person may feel a more or less strong attachment to a province, a village, a neighborhood, a clan, a professional team or one connected with sport, a group of friends, a union, a company, a parish, a community of people with the same passions, the same sexual preferences, the same physical handicaps, or who have to deal with the same kind of pollution or other nuisance.”

These multiple facets exist, simultaneously, within each individual and form a hierarchy based upon one’s background and life experience. Such a hierarchy is, according to Maalouf, highly mutable. It can change; indeed it does change, over time. “[O]ne has only to look at the various conflicts being fought out all over the world today to realise that no one allegiance has absolute supremacy.”

The issue that determines which of these many elements will gain ascendancy at any given time, says Maalouf, is a question of threat. When one of these elements is threatened, it will tend to dominate a person’s identity. If, for instance, one feels their faith is in danger, then their religious affiliation seems to become their whole identity; whereas if one’s tribe is under siege, one may fight tooth and nail to preserve it against members of one’s own faith. Whichever aspect of one’s identity is under grave threat at any one time will tend to become one’s entire identity.

This tendency is often exploited by those whose intent is to foment conflict and violence or to seize political power. Those people who share a certain affiliation are encouraged to “assert your identity” or to “protect your faith” and even if only a small percentage heeds that call, an army is born. A classic example in recent memory is what occurred following the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. Serbs and Croats, Christians and Muslims who had been living side-by-side for generations waged brutal war on each other – committing

---

3 Ibid., 10-11.
4 Ibid., 13.
5 Ibid., 13-14.
unspeakable atrocities — over ethnic and religious identities that were suddenly threatened by the disappearance of their sense of an overarching identity.

Thus the question of identity formation in South Africa becomes central to its future. In a land where the dynamics of identity are so volatile, the need to create a sense of common affiliation that can overcome the threats — both real and imagined — to more parochial identity group attachments is imperative. By examining the role of Myth and Monument in this process I hope to reveal some possibilities for South Africa’s future identity.

Myth

In order to examine the role of Myth and Monument in the reshaping of South African identity, it is critical that we first define these two terms. It is important to distinguish Myth (and myths) from the seemingly interchangeable constructs of fables and fairy tales. The most fundamental difference is that Myth is almost always grounded in fact. Even the most supernatural mythology usually has some basis in reality. Fables (like those of Æsop) and fairy tales (like Hansel & Gretel or the Brothers Grimm), though they may have a moral lesson to teach, are seldom based on actual people or events.

The perceptive reader will have noticed that I have referred to both Myth and myth(s). This is an important distinction. Myth (capitalized) is a category of communication, one which I will define more fully in a moment; whereas myths are the individual stories themselves, unique to a particular people (though often similar across many nations), that give that particular people its unique identity. Thus myths are specific examples of Myth. Throughout this paper I will be discussing both and will do my best to clearly maintain the distinction.

In his essay “Myth Today”, Roland Barthes defines Myth as both a type of speech and as a semiological system. As speech, he says, “…what must be firmly established at the start is that myth is a system of communication, that it is a message. This allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form.”

If Myth is a form, then anything can be a myth provided it becomes a part of a discourse; that is, as long as it is part of a (literal or figurative) conversation. Such

---

6 Barthes does not make the distinction between Myth and myth(s) as I have, thus he does not capitalize the word. Nevertheless, he is describing Myth as I will be using it.

Mythic status, however, is neither inevitable nor automatic. Barthes maintains that Myth is always temporary, historical and contingent: “It is human history which converts reality into speech, and it alone rules the life and death of mythical language. Ancient or not, mythology can only have an historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the ‘nature’ of things.” As such, the material of Mythic speech must have already been endowed by history with some meaning.

Take, as an example, Caesar crossing the Rubicon. This crossing, in an historical context, carries enormous meaning for the future of the Roman Republic. It is, in fact, the beginning of the end of the Republic. Lacking such historical import, this event would be unsuitable for elevation to Mythic speech; it would have been “lost in the mists of time,” as they say. However, given its historical impact, the crossing of the Rubicon has for centuries maintained a Mythic significance as beginning of end, as the act that seals one’s inevitable fate. But it is neither the crossing, per se, nor the end of the Republic alone that produce this Mythic connotation; it is necessary for the two (crossing and ending, material and meaning) to be taken together. Barthes explains the process by which this occurs in his description of Myth as a semiological system.

Semiology “postulates a relationship between two terms, a signifier and a signified.” This relationship produces a third term, the sign, “which is the associative total of the first two terms.” Take an example from Barthes’ essay: a black pebble in and of itself carries no meaning, though it could be made to mean many things. Use that black pebble to a death sentence in a secret vote and you create a sign: the pebble death sentence. As Barthes points out, the relationship between signifier and signified is not one of equality (i.e. black pebble ≠ death sentence) but one of equivalence (i.e., black pebble ∴ death sentence). The sign exists only in the association between the two other terms.

In Mythic speech it is this associative total, the sign, which is being communicated. But because it requires material that has already been imbued with historical meaning Myth is, in effect, a second order semiological system “constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it…That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system

---

8 Ibid., 100.
9 Ibid., 112.
10 Ibid., 113.
11 Ibid., 112.
becomes a mere signifier in the second.”

Here is a (strictly metaphorical) representation adapted from Barthes’ essay:

In order to become the mythical signifier, the linguistic sign must already possess an associative meaning (e.g., Caesar crossing the Rubicon signifies the beginning of the end of the Roman Republic). However, in the process of becoming Myth it is essentially emptied of this meaning. Although the meaning still exists, and is necessary to the creation of the mythic signification (e.g., “Caesar crossing the Rubicon as the beginning of the end of the Roman Republic” signifies the beginning of any inevitable chain of events), the first-order meaning is reduced to mere form within the second-order Myth. As Barthes writes, “When it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains.”

Barthes stresses that this reduction from meaning to form does not remove the historical meaning; it merely places it in the background to be usurped in its primacy by the needs of a particular understanding of present-day necessity. According to Barthes, “In this sense we can say that the fundamental character of the mythical concept is to be appropriated.”

Thus, to say that one has “crossed one’s own personal Rubicon” has nothing to do with an Italian river or the collapse of the Roman Republic. These historical meanings belong to the linguistic semiology and “evaporate” when Myth is invoked. Rather, the phrase conveys an associative meaning according to the necessity of current usage, something to the effect that one has “sealed one’s fate; has set in motion a sequence of events that is beyond one’s further control and from which one can no longer turn back.”

One could say that South Africa crossed its own Rubicon in 1990, with the release of Nelson Mandela after 27 years in prison. This was the beginning of the end of white minority rule – and thus of apartheid – in South Africa. Mandela has

---

12 Ibid., 114.
13 Barthes calls this second-order associative meaning the “signification”, to differentiate it from the first-order linguistic “sign”.
14 Ibid., 117.
15 Ibid., 199.
certainly achieved Mythic status, both at home and around the world, in the intervening years. Although a myriad of elements have contributed to that phenomenon, it is possible to examine the essentials through the suggested semiological framework to see how the myth of Nelson Mandela developed.

Mandela as Myth

As we’ve seen, Myth, as a form of communication, has a particular meaning it is attempting to convey. Thus for any particular myth, the essential question becomes: What is its meaning? What is it attempting to communicate? In the case of Nelson Mandela, let us begin by examining this question.

My assessment suggests that the myth of Mandela begins with the idea that he is the “Father of the Nation.” Several people I spoke to described him as a South African George Washington, the leader without whom the new South Africa would not exist. Thus, the myth of Mandela is very much a myth about origins, in this case national origins. At a deeper level, the myth surrounding Mandela carries the message that he is an (perhaps the) exemplary South African citizen. His values, his virtues, his strengths are those of South Africa and of the South African people. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in his speech at the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), spoke directly to then-president Mandela, “Madiba,” the world has looked in amazement and indeed awe at the remarkable example that you have set of magnanimity and generosity in your willingness to forgive and to work for reconciliation… They have seen the miracle of April 1994 continuing in people who suffered grievously, ready to forgive.”

Thus, one notion that was conveyed to me during several personal interviews is that it is not uncommon, under widely varying circumstances when important decisions need to be made, for South Africans to ask (either literally or figuratively): “What would Madiba do?”

If this is the meaning – in Barthes’ terms, the signification – of the Mandela myth, then it should be possible to work backwards to determine the component elements that produce this meaning. Perhaps then, what we have is Nelson Mandela as the exemplary South African citizen. But we have also established that the Mythic signifier, in this case Nelson Mandela himself, must be the associative

---

16 Madiba is Nelson Mandela’s clan name. Among the Nguni people (which includes both the Xhosa and Mandela’s tribe, the Thembu), the clan name is an appellation of respect. It is the name most South Africans use to refer to Mandela in casual conversation.
total of a previous semiology imbued with significant historical meaning. In Mandela we certainly have a person of profound historical import, and thus his Mythic signification might more precisely be described as Nelson Mandela the *historical figure* the exemplary South African citizen. From here it should be possible to look back and understand what it is about his life, his history that has created such a Mythic signification.

Nelson Mandela was born into the house of a tribal chief. Though not in the direct line of succession, he was fated to be one of the chief’s foremost advisors. This is a source of great pride and deep significance for the indigenous peoples of South Africa. It marked Mandela as an eminent figure from the beginning. In his autobiography, he describes being deeply impressed by the tribal meetings presided over by his guardian, the chief regent of the Thembu tribe. These meetings had a lasting influence on Mandela as a leader. “As a leader, I have always followed the principles I first saw demonstrated by the regent at the Great Place. I have always endeavored to listen to what each and every person in a discussion had to say before venturing my own opinion. Oftentimes, my own opinion will simply represent a consensus of what I heard in the discussion.”

Thus, he was schooled from an early age in the art of compromise and consensus building.

As a student in Johannesburg, Mandela was a founding member of the ANC Youth League. The Youth League is widely credited with reinvigorating the ANC and with moving them from an organization of words to one of actions. As a leader of the Youth League, Mandela organized and led many of these action campaigns. Ultimately, he was banned as a result — but he also gained a reputation as a man of conscience and conviction. Despite his banning, he and Oliver Tambo went on to establish the first black law practice in the city of Johannesburg.

After being famously tried and acquitted of treason, Mandela became the first leader of uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the African National Congress. While this solidified his reputation as a committed fighter (now, literally) for the cause of freedom in South Africa, it also forced him to live on the run. He became, as the South African press described him at the time, “the Black Pimpernel.” His ability to elude the authorities only served to enhance his status. Eventually, however, he was apprehended and again tried for treason.

18 Ibid., 267-68.
This time he was convicted and sent to Robben Island, the notorious prison twelve kilometers off the coast of Cape Town – and in a universe of its own.

Mandela spent 27 years as a prisoner of the apartheid regime, and it was during this time that his status reached Mythic proportions. In his absence and isolation, Mandela became the international symbol for the anti-apartheid movement. He became the leader and spokesperson for all the political prisoners on the island. His name and likeness appeared on protest regalia throughout the world, from buttons to t-shirts to placards and banners. Any officials, dignitaries or humanitarians who visited the island made a point of seeking him out to inquire about his health and state of mind; and he took advantage of such occasions to press not only for better treatment for himself and his fellow prisoners, but for the cause to which he continued to dedicate himself – freedom for all South Africans. Throughout his time as a “guest” of the apartheid regime, Mandela continued – presciently, it seems in hindsight – to prepare himself for his historical destiny.

There is, in Mandela’s story, a remarkable resemblance to the mythology of classical Greece. In Greek mythology few individuals ever traveled to the underworld and were able to return, and only one, Hercules, returned whole and triumphant. As a son of Zeus, Hercules had the blood of an immortal running through his veins; Mandela has the blood of royalty in his. In their lifetimes, both Hercules and Mandela survived attempts upon their lives and years of slave labor. Like that of Hercules, Mandela’s life has been one of both triumph and sorrow, filled with arduous labors and truly Herculean deeds. And like Hercules, Mandela ventured into the underworld – both in exile and in the living hell that was Robben Island – and emerged victorious.

The conclusion of Mandela’s story is well known. In 1990, he finally emerged from the underworld. Following secret negotiations with the South African government, he was released from prison and all opposition political parties were unbanned. In 1993, he and then-South African president F.W. de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work toward the democratic restructuring of South Africa. And in 1994, he was elected the first black president of South Africa, in the nation’s first fully-democratic election. It was the ultimate triumph for the man who had become the ultimate icon of the struggle for freedom and it cemented his place as a Mythic figure in the history of the new South Africa.

---

19 I am indebted to my friend Kjersten Gmeiner, MD for suggesting this parallel.
Monument, and the “Germany Parallel”

As mentioned previously, it is with myths of origin that I am particularly concerned when it comes to South Africa. If such myths are at the heart of a people’s identity, it is monuments that give them form and substance. As James Young has written in his book *The texture of memory*, “By themselves, monuments are of little value, mere stones in the landscape. But as part of a nation’s rites or the objects of a people’s national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory.”

Young’s book is an exploration of the idea of the monument and its role in public memory, specifically as it relates to the Holocaust. As such it is an excellent model for South Africa, a model which I will examine in some depth. In this regard I will make a distinction (similar to that between Myth and myths) between Monument (as an idea, as a category of communication) and monuments (as specific individual instantiations of Monument).

The process of monumentation is a primary method by which nations and peoples revisit the myths that comprise their cultural identity. As Young puts it, “The matrix of a nation’s monuments emplots the story of ennobling events, of triumphs over barbarism, and recalls the martyrdom of those who gave their lives in the struggle for national existence – who…died so that a country might live.”

There is a distinction to be made here as well, between monuments and memorials. For the purposes of this paper, I will consider memorials to be a specific sub-genre of Monument. Thus, all memorials are monuments but not all monuments are memorials. Arthur Danto, in an article on the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington, DC, defines the distinction this way:

> We erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget…Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends…Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct, extruded

---

21 Ibid., 2.
22 Young makes a similar, but contrary, distinction. He says that a memorial can take many forms: memorial books; memorial days; memorial festivals, memorial statues, etc. Monuments, according to Young, are but one form of memorial, thus all monuments are memorials but not all memorials are monuments (3-4).
from life, a segregated enclave where we honor the dead. With monuments, we honor ourselves.  

“Danto’s distinction is a good starting point,” suggests Henry Pickford in his analysis of Holocaust memorials in Berlin, “because it rests on the use to which monuments and memorials are put in the context of public commemoration, which suggests considering them as modified forms of semiotic communication. Thus monuments (and memorials) are not merely physical representations of Myth (or myths), but are a way of communicating directly the semiotic messages contained therein. Thereby, Myth and Monument are further entwined in the process of identity formation.

It is not a coincidence that both Young and Pickford made their observations in reference to Holocaust memorials in Germany. The parallels between post-war Germany and post-apartheid South Africa are too significant to ignore. Young, though referring to Germany, could just as easily have been writing about South Africa when he asks:

How does a state incorporate its crimes against others into its memorial landscape? How does a state recite, much less commemorate, the litany of its misdeeds, making them part of its reason for being? Under what memorial aegis, whose rules, does a nation remember its own barbarity? Where is the tradition for memorial mea culpa, when combined remembrance and self-indictment seem so hopelessly at odds?

Pickford takes this idea further, suggesting that such conflicted desires give rise to the creation of conflicted (and conflicting) identities. Future generations, he posits, face the daunting task of “constituting stable self-identities by way of identification with parents and grand-parents who, in the worst possible cases, may have been directly implicated in crimes of unspeakable dimensions, thereby radically impeding their totemic availability.”

He argues that this necessity to identify with figures whom one would otherwise renounce creates an ambivalence to conventional identity formation, leading to an attenuation of the idea of collective identity. This, in turn, leads to the creation of contradictory – and often competing – versions of history through

25 Young, 22.
26 Pickford, 136.
which succeeding generations then attempt to construct an identity that distances them from the deeds of the past while appropriately representing their position within the larger historical discourse.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the realm of Monument. According to Pickford, “The confluence of contradictory historiographies often results in symbolic conflict, and such conflict is perhaps nowhere more noticeable than in public memorials that seek to rescript these various histories into one story, one mythos.”

This should not be surprising, given the dual nature of the semiotic messages many such monuments are expected to convey. For purposes of analogy, I have replaced references to Germany in the following passage from Pickford with references to South Africa. The statement is rendered no less true as a result:

The double bind afflicting [post-apartheid South Africa] is that the memorials commemorating the war dead are at once also monuments to the “birth” of modern democratic [South Africa]: the “myth of beginning” and the “reality of ends” that Danto separates by analytical definition are here inextricably convoluted…the historical narrative – the context – that [newly democratic South Africa] wants to tell itself is just as conflated, trying to name the same event(s) under two descriptions: defeat and rebirth are “co-originary,” as Heidegger would say.

Without sliding off into a lengthy treatise on the nature of identity formation, the parallels to the situation in South Africa should be apparent. Young states that the German national identity “is that of a nation tortured by its conflicted desire to build a new and just state on the bedrock memory of its horrendous crimes.” To the extent that the very same can be said of South Africa, one might expect the process of reconstructing the national identity to develop similarly there as in post-war Germany.

So the question arises, given the similarities between post-war Germany and post-apartheid South Africa, are there other circumstances that suggest that the process will play out differently in South Africa than it has in Germany? Are there powers at work in South Africa that suggest a dissimilar outcome? My answer to both questions is: yes. This difference, I believe, is embodied in the

---

27 Ibid., 138.
28 Ibid., 154.
29 Young, 22.
South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). More specifically, it is in the difference between the TRC and the Nuremberg trials.

It has become quite fashionable these days, nearly de rigueur, to view the TRC with a certain skepticism; to question whether it truly fulfilled any of its objectives, at least those stated in its charter. I have no intention, indeed no reason, to engage in that particular debate. For the purposes of the current argument, I contend that the TRC has succeeded brilliantly as an antidote to the conflicting historiographies that Pickford says have so plagued succeeding generations of post-war Germans. 30

The essential difference between these experiences lies in the nature and history of the two proceedings. The purpose of the trials at Nuremberg was to establish guilt, to apportion blame, and to punish those responsible. It was, in the current parlance, a retributive proceeding. As such, it was an inherently adversarial process, as all criminal trials are. In that we are discussing conflicting historiographies, it is important to acknowledge the historical circumstances that brought about this process.

The Germans did not choose a retributive model; the retributive model was imposed upon them by the victorious Allied powers. Further heightening their sense of guilt was the fact that those who inherited the task of reconstituting German identity in the aftermath of the war held the same racial and cultural identity as those convicted of crimes against humanity. And because the charges constituted crimes against humanity, their convictions created not mere criminals, but universal pariahs shunned by the entire human race. This utter renunciation of not just the acts, but above all of the perpetrators of those acts, is primarily what activated the ambivalence of identification that Pickford cites as the origin of the historiographic and symbolic conflict in post-war German identity.

Contrast this with the history and principles behind the TRC. The purpose of the TRC was to determine, to the greatest extent possible, the fate of victims of gross human rights violations that occurred on both sides during the years of struggle against apartheid. It was not a trial to establish guilt; it was an attempt to ascertain the facts on behalf of those who could not do so for themselves. Thus,

rather than being a retributive process, the TRC was intended as a restorative project. But as in Germany, the choice of a restorative model in South Africa was not entirely voluntary.

The white minority, in relinquishing power, were terrified (for good reason) of the prospect of reprisals against them once the transfer of power was complete. In order to counteract that possibility, it was made a condition of the transfer that a mechanism allowing amnesty for former functionaries of the apartheid government be established. To that end, in addition to hearings looking into the nature of the human rights violations committed under apartheid, the TRC also held a series of amnesty hearings wherein those accused of such violations could present their case for amnesty. These hearings, collectively, were conducted throughout South Africa over a period of two and a half years, the majority broadcast live on South African national television and/or radio. A primary consequence of the hearings was to establish a single shared history of the events of those years. It should not be necessary to point out that this is precisely the opposite effect of the Nuremberg trials as described above.

In this regard, one can make a credible argument for a continuum of late 20th century cases based on this idea. At one end is Germany, whose post-war identity has been formed largely by those identified with the perpetrators of the Holocaust (not by the individuals themselves, but by those of the same racial and cultural affiliation). At the other end lies Israel, whose identity has been forged almost exclusively by those identified with the victims of the Holocaust (in large measure, by the surviving victims themselves). And somewhere in the middle is South Africa, where victims and perpetrators are attempting to work out their new identity together. To my mind, theirs is by far the more difficult task.

But it is also important to note that, unlike in Germany, the inheritors of the state apparatus in South Africa are of an entirely different racial and cultural identity than those overwhelmingly implicated in the crimes of apartheid. This permits them to distance themselves from the evils of the previous regime. At the same time, the exigencies of nation-building – social, political and economic – impose upon them a necessary attitude of cooperation with their former oppressors, further institutionalizing the drive for reconciliation as opposed to retribution. All of which suggests that the process of identity formation in the new South Africa could play out very differently than in post-war Germany. Seemingly, issues of pragmatic necessity may have nearly as much influence on the process as those of idealistic aspiration. The enduring commitment to reconciliation and cooperation requires that both sides be open to compromise for the sake of
ongoing harmony. Such compromise is never easy and is not always successful. An illustration of the difficulties can be found in the treatment of the Gugulethu Seven.

The Gugulethu Seven: a case study in the politics of Myth and Monument

In early 1986, a group of seven young men were recruited and trained as members of uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK). Unbeknownst to them, the man who recruited them was an *Askari*, a former MK operative who had been turned by the government into an agent of the Security Branch. These young men were trained in guerrilla warfare and armed by members of the Security Branch anti-terrorism unit at Vlakplass, posing as MK comrades.

On the morning of March 3rd, 1986, the *Askari* drove these young men into the township of Gugulethu, where they believed they were going to conduct an ambush on Security Branch forces. The truth was that the Security forces were already there, waiting at a prearranged location to ambush them. As the van in which they were traveling arrived at the intersection of the NY1 and the NY111, the *Askari* stopped the vehicle and fled as the Security forces opened fire. A plaque attached to the memorial recently installed near this site indicates that, “Some of the activists were killed as they sought to defend themselves, some were killed as they tried to surrender, whilst the injured were shot as they lay on the ground.”

Video of the aftermath of this attack was broadcast throughout South Africa in the hours and days that followed. Many of the victims’ families learned of the fate of their loved ones only when they saw these images of the bodies being dragged away or manhandled by the Security forces. The community was outraged. Protests, both official and unofficial, erupted. In defiance of the existing State of Emergency an estimated 30-40,000 people attended the funeral. Despite eyewitness accounts to the contrary and conflicting forensic evidence, two separate inquests carried out by the apartheid government found that the men had been killed in a legitimate anti-terrorism operation.

During the TRC hearings it was revealed that this operation was planned and conducted by the Security Branch in the hope that it would be seen as a dramatic victory and would generate support for additional funding for the anti-terrorism unit. Only two of the officers involved in the incident applied for amnesty through the TRC. Both were eventually granted amnesty on the basis that they
acted “in the scope of their duties and within the scope of their authority and have complied with the requirements of the Act. (IOL)"

Unlike Mandela, it is not the history of their lives that has elevated the Gugulethu Seven to Mythic status, but the circumstances of their deaths. The message conveyed by the myth of the Gugulethu Seven is two-fold. The operation that killed them is considered among the most cowardly and despicable acts of the apartheid era; wherein the government created terrorists where none had ever existed before and then, for their own purposes, massacred them in cold blood. Thus, one aspect of the myth speaks of the ultimate betrayal.

The other signification of this myth, accounting for the devotion and commitment of these seven young men, is that of the ultimate sacrifice. Believing themselves to be fighting for the cause of freedom, they are remembered as heroes and martyrs. The memorial plaque states:

Inspired by the ideals of the Freedom Charter and motivated by the command to render the country ungovernable, these young men paid the ultimate price. Their blood has nurtured the tree of freedom. This shrine should remind many that these seven young men lost their lives for the freedom we enjoy today.

As previously stated, monuments are one way of communicating the semiotic messages of Myth. The message(s) contained in the myth of the Gugulethu Seven have not always been so eloquently represented in Monument. A previous memorial located nearby was for years a source of controversy and consternation within the community, not only in Gugulethu but throughout Cape Town. The existence, and the replacement, of this previous monument is an object lesson on the impact of politics on the process of identity formation.

The original Gugulethu Seven memorial was quite small, perhaps four feet square, created of stone and cement. It was commissioned by the Cape Town City Council and unveiled on March 21st, 2000 – Human Rights Day. With an obelisk-shaped pillar about three feet high, it incorporated the eight-spoked wheel – the symbol of the ANC – along with a small plaque of only a few square inches. While it did list the names of the men who were killed, it did not attempt to represent in any way either their lives or their deaths. On the subject of the episode it was intended to memorialize, it was essentially mute. Installed along the NY1 road in Gugulethu, but so inconspicuous that it was easier to miss than to notice, it was more marker than monument.
By contrast, the new memorial to the Gugulethu Seven is nothing short of astonishing. At the front of a plaza paved in stone stands a line of seven ten-foot high granite slabs, one for each of the men who died that day. Each stands on a pedestal with a bronze plaque affixed, telling about the life of one of the victims. Cut out of each slab is the shape of a contorted human body. Visually, it is not at all clear if these bodies are contorted in the joy of life or the throes of death.

This new memorial was dedicated on March 21st, 2005 – exactly five years after the original. It is also located along the NY1 road, only a few yards from the location of the earlier monument. But this new representation is light years beyond the original in its artistic expression, in its incorporation into the larger landscape and in its depiction of the lives and deaths of these seven young martyrs.

How can we account for these two utterly dissimilar renderings of the same episode? Could the mythic signification of the events of that day have changed so drastically in five years as to account for the differences? Possibly; such metamorphoses have been known to occur. It has happened that some event or person so captures the popular imagination that it is catapulted into the national consciousness in such a way as to achieve mythic status. As just one example, the 1980 murder of John Lennon comes to mind. I know of no such epiphanal moment in the recent history of the Gugulethu Seven. I believe the explanation in this case lies not in the realm of Myth but in the realm of politics.

In an interview, Dr. Nico Jooste, historian and the Director of International Education at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, suggested that the politics of the Western Cape, where Gugulethu is located, provide some of the explanation:

You wouldn’t have found a lot in the Western Cape, definitely, because the Western Cape after ’94 was not in ANC control – until now, last year [2004]. Prior to that time the Western Cape was controlled by the National Party – the New National Party – who had no interest in building monuments to the ANC victory.  

He continues:

---

That’s why you’ll find, if you go to East London, you’ll find the Steve Biko monument in front of the City square. If you go to Johannesburg you’ll find a number of monuments there. But not in the Western Cape, you’re right about that.  

Yazir Henry, director of The Direct Action Centre for Peace and Memory, agrees. “I think this is a key point,” he says, “Why would parties – not just the National Party, but also the Democratic Party and parties from that tradition…why would they want to be reminded of their atrocity? They deny it!” Henry, whose organization was involved in the discussions that resulted in the creation of the new monument in Gugulethu, went on to say that lack of resources, as well as what he called “battle fatigue” also contributed to the slow pace of monumentation throughout the country. Both of those conditions could have been overcome had there been the political will to do so. Monuments in the new South Africa have become, it seems, as much a matter of realpolitik as of culture.

Where are All the Monuments?

This issue of monuments is not simply an academic question. According to Ciraj Rasool and his colleagues Leslie Mitz and Gary Minkley, all from the History faculty at the University of the Western Cape, “One of the instant imaginings accompanying the end of apartheid was that many of the symbols and memorials that saturate the South African landscape would disappear.” Indeed, at a conference held at Witwatersrand University in 1992, a primary topic of discussion was the destruction of the Voortrekker Monument described in the introduction. Overwhelmingly, however, this impulse has not been translated into action.

Tributes to the “old” South Africa continue to dominate the national landscape. Markers commemorating the “Great Trek” and its heroes abound. A memorial and cultural center dedicated to the English settlers of 1820 stands above Grahamstown, where the preserved guns of a colonial fort still overlook the town. Near the city of Paarl, northwest of Cape Town, an astoundingly phallic monument to the Afrikaans language commands the view for miles in all

---

32 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
directions. These and innumerable other reminders of South Africa’s history of oppression have been left standing “as if monumental structures encompass a neutral past.”

And it is not merely that the old monuments remain. According to Rassool, “If the removal and reconfiguration of apartheid’s monuments have proceeded at a snail’s pace, the construction of new monuments has been haphazard and piecemeal.” Following the elections of 1994 the government initiated the Legacy Project, which was intended to generate a coherent national program of monumentation. Such a program has been slow to materialize.

Politics played a role in keeping such monuments out of the Western Cape, yet another reason for this is that the government, committed both politically and socially to the goal of reconciliation, couldn’t risk alienating the white minority. Dr. Jooste states, “You must remember the political transformation...took place in 1994. The socio-economic change is still taking place. It’s only ten [sic] years. And monuments are either built by governments or by communities. The government has tended not to do that because monuments can also be quite divisive. In a multi-cultural society, where there’s still a political divide, it could be quite divisive.” The danger of further isolating those with whom it has committed to reconcile left the government program hanging on the horns of a dilemma. This, in turn, has left it to individual localities to create their own projects (of which the original Gugulethu Seven monument was one) or not.

In the meantime — whether by design, by accident or some combination of the two — an alternative strategy for commemorating the heroes and events of the struggle against apartheid has emerged. In numerous locations throughout the country it is the sites of oppression and struggle that have been transformed into monuments. Foremost among these sites is the former political prison on Robben Island. Now a museum, with educational programs and a conference facility, much of the former prison has been preserved in order for future

---

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid, 122.
37 Josste, interview.
generations of visitors to face, in some small measure, the reality of the experience of those whose suffering is now memorialized there. In addition, at all levels those doing the talking (so to speak) at Robben Island – leading tours, conducting educational programs, providing the historical context – are former prisoners on the island. This personal connection, the inclusion of individual experience to the historical narrative, adds enormously to what Young refers to as “the rhetoric of ruins”. [T]he magic of ruins persists,” he writes, “a near mystical fascination with sites seemingly charged with the aura of past events, as if the molecules of the sites still vibrated with the memory of their history…As houses come to be “haunted” by the ghosts (memory, really) of their former occupants, the sites of destruction are haunted by the phantoms of past events, no longer visible, but only remembered”. 38

The monumentalization of such sites requires an intention on the part of the visitor, however. “[W]ithout a people’s intention to remember, the ruins remain little more than inert pieces of the landscape, unsuffused with the meanings and significance created in our visits to them.”39 This intention, this “will to remember,” is one of the motivations behind the Western Cape Action Tour

38 Young, 119.
39 Ibid., 119.
project. WeCAT, as it is known, is a program of the Direct Action Centre for Peace and Memory. Former MK soldiers conduct visitors on tours around the townships of the Cape Flats outside Cape Town, focusing on sites of oppression. Included in the tour is that stretch of the NY1 road in Gugulethu where the new memorial now stands, and where nearby the murder of American student Amy Biehl occurred; Thornton Road in Athlone, where the Trojan Horse incident took place in 1985; as well as the former Bantu Administration Building in Langa. At each stop along the way, the former soldiers (like the former prisoners on Robben Island) describe both the historic and the personal significance of each location.

The tours, according to director Yazir Henry, are both a memorial for the dead and a monument to the living. “Through creating a process that remembers young people who were killed during the liberation struggle in places that oftentimes they were not being remembered we, in the absence of plaques, decided to become the plaques ourselves. By remembering the ideals that those young people died for, and the spirit with which they carried them, we engage today, we engage the present, again.” Henry, whose organization has been operating WeCAT since 1997, says the project is as much about the past as about the future. “We made promises to people that if they didn’t make it that they would be remembered,” Henry says. “And it was important for us who remained alive that there be an active process that honors those who died; that transmits to others, as well as future generations, the history of young people who – I think – did the impossible.” He adds that, “Another important aspect of the WeCAT project is that it provides a vehicle for former soldiers who were engaged in that battle to bring onto the landscape, onto these sites of trauma and killing, their experience of those places and to transmit that outwardly as education.”

The WeCAT project combines the “will to remember” with the immediacy of personal experience to transform sites of past oppression into living monuments that actively engage with present-day understanding. This immediacy makes the messages conveyed all the more powerful. Perhaps nowhere does this combination of monument and personal experience convey a more powerful message than in the area known as District Six.

District Six: Myth, Monument and Reality

For nearly a century, the area of Cape Town known as District Six was a vibrant, thriving, multicultural quarter of the city. Given its name in 1867, when it was established as the sixth municipal district of Cape Town, it occupies one and a
half square kilometers on the western flank of Table Mountain (arguably some of the most valuable real estate in all of Africa). In its heyday, it was a mixed community of some sixty to seventy thousand people that included, during its history: freed slaves and immigrants; artists and artisans; politicians and merchants; writers, teachers, priests, gangsters and sheikhs. It was an area at once terribly overcrowded and enormously diverse; an area of dreadful poverty and surprising harmony.

Architect Lucien LeGrange offers this description of the sense of community that characterized District Six during those years:

Despite the origins of the various people that made up the population, District Six developed over a period of time into a community that was at once heterogeneous and yet still cohesive. It was a community that had a sense of continuity and a sense of its own history. It had a high population density that allowed for a threshold of support for a number of cultural, social and commercial services. Such diverse conditions were to influence the daily lives of people living in the area.

There was in District Six no apparent residential segregation between classes – labourers lived cheek by jowl with professionals. This was perhaps so because there existed an organic link between the various people that made up the community – families were often constituted of various ‘classes’, where professionals, artisans, and labourers were of the same family living under the same roof.

In addition there existed a level of tolerance amongst people that could accommodate a range of religious and political beliefs. Christians, Muslims, Hindus and other creeds co-existed peacefully within the same street, the same tenement building. This tolerance contributed to the sense of community that existed within District Six. Despite different allegiances, people could attend the same church, mosque or school, share social and sports facilities, and exchange ideas freely. Identity, unlike the conservative character it has assumed today, was informed by common socio-economic circumstances and a shared sense of place rather than by notions of ethnicity or religious exclusivity.

That sense of community was shattered on February 11, 1966 when District Six was declared a “Whites only” area under the Group Areas Act of 1950. During the ensuing sixteen years, gradually but inexorably, District Six was demolished.

---

40 Noor Ebrahim, Noor’s story: my life in district six (Cape Town: District Six Museum Foundation, 1999), 8.
41 Lucien LeGrange is a trustee of the District Six Museum in Cape Town.
43 The Group Areas Act reserved 87% of South Africa’s land for whites, who made up only 25% of South Africa’s population.
Over 3,700 residential and commercial buildings were destroyed.\(^{44}\) The only structures left standing were the various houses of worship – churches, mosques and synagogues – that had been the anchors of the once-flourishing community. Tragically, the people of that community were forcibly removed, deposited among the ever-expanding townships of the Cape Flats – Lavender Hill, Hanover Park and Bonteheuwel – miles from their former home, from their work, and from those spiritual centers the government had so thoughtfully left behind. By the end of 1982 the reality of District Six had ceased to exist; the myth of District Six had only just been born.

During the years after the declaration of 1966, District Six went into a steady decline. Knowing what was coming, many who could afford it chose to leave on their own terms before they were forcibly relocated. Many shops and businesses closed, buildings were left derelict and unoccupied. Squatters, gangsters and petty criminals proliferated. The death throes of District Six were not pretty. At the same time, nostalgia sprang up for the “glory days” of the old neighborhood. The “will to remember” what had once existed there began to take hold. The loss of that sense of community that LeGrange describes led to the creation of a new sense of identity as “former residents,” much as Maalouf suggests it might. One expression of this new sentiment was the appearance of romanticized tales of life in District Six, such as those presented by the late Richard Rive\(^ {45}\) in his book ‘Buckingham Palace’, District Six. These nostalgic recollections laid the foundation for the mythologizing of District Six. It became, along with the Sophiatown area of Johannesburg (a similar neighborhood that suffered a similar fate), emblematic of the dream of a non-racialized South Africa where all were capable of living harmoniously together. Unlike Sophiatown, District Six became a monument to itself.

One of the goals of the South African government in declaring District Six for “whites only” was to redevelop this area for the benefit of the white ruling class. Its geography at the base of Table Mountain, as well as its proximity to the social and commercial center of Cape Town, made it some of the most desirable property in all of South Africa. Once the former residents had been removed and the landscape had been completely scoured, development would commence much as it had in the former Sophiatown area, by now entirely rebuilt and renamed Triomf.\(^ {46}\) But the government hadn’t reckoned on the power of memory.

\(^{44}\) LeGrange, 9.
\(^{45}\) Rive was brutally murdered in his Cape Town home in 1989 at the age of 58.
\(^{46}\) For a fuller examination of the fate of Sophiatown, see Sparks, The mind of South Africa, ch.8.
Around the same time that Richard Rive was offering up his rose-tinted version of life in his former home, there emerged a grassroots community movement known as Hands-Off District Six. The expressed goal of this organization was to prevent the government from redeveloping the area without the participation of former residents. Through a combination of social, political and economic pressure, they were almost entirely successful. With the exception of the Cape Technikon, a large technical college located in the center of the district, the area remains largely bare and undeveloped, a monument to the inhumanity of apartheid.

Where once a dynamic community lived, worked and played, now for block after block fields of tall grass sway in the constant breezes that blow down off the slopes of Table Mountain. Between thoroughfares retained to allow passage through the area, the vestiges of the once-lively streets of the old District Six linger like ghosts. The wind howls with the echoes of children playing, or whispers with the muffled sounds of long-forgotten conspiracies. The very ground, as Young would say, “vibrate[s] with the memory” of a history that refuses to be forgotten. The myth of District Six lives here, amid the ruins.

Indeed, the ruins themselves serve to sustain the myth of District Six. For as long as the physical remnants are left undisturbed the possibility, no matter how improbable, of re-creating District Six in its mythical image remains. In District Six, the myth and the monument will continue to reinforce one another as long as that prospect exists. Alas, it is a fleeting hope:

Given the strategic position of the vacant land and the growing need for affordable inner-city housing, it is inevitable that the area will have to be developed sooner rather than later...It is clear that all the families and individuals removed from the area cannot be ‘repatriated’ nor can intruding developments such as the Technikon be wished away. It would also be foolhardy to imagine that District Six can be reconstructed to what it was formerly.47

---

47 LeGrange, 13.
In fact, such redevelopment has already begun. In early 2004 the first new residential construction within the boundaries of the former District Six in over 40 years was occupied – by families that had previously been removed from the area. These homes, located on adjoining blocks in Chapel Street, represent the
first of some 4,000 expected to be completed by 2008. This process has been

Notwithstanding the abundance of positive spin on what former residents call simply “the return,” the issue of repatriation is an exceptionally thorny one. It encapsulates many of the complexities of Myth, Monument, memory and identity that challenge South Africa today. Despite the truth of the earlier suggestion that the myth and monument of District Six are mutually sustaining, they are at the same time profoundly in conflict; the realization of either one would require the demise of the other.

The preservation of the ruins of District Six as a monument would preclude any large-scale redevelopment of the area. Without such development, the realization of the myth of District Six as a community reconstructed in its own (mythical) image is impossible. By the same token, any effort to reconstruct District Six – in whatever image – necessarily entails the obliteration of the existing ruins. To whatever extent such reconstruction failed to live up to the mythical image of what District Six once was (and it is difficult to believe that the results of such an attempt could even come close), many people would undoubtedly feel that both the myth of District Six and the monument had been profoundly diminished as a consequence.

Redevelopment appears, if not imminent, then at least inevitable. Many believe that the return is necessary for the healing of past trauma. Former residents, especially those who were adults at the time of their removal, see it as part of the restitution required of the former regime – despite the reality that it is an ANC-controlled government administering the process.\footnote{Noor Ebrahim, interview, March 27, 2005} Given the enormous energy many have dedicated to their status as former residents, the reclaiming of the physical space from which they were brutally torn is, for them, a matter of reclaiming a lost identity.
However, there are those—former residents among them—who believe that the ruins of District Six ought to be preserved. It is only through absence, they reason, that the true devastation of the atrocity committed there can be adequately communicated. They argue that it is not only the memory of those who died fighting against apartheid, but also the memory of those who suffered living under it, that needs to be preserved. In their view, any re-development in District Six will alter the character of the memory of those events in ways that can only serve to diminish its impact.

They maintain that it would be nearly impossible to re-create the popular image of a harmonious, non-racialized community out of whole cloth. The previous community evolved organically over time—a process not offered via mere reconstruction. Ultimately, they believe that the lessons of what was done—and what was lost—in District Six are more valuable than any attempt to re-create the myth of a community that may once have existed there.

Of course, any question of value inevitably raises the issue of economics, and there are certainly economic arguments for the redevelopment of District Six. As previously noted, the area comprises some highly desirable real estate. Simple geography makes redevelopment a very attractive undertaking, economically. As
currently envisioned, reconstruction of the community would add some 4,000 family units to the economic base of the city of Cape Town. What value does a revived and dynamic economy have in the creation of a new national identity? How do you weigh that against the value of history and memory?

More specifically, however, many people are motivated to return to District Six for purely financial reasons. The opportunity to claim a piece of such valuable real estate can be a powerful incentive, especially for those who are children or grandchildren of former residents who may not have an intense personal connection to the past life of the community. For these people, the return is much more about their own future than about anyone’s past. Such economic motives for return are seldom addressed publicly, inasmuch as they are incompatible with the mythology of memory, reconstruction and repatriation. Here again, the politics of pragmatism may play a decisive role in the formation of South Africa’s new identity.

Conclusion

So, in the end, what can be said about the role of Myth and Monument, and about the future of identity formation, in the new South Africa? After all, identity – or perhaps more accurately, identities – have been dictated to South Africans for generations, since long before the “formal” introduction of apartheid. This history of oppression has left a legacy of obstacles, both cultural and practical, that must be surmounted in order for a new, more enlightened sense of identity to emerge. The work of Amin Maalouf suggests that in so doing, threats to the identities of the various groups within South Africa must somehow be eliminated or overcome. I would argue that this is most effectively accomplished by the creation of an overarching national identity common to all South Africans. In the end, what can be said about the role of Myth and Monument, and about the future of identity formation, in the new South Africa? After all, identity – or perhaps more accurately, identities – have been dictated to South Africans for generations, since long before the “formal” introduction of apartheid. This history of oppression has left a legacy of obstacles, both cultural and practical, that must be surmounted in order for a new, more enlightened sense of identity to emerge. The work of Amin Maalouf suggests that in so doing, threats to the identities of the various groups within South Africa must somehow be eliminated or overcome. I would argue that this is most effectively accomplished by the creation of an overarching national identity common to all South Africans. Such a national identity is not uncommon. Certainly nations with centuries, in some cases millennia, of continuous history (China, India, Egypt,
Greece, etc.), carry with them a strong national identity. But some younger nations have created strong identities, as well. The United States, for instance, is a relatively young country; Israel even younger. Both have a fierce sense of national identity. But what are the prospects that such a feeling of national identity will develop in South Africa, given its violent history of identity-based conflict?

I believe that if such an identity is to develop, Myth and Monument will play a pivotal role. It is evident that Myth is often an important element in the development of a people’s identity. This is because myths carry the messages of history directly to the people; they are, in effect, a form of collective memory. (Why else would we remember the Rubicon 2,000 years later?) So the question of which myths will gain ascendancy in the (re)shaping of South African identity is critical to its future direction. They have had, and will continue to have, a profound influence on the values embraced, the policies enacted and the character of relations—internal and external—practiced by the South African people and their government.

Perhaps the foremost example of this influence is the myth of South Africa as “the Rainbow Nation.” The idea of the Rainbow Nation draws from many of the myths I’ve examined here and binds together many of the hopes and dreams that South Africans have for their future. The Rainbow Nation projects South Africa as a progressive, non-racial democracy where people of all races, all faiths, and all backgrounds live, work and play together, and cooperate for the good of all. It is an idea born out of the traditional South African concept of *ubuntu*⁵⁰ and strengthened by “the miracle” of 1994 that allowed the nation to move from oppression to democracy without descending into civil war. And it is an ideal that has shaped the direction of South Africa’s development ever since. A fundamental method by which these ideas, these messages, these values are communicated—both in the present and over time—is in monuments. The existence (or lack thereof) of such monuments, their location, form and character all affect the content of the messages they convey. Thus the issue of how the myths of the new South Africa are realized in Monument is a non-trivial matter.

The development of identity, and of Monument in particular, in post-war Germany provides a credible comparative case study. This comparison suggests that fundamental differences in the way South Africa has dealt with the atrocities

---

⁵⁰ *Ubuntu* is perhaps best understood through the Xhosa expression “people are people through other people.”
of its recent past may mitigate some, if not most, of the identity conflicts that Germany suffered in the last half of the 20th century. The TRC process has helped to create a shared understanding of that period that has effectively allowed all South Africans to recognize their collective historical origins. This shared understanding can provide the foundation for the sense of national identity that I have suggested.

The comparison with Germany also indicates some possible explanations for the slow development of new monuments in South Africa, as the nation struggles to memorialize those who perished while simultaneously celebrating the creation of a new democracy. This symbolic conflict has led to a strategy of creating monuments at significant “sites of memory.” At such sites, the messages of history are more concrete and thus less open to (re)interpretation. The addition of personal narrative to the Mythic messages embodied at these sites (such as that provided by WeCAT and at Robben Island) creates a human connection that makes the messages all the more real; they become experiences rather than “just history.” And in the end it is ones experiences that form the core of one’s identity.

However, it is also true that Myth and Monument sometimes conflict with practical reality. This may be especially true in a place like South Africa which is still actively engaged in the process of nation-building. This process often involves compromises, which sometimes require that myths be subordinated to practical necessity. Such may ultimately be the case in places like District Six. This is neither inherently bad nor is it unexpected, as a nation’s strength and prosperity also contribute to its people’s sense of identity.

Ultimately, it will come down to the values embodied in the process. If the values employed in nation-building are consistent with those espoused by the complex of Myth and Monument, the two can work hand-in-hand to create a strong, vital, confident South Africa; an identity worthy of a nation that Desmond Tutu calls “the rainbow people of God.”

Steven C. Myers is a 2006 graduate of the Comparative History of Ideas program, University of Washington, Seattle. He served in the Peace Corps in Benin (West Africa) from 2007-09, and is presently working in Benin with The Center for Arbitration, Mediation, and Conciliation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Myers is a Mickey Leland International Hunger Fellow (2009-2011).
intersections