Stories from Montreal 6

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Ethnographic Accounts of Life in North America's Francophone Metropolis

Angelina Leggo, Mona Magalhaes & **Valerie Webber**
Editors

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Angelina Leggo & Valerie Webber

INTRODUCTION

As a city forever shifting, Montreal will always provide fertile ground for young ethnographers to sink their shovels and hands into. It is the dynamic nature of this urban setting that draws so many of us here, and it is the excitement of what may come that holds our gaze. As this volume of *Stories from Montreal* shows, the undergraduate anthropologist's imagination is never for want here, and the eight articles found herein offer unique and particular glimpses into some of the lesser known aspects of what it means to examine humankind in the here and now. The productions of these students also show that Concordia continues to support and engage vibrant minds in their quest for unorthodox knowledge.

To begin, we ground ourselves with the belief systems of two different Montreal cultures. Ekaterina Ksenofontova illuminates the oft-misunderstood realm of modern day astrology, which is alive and well in Montreal. Through her in-depth examination of three long-practicing astrologers, she unearths their inspiration: the foundations, motivations, and goals of astrology, not as a fatalistic guide to pre-destined fortune but as a map to self-understanding and self-determination.

Catherine St-Hilaire then takes us on a journey into the religious significance of Sikh clothing in a country where religious symbols have political connotations. By examining the use and meaning of Sikh symbolic clothing, she reveals how the reasonable accommodation policy of Canada applies to communities in Montreal, increases awareness of differing perspectives on the wearing of the *kirpan* and realizes that being Sikh in Montreal is commonly believed to be an easier task here than in India.

Recognizing the similar alterative powers between martial arts communities and religious encounters, Bernard Oppliger then traces his personal discovery of the transformative potential of *ninjutsu*. In this descriptive ethnography, he takes readers upon his journey of self-discovery and change, arguing that the martial arts community begins with the relationship between a student and a teacher and builds into a supportive network of "warriors" who seek to "see how well you can fight."

Movement, migration, and travel are all intricately tied to self-identification. The various motives entailed, as well as strategies adopted, depend on a complex intersection of where one is from and where they

hope to go. Danielle Riome explores the growing 'couchsurfing' movement, where strangers open their doors to travellers on a budget or those looking for that unique experience of an unknown place. She examines how couchsurfing is both a form of cultural capital and a desire to experience the cultures of others by traveling and hosting. Dispelling some conceptions of couchsurfing derived from previous anthropological works, Danielle distinguishes this practice from tourism while identifying the many reasons that motivate its use and how it creates what she terms "a good story."

Angelina Leggo approaches migration from a very personal position: her own. Through her auto-ethnography she complicates the myth that rural to urban migration consists purely of pull factors to the big city. Her journey back and forth from the Gaspé sets the stage for an analysis of the tumultuous negotiations involved in what is essentially a journey to find the self and a comfortable place to house and nurture that self. She develops an argument showing that both one's home and the area they migrate to contain push and pull factors that must be navigated in order for a move to be successful. Essentially, she realized that one must be able to "live in both worlds", maintaining aspects of home and integrating them into one's new space of living.

When migrating to Montreal, unique factors present themselves due to the linguistic diversity of the city and the province's commitment to the francization of non-French speaking immigrants. Intrigued by the notion of language as cultural identity, Mona Magalhaes explores migrant attitudes toward and motivations for learning French, the language of their host country. Through interviews with migrant students and participant observation in a French language course in Montreal, she examines how the process of language acquisition interplays with the formation of cultural identity and influences migrant views of Québécois society.

In the third and final section of this book, it is sexuality that falls under the lens. Jade Cambron offers a succinct explanation of HIV, a virus that has fallen out of the spotlight but is all too present despite appearances. This educational piece, drawn from her experience as a volunteer at a local HIV organization, is an important step towards repositioning sexuality as a necessary subject in a province that has cut sex education courses in the past years.

Valerie Webber then explores the commonalities in a not-so-common culture. Her interviews with non-monogamous couples shine light upon the reality that mononormativity, the assumption that monogamy is the best and only way, is not only misguided but blatantly harmful as well. By looking specifically at non-monogamists who are not part of a more cohesive polyamorous or swinger culture, she seeks to show that even when residing in disparate communities, non-monogamists often find similar benefits, difficulties and stigmas attached to their sexual and romantic lives.

The Stories from Montreal team sincerely hopes you enjoy this hard earned journey through Montreal and its environs through the eyes of the burgeoning anthropologist.

Lifestyle, Belief and Politics: Negotiating the Self

Negotiating the Future in Montreal: A Case Study of the Social and Cultural Role of Astrology in an Urban Setting

Ekaterina Ksenofontova
In collaboration with astrologers Irina Rozkova, Michel Morin and Elena Vaoulina.

From the beginning of time people have looked up to the heavens in wonder, searching celestial bodies, trying to understand their own place in the universe and the intimate relationship between their life and the movements up above. The star of the day and the lamps of the night had been part of every known cosmology and culture (Lehmann et al. 1998; Hall 2005). They guided mariners and inspired poets, puzzled philosophers and frustrated saints. They were worshiped and feared, studied and loved. Today in Montreal, in a city full of lights, where skies are hardly visible among clustering towers, people still gaze at the stars in search of meaning, if only symbolically.

Beside the abundant forecasts in press and internet there are also personal one-on-one consultations available. Professional astrologers are numerous; some of them enjoy membership in associations like

Astrology Montreal, Astrological Society of Montreal, and The Canadian Association for Astrological Education (CAAE) while others work independently. In the course of this study I approached three Montreal astrologers of different backgrounds, origins and astrological traditions with well established practices of personal consultations. Using semi-structured interviews and informal conversations on a set of basic questions about what it is that they do, I sought to understand what they believe they do for people who consult them and how they perceive their roles in the life of community and society at large. My hypothesis was that the social role of modern astrologers is similar to the role of diviners, priests, shamans, and healers in other cultures who manipulate symbols to integrate society (Dr. Classen lecture notes, December 5, 2009). In search of less biased theoretical clues I turned to a variety of sources and perspectives, trying to remain as open ended as possible and focusing on emic perspective.

A Neglected Subject

The goal of my project was to probe into the little studied subject of occult practitioners in the West. Although various occult practices like Tarot divination, palmistry, psychic readings, spiritism and astrology never ceased in the West and took a strong hold in popular culture, they were largely ignored or viewed with bias and prejudice by scientists. In 1976 Patricia Hartman wrote, "There is no question that interest and participation in the occult arts are booming. The major questions which arise are: What is the nature of this interest? And, why has the phenomenon been largely neglected by social science research?" (1976: 169). Unfortunately, 34 years after this observation was made, these questions still stand. This is in part because historically, people who subscribed to alternative spirituality and belief in the occult were often constructed as undereducated, marginal and unbalanced (Wuthnow 1976: 157-168; Newman 1999: 82-106). What was seen as normal for a 'primitive native' was deemed unacceptable for a learned civilized person. Indeed, what purpose would be served by study of the survivals of this shameful ignorance of the past? What possible relationship between stars, planets, moon, sun and human could there be? And how could people of the past have known anything about it? While the question of the validity of the astrological concepts is not part of this study, the fact remains that marginalisation of the occult by the social sciences was due to ethnocentric and chronocentric bias. However, a later exploratory study of astrology and its constituency by Shoshanah Feher reports: "When compared to the general population, the UAC'89 respondents [participants of an astrological conference] were more highly educated, had higher incomes, and were more likely to be white..." (1992: 89). "My findings show that marginality decreases significantly as interest in astrology increases" (1992: 91).

It is also possible that the Western paradigm that situates man outside of nature and the discovery of alternative sources of energy contributed to the view of humans as independent of their environment and in domination of it. In turn this brought about the rejection of world views that highlight interdependence and interconnectedness of different phenomena of the physical and social universe. Yet, life on Earth is subject to very specific astronomical conditions, the slightest change of which might put a stress on it or even bring it to an end. As we experience growing social and environmental disintegration, the conceptual structures that allow for an espousal of this synthesis might gain greater attention and popularity as the world grows more interconnected and communities become increasingly multicultural (Lehmann et al. 1998; Bromley et al. 1994).

Indigenous diviners, magicians, and shamans outside the West are, on the other hand, well studied by anthropologists. These meaning-wielding characters are generally recognized to uphold and transmit traditional values and contribute to social cohesion and regulation (Bastien 1978: 227; Myerhoff 1974: 285). As outlined by Malinowski, magic and religion serve to satisfy the basic human need for safety by providing symbolic means of intellectual, emotional and pragmatic control of destiny and chance (Malinowski 1939: 938-964). Similarly, a study of nonofficial religion in South Korea suggests that astrology serves pragmatic needs such as counselling, healing, emotional security, protection from misfortune, and realization of material wishes (Kim 2005: 284-302). My interviews with Montreal astrologers revealed that people consult them about very similar issues. Below I deconstruct the astrological consultation as a creative dialogue in which astrologer and client are involved in the negotiation of meaning, of the client's identity, and a reconstruction of causal links in order to gain control over circumstances and find a solution to the problem.

My Astrologist Collaborators

This paper is based on numerous informal conversations over the course of three years, two public lectures at a school of astrology, electronic resources and publications recommended by informants, but primarily on semi-structured interviews. The research was conducted in English, French and Russian. All translations were done by the researcher, but whenever possible the accuracy was verified with the informants. All participants signed detailed consent forms.

I interviewed three practicing astrologers in Montreal, who all requested that their real names be used. Irina Rozkova has been practicing astrology for 15 years, six of those in Canada. Two and a half years ago she opened her school of astrology in Montreal. Latvian born, she comes from a mixed Baltic-Slavic background and speaks five languages. She is educated in medicine, business, music and design. I was introduced to Irina in January 2006. As a part of this project I attended two of her public lectures on November 20, 2009 and February 13, 2010. Two semi-structured interviews were recorded on February 13 and February 23, 2010. During numerous informal conversations Irina provided me with invaluable insights and helped me to clarify many intricacies of astrological concepts. All communications were in Russian.

Michel Morin is a professional astrologer and palmist since 1979. This is how he describes himself: *"D'origine Française, je réside au Canada. J'ai écrit dix ouvrages sur l'astrologie, le Tarot de Marseille, la chirologie, Les Prophéties de Nostradamus, etc."* [Born in France, I live in Canada. I have written ten books on Astrology, Tarot of Marcel, Palmistry, prophesies of Nostradamus, etc.] He has given dozens of lectures and classes in North America and Europe. He speaks ten languages and has education and experience in political science, economy and medicine. The interview, which took place on March 22, 2010, was partially recorded. The conversation took place in English and French. In addition to our interview, Mr. Morin gave his permission to use resources on his website (http://michelmorin2009.blogspot.com/).

Elena Vaoulina, the director of the Montreal branch of Saint-Petersburg's Astrological Academy, which is part of the Oxford Educational Network, and supported by the American Federation of Astrologers and the International Astrological Society of Canada, has been practicing for 15 years. She is Russian, but speaks five languages and holds diplomas in music, art criticism, astrology and psychology. I had first met Elena in September of 2003. Apart from many informal discussions regarding astrology over the years, the formal interview for this research took place on March 22, 2010. The interview unfolded in English and Russian and was fully recorded.

The World View

In History

All of my informants appear to link the value of their work and their social role with a specific world view that they share and promote. This world view encompasses both the goals they set for themselves and the methods they use in their practice. It defines the success or failure of their efforts to help people.

In part the great value of the astrological world view is determined by its long history of tradition, which bears witness to its adaptability. The understanding held by my informants and the astrological community in general corresponds at large to historical findings (Hall 2005; Hall and Philosophical Research Society 1976). According to Jutta Lehman's (1998) work on the revival of astrology in the 20th century, astrology dates back to the most ancient times and the religious significance given to the havens is almost universal. In the West its blood line runs from Greece through Roman to medieval times and the planets share their names and symbolic meanings with Greek and Roman gods. Astrology was also practiced in the Middle East by Persians and Jews. It was wide spread in the Arabic world deriving from Indian, Iranian and Greek sources. In medieval times Western astrology was in practice Arabic astrology. It was part of the heritage of the ancient world rediscovered via Arabic sources during the Renaissance along with Corpus Hermeticum, Plotinus, Plato, Aristotle and others. It was traditionally practiced by educated members of society, often in service of the rulers and policy-makers, who employed its services to address both national and private matters. This practice continues today, as many people of power around the world had been reported to employ astrologers (Lehmann et al. 1998).

The global character of the tradition is quite evident through its history, but most importantly, it was always part of a holistic paradigm,

where knowledge, religion, and therapeutics went hand in hand. The underlying assumption of the exact correspondence between the macrocosm (the stellar world of the Deity) and the microcosm (the human body and affairs) suggested that human destiny was timed by the movements of the planets which, when rightly interpreted, could offer guidance for the future. Thus astrology served as a mediator between macrocosm and microcosm. This world view was a reason for the ambiguous and often changing attitude of the Church towards astrology. It challenged many Christian doctrines such as free will and mystery of the divine will, as well as the power and status of the church as the only legitimate mediator between God and human. Although it was almost completely banished from universities in the 18th and early 19th centuries (Lehmann et al. 1998), it continued to develop and influence spiritual thinking in the West. In the 20th century, the Theosophical movement contributed to the revival of astrology. The Theosophical society made efforts to bring science, religion and culture together in accordance with 'divine science', on the basis of Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine. The resulting holistic world view provided an ideological basis for the promotion of astrology. It was reinstituted as science, incorporated in the body of the occult and further enriched by the notions of karma, reincarnation and the psychology of the soul (Lehmann et al. 1998).

In The Present

Astrology today is not easy to define. The word itself originates from Greek 'αστρον [astron]—heavenly body, star; and λογος [logos]—word, discourse. It is an ongoing debate as to whether astrology should be classified as a religion, philosophy, science, divinatory system, alternative spirituality or a secular movement. The problem lies in the very nature of astrology – it is a holistic system with the built-in mechanism of mutation and adaptability. Perpetual cosmic movement implies changes in climate and society, in personal relationships and forms of government, ideas and moods. It describes unfolding creation. Only the basic Hermetic principles of creation such as vibration, rhythm, polarity and cause and effect remain.

Liz Greene, in her online article *How We View Life is How We Read Charts* for the Astrological Association Conference points out:

> Although our symbolic system has retained its structural integrity for over two millennia, it is in the nature of symbols to reflect not only some mysterious and ineffable potency, but to lend themselves to different and often wildly contradictory interpretations, any of which, for particular individuals and cultures at particular times, may be experienced as 'true'.

She also stresses the importance of being aware of individual differences between astrologers:

> Each time we attempt to define the nature of the astrology [we should keep in mind that] we practice according to our own individual belief system or world view… Astrology cannot be explained by any single theoretical framework, but must be viewed against a specific religious, philosophical, social, and political background and, equally importantly, from the perspective of individual practitioners working within a particular milieu in a particular place, in a particular decade of a particular century. [Green 2008]

The statistics provided by sociologists who conducted research in the US and Great Britain demonstrate cultural and individual differences as well, and the variables they explore proved to be meaningful for my collaborators. Liz Greene quotes the results of these surveys:

Shoshanah Feher's survey (US, 1992) on how astrologers view astrology:

- As a healing art: 92%
- As a psychological tool: 99%
- As part of a 'metaphysical religion': 61%
- Conjoined with 'other esoteric teachings': 25%

Nick Campion's 2003 survey on how astrologers view astrology:

	British (AA conference)	American (UAC conference)
As a science	24.5%	36.1%
As a divine science	42%	52%
As a psychological tool	64.8%	60.5%
As a form of divination	33.3%	40.1%
As a religion	6.9%	7.9%
As a path to spiritual growth	66%	55.9%
As a form of counseling	57.8%	65.1%
As a healing art	53.4%	57.9%
As a means of predicting the future	42%	43.4%

Nick Campion's survey (US and UK 2003) on what astrologers believe:

- Believe in reincarnation: 78%
- Believe in the law of karma: 63.5%
- Believe in a Supreme Consciousness: 52.2% (c.f. Greene, 2008)

My informants have alternatively referred to Astrology as:

Michel	Elena	Irina
A philosophy of nature A map, a compass and a clock Path to truth	Science and art The light of the headlights on the dark road	An X-ray A way of life

All of them explicitly stated belief in reincarnation, laws of karma and God.

The comparison of the attitudes and beliefs held by my informants with those of their UK and US counterparts shows significant resemblance. Thus, it is safe to regard them as representatives of the international astrological community. Most importantly, it demonstrates that astrology is often viewed both as a paradigm and as a tool, which reflects its holistic nature where spirituality, knowledge and practice form a synthetic whole. The variety of descriptions shows that as a system astrology is capable to accommodate different understandings. On the other hand these different interpretations are usually not as mutually exclusive as they may appear. Like science it is based on empirical astronomical data, yet requires spiritual engagement and beliefs like religion. At the same time, in its practical application it is a divinatory art that has psychological and social healing as its goal.

However, deterministic and fatalistic astrology was often seen as vulgar in the past, and even more so today. Contrary to the traditional predictive astrology that aimed at divining future events, modern humanistic astrology tries to present people's personal (psychic) growth by prognosis and retrognosis of mental states. It aims to aid an individual and empower him. My informants share the belief that an understanding of the human's place in the cosmic order allows one to fully exercise free will. In a way, it is also a positivist position as it implies the existence of universal order, where nothing is left out. Moreover, it is knowable, and the knowledge should be used for the betterment of others and self. The following quotes from my informants provide clarification:

> **Michel:** *'Les astres inclinent mais ne déterminent pas.' (Thomas Aquinas)* The stars give you directions but they do not give predictions. I do not predict; I give prognosis.
> **Elena:** Astropsychology gives prognosis, not predictions. The freedom of choice exists a priori. Many things can be changed. ... [But] we do not offer miraculous solutions; we are here to help you take on the responsibility for your own life. It is the key to your success.
> **Irina:** Sometimes people ask me to tell their fortune. I'm not a fortune-teller. One has to create one's fortune; it depends on the choices one makes.

Overall, what I found in practice is a system of operating all available knowledge on three levels: cosmic, social, and individual. It could be seen as part of a wider discourse about the relationship between human beings and nature, as well as to what extent the social and cultural life is shaped by environment. As a working model for the purpose of this study I schematically divided astrological discourse to the three-level system:

Cosmic-Law	**Social**-Market	**Individual**-Capital
given, eternal, yet constantly changing environment governed by natural and spiritual laws	negotiable, temporal, circumstantial, adaptive, subject to change, governed by human laws of the day	given, attained, developed, governed by agency, but inherently linked to the cosmos

Given the collaborative manner of my project, I discussed this model with all of my informants, working out the details until obtaining their approval. All of them recognised it as adequate and relevant in more than one way.

What Advice do People Seek?

> **Michel:** So many people who entered this room told me, 'I just want to be happy...', but I asked them, 'What is happiness? Money? Love?'

It is worth noting that Irina and Michel reported approximately equal numbers of men and women seeking advice, while Elena works mostly with women and their children. In spite of this difference, the topics they bring to the table are very similar as well as the distribution in terms of frequency. Problematic areas in descending order are:

money, employment and business, love, health, family and children, choice of career, self knowledge and personal development.

The last category is the rarest yet most favoured by astrologers, because self knowledge allows for the prevention of problems, rather than dealing with the consequences. As Elena explains, "Oh, people, when they are in trouble, in cul-de-sac, then they seek magic solutions. Rarely people come to profit from prevention."

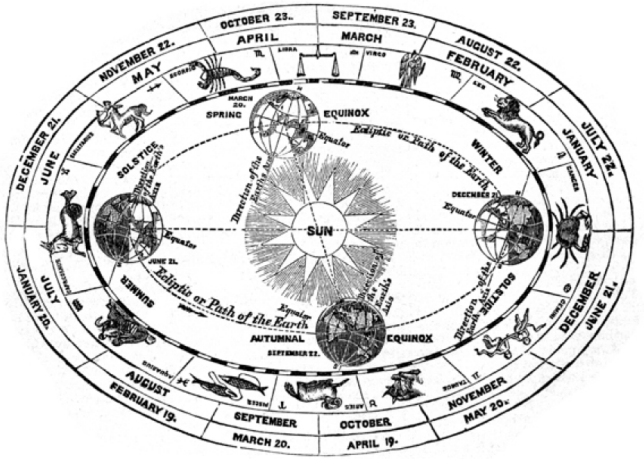
Astrologers' Goals: Help, Explain, Inspire

On the basis of the schematic representation of astrological discourse above, the objectives of astrologer's work can be formulated as follows: Using the knowledge of the law and market dynamics, an astrologer makes assessments of the capital and gives advice on the investment. As a step-by-step process this would appear as follows:

1 Assess individual's capital: Introduce a person to their self; their temperament, abilities, potential, weaknesses, needs, health concerns, and optimal goals for development.
2 Relate to cosmos: Where we come from, where we are headed, conditions, exact position. Formulate karmic program of personal evolution and karmic obligations.
3 Relate to the field of social expression: Estimate optimal trajectory, give practical recommendations and prognosis.

It is impossible to talk meaningfully of astrological consultation without at least a brief reference to the inner workings of the system. As the human body is always a social body (Synnott 1993), our cosmos is often a social cosmos. Cosmos provides some of the best and persistent idioms; its structure allows for rich symbolism and yet is accessible. Astrological symbolism was developed and enriched over many centuries in an interchangeable fashion. Symbols provided for understanding and interpretation of the events; events supplied and redefined meaning to the movements of the figures on the cosmic clock.

According to the ancient astronomer Ptolemy, astrology uses its own specific philosophical method: it studies the changes that heavenly bodies cause on earth on the basis of the particular configurations of the heavenly bodies. The path followed by the Sun in the sky is called the ecliptic. The ecliptic path passes through a number of constellations which are called zodiacal. Sun, moon and planets appear to travel through the zodiacal constellations, thus they are used to provide reference for the planetary movements. Moreover, they offer symbolism to the twelve sectors of the space, 30° each, through which the earth makes its way around the sun. In effect, we have a disc divided into twelve fields with different qualities.



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Through these fields planets move like figures on the game board in direct and retrograde motions and enter into relationships with each other through specific angles, called aspects, forming patterns that are assigned specific meaning. Thus, every moment in time has its unique code expressed through the symbolism of planetary positions on the ecliptic. Every being shares the qualities of the moment they come in to existence and subsequently come into relationship with the time-space continuum and other beings. As Tibetan astrology poetically describes, "each person is as a drop of time." Logically, the time and place of birth is treated as the perfect and

complete representation of the person. Each of my informants described this phenomenon in a different way:

> **Irina**: The portrait, the reflection, the microcosm
> **Elena:** The DNA of personality
> **Michel:** The mold of destiny

The code of the person is juxtaposed with the code of any given moment to determine the particular situation. Thus, the whole course of life can be viewed as a relationship between a person and cosmos – the program of engagement in the life process. Psychological states, aspirations and dangers can be forecast and events anticipated. The road of life is laid out but specific individual reaction to the circumstances and stimuli is a matter of choice and moral integrity.

The time and place of birth is given and fixed, but similar to DNA, the birth chart contains enormous potential that under various stimuli can develop differently – it is capital to be invested and built upon. My informants insist that they work with a person, not a chart. Elena pointed out that it shows neither gender, nor origin, nor level of spiritual evolution. The chart shows what one can and should do with one's life in general, but it doesn't show what one actually does. In a philosophical sense, the planets are powerful symbols that stand for abstract principles that can manifest themselves in any number of things and events on the ground. Although within the framework of objective reality the possibilities are limited, they are so numerous that for all practical purposes they are virtually infinite. In this way the conflict between predestination and freedom of choice is resolved. The course of the planets is set, it is unlikely to change, but the future of the individual and their path in life is negotiable. Therefore, appropriate development of the person's potential becomes the subject of negotiation during the consultation. Ultimately, it is a negotiation of identity.

> **Irina:** All social laws are constructed by humans. People who come to an astrologer often wonder where they have breached the social law. At the same time they have no idea, no concept of cosmic laws. Now, every person is individual, as individual as he or she is unique. The great task of astrologer is: first, to uncover the uniqueness of each person and to understand it; second, to offer a person an opportunity to become aware of his or her place in society on their own terms; third, considering individual characteristics to help the person, instead of opposing self to society, to find harmony with it and bring maximum benefit. Then, while imperfect, the harmony is established between the particular social law (and we know, not all of them are perfect) and the individual interest.
> **Elena**: To help, to inspire, I have to give a client a picture of his potential; to introduce him to himself. Then, I explain who an astrologer is – not a magician. Everyone is responsible for themselves, for their lives and choices. I also have to give alternatives: the scope, the spectrum of possibilities. The events may unfold on three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. There is nothing bad on the spiritual level: everything works for the evolution of the soul. I have to explain how you can tap in to different level to avoid negative physical manifestation (sickness, injury). Also, when you are on the dark road the light is a great power. It has a healing psychological effect. People want to know how the road of life looks like. People want to know themselves. 'What is going on with me?' they ask. I tell them, 'You need to understand yourself and the power to change yourself.' Not knowing may lead to depression. When you explain why the situation occur people feel better. When in pain, knowing it is going to pass makes it easier to withstand the trial.

When we compare these ideas with the statements from astrologers of the past the similarity is persistent. Rudhyar (1972) states "...there is latent in every man and woman the power to be greater than they are, more creative, freer, yet more deeply committed to a process of world-transformation," (30) while Allan Leo posits: "... I am convinced that every man derives his will power from a Planetary Sphere of Influence which he uses, or abuses, by which he can overcome evil tendencies and control his animal nature. Hence Astrology teaches that Character is Destiny." (c.f. Greene 2008).

Astrologers perceive themselves as playing a positive social role, contributing to the wellbeing of individuals and society at large. They preserve and develop traditional knowledge in a comprehensive symbolic system that provides a convenient schema for understanding the individual's place in society and cosmos, space and time, social relationships and personal aspirations. It goes beyond the realm of bodily existence as it implies continuity of an individual's life, before and after incarnation. Thus the individual always has a history and is an actor on the cosmic scene; he is integrated in the cosmic order that exists beyond the particularities and fashions of one time and society. In effect,

he is morally responsible for his past, present and future actions, for enacting and upholding the harmony of personal and social existence with the universal law and with ongoing dynamic change and development of the universe. This implies perceptiveness of the cosmic rhythm and adaptation. From the demand for the dynamic harmony with the environment in a larger sense, the notions of whole as holy and moral are derived throughout human cultures. Whenever some general understanding of the world as unity is observable, the social behaviour will be defined, adjusted and judged in relation to the current dominant system of thought. Basically, everything has to be in its proper place at its proper time. The conceptual paradigm provides the reference point for what is proper.

Irina: The Astrologer deciphers and returns to people the original meaning of laws, the concepts behind them. He helps them to orientate themselves in the world and define their own course in the particular, concrete given time period. This is an astrologer's main task in the modern society.

Michel: My goal, and it presents the greatest difficulty, is to pass the message of solution. People cry. Those are better. Those who don't cry, they are more difficult. I don't like hopeless cases. I'm here to help, to give advice, to offer solution. People are lost, very confused. People are frightened of the unknown. When someone tells me 'tell me everything' for me it is an immediate red alert, because I know it means 'don't tell what I don't want to hear.'

I feel bad for my kids. My generation was lucky, the times now and ahead are much tougher. The great values of the past, things that hold the society – Church, Law and Family - are gone. The family is the most important. Without the family the society is dead.

Irina: We deal with real people with real problems. The world demands constant change, constant adaptation. Astrologer helps, softly, gently, one's growing awareness of oneself, of one's particular individual abilities and talents. He helps to find harmony with current, concrete time and circumstances, while taking in to consideration cosmic laws, karmic laws and social laws. These three are different systems, yet we all are subjects to cosmic and karmic laws, while social laws have different origins and applications. That's why we often find contradictions and conflict in society. So, we try to resolve these contradictions with regard to individual character. So, to give a person a chance to live with these contradictions, always with the consideration for the unique characteristics of the given person, to give him or her way out of this position – this is the essence of what astrologer does.

In essence, this is how astrology views the purpose of human life and a way of being happy: Know yourself. Become a bearer of your true mission; fulfill it. Learn and recognise your potential fully instead of submitting to circumstances and being a slave to them. Use your knowledge to work for the benefit of all: humankind, planet and beyond. Develop your abilities and work on your weaknesses – by changing yourself you are changing your immediate environment, society and the world at large. Change yourself and the world will follow.

There are thousands of legal regulations and social norms, applicable at different times in different places. There are 144 karmic laws that apply to physical and social life of the individual, but there are only four cosmic laws that apply to all at all times:

1. Know thyself, know your horoscope, and be at the right place, at the right time.
2. Do not abuse the environment, care for you planet.
3. Put the interests of your partner above your own.
4. Do not make profit on the grief of others.

Successes and Difficulties

In view of the necessity to negotiate the client's self image, needs and goals, as well as the acceptable way for the client to approach and resolve his or her problems, the astrological consultation is by definition a collaborative effort. Consequently, the success is perceived as a well established partnership and co-operation between astrologer and a client.

Irina: The astrologer is not a wizard. I can do my work, but I can't change the person's life for them – only they can.

Elena: There are two kinds of clients, psychologically, masters of life and victims of life. Masters do not expect choices to be made for them, but rather expect the alternatives. The victims, in contrast, wait for directions: at this time over there do this. They expect you to solve their problems. The important factors of success are mutual understanding and the readiness [on the part of the client] to work, the ability to take responsibility and to comprehend.

Michel: Good communication is the key.

The difficulties that my collaborators reported mostly concern mistrust. Often people are not prepared to make any effort or simply do not follow advice. Sometimes they even act to the contrary out of curiosity, to see what will happen. Michel gave an example of a client whom he strongly advised against airplane trips at specific times. In spite of the warning, the man went on a business trip to South America. He had a near death experience when the plane crash-landed, but luckily escaped with minimal injuries. In such cases, when something bad happens, people easily turn against the astrologer claiming that the astrologer's warning had somehow brought on the curse. On the other hand, when a warning is acted upon and preventive measures are taken, some clients have been reported to complain that the feared event did not take place. They may feel that they were lied to and afraid for nothing. Fortunately such incidents are rare.

> **Irina:** Sometimes people ask me, 'What is the percentage of accuracy of your forecasts? How often do they come true?' What can I tell them? I work so hard to make sure that the worst of my prognosis would never come true.

What Does It Take?

All of the astrologers I spoke with agree that, first and foremost, an astrologer has to love people. In addition, to be an astrologer one has to: have both analytical and synthetic faculties of intelligence; be very versatile and eloquent; love both to talk and to listen; be well educated preferably in more than one field; know the society they work in well; and follow strict ethics including: Do no harm; Observe a client's privacy; Take into account the compatibility of people; and Do not offer too much negative information, but give warnings.

> **Elena:** I try not to tell really negative stuff. It can break a person.
> **Michel:** I was born on the day of three archangels [September 29th], so I'm a soldier, an ambassador and a healer. In my work I combine characteristics of a lawyer, doctor and priest, which implies constant self education.

There is also the ambiguous subject of psychic abilities. Although all astrologers insist on the scientific nature of their work, it is nonetheless understood that without some psychic ability or intuition the astrologer can achieve neither high accuracy nor status. Some claim that it is an intrinsic part of astrology, other disagree but confess to using their own psychic talents in their work. Regardless, whether the specific astrologer deems it a compulsory asset of the profession or not, all my informants claim to have them: visionary, prophetic, and healing. "I'm a psychic, a prophet and a healer, although it is not astrology", says Michel casually. "Don't worry, I know everything about you," he informed me the moment I walked into his study, producing my birth chart out of a thick folder. "A Horoscope is a Mandela which an astrologer creates and into which he gazes", he commented, "but I don't even need it. When someone calls, I feel right away if I should take the call. I'm not in this only for money, so I don't take hopeless cases."

Irina also made references to the chart wheel as a Mandela. She explains that in her mind it is not static; it moves and shifts. Its powerful symbols invoke images, feelings and concepts. Out of the sea of possible analogies she has to fish out the ones that are relevant to the particular relationships and events. Of course, the application of the laws of analogy requires careful reasoning and analysis. But it is the synthesis that brings stunning results. Irina related an episode that occurred during a telephone consultation. The middle aged woman who called decided to test her abilities and asked if Irina could guess what colour her eyes were. After a momentary consideration, Irina named the colour and pointed out that it had changed in the past, naming the approximate year of change. Her answer was correct. Irina felt that she just reasoned it out, but the speed and precision of such reasoning had certainly left the client with an impression that the astrologer sees through time and space. Irina herself is not entirely sure how she does it "I just know it is true. I go mentally through different variations and sometimes the answer doesn't come, something feels wrong, but when I find it I know - this is it."

Conclusion

There are certain consequences that derive from an astrological world view and practice. First, due to the historically multicultural and holistic character of astrology, astrologers in Montreal are able to reach out to people of different backgrounds and do not shy away from any kind of concerns. Like traditional cultural figures they embrace the person, the community and the world as a whole.

Second, they contribute to human development as they focus on the overall wellbeing of individuals by encouraging them to explore and develop their own potential. At the same time they seek to harmonize society and bring about necessary change. There are perceived social and ideological conflicts and a demand to resolve them. There is a need for guidance to fill in. So, they guide, advise, and heal.

According to my informants, many people want a map and instructions on how to navigate it, safely and in the desirable direction. This direction is determined by social goals: wealth, status, family, sexuality, etc. Our ideas about happiness are shaped by our culture. We must have what is prestigious: "Better to be rich and healthy, than poor and sick" (Russian proverb). The problem is that not everyone finds themselves on the top of the scale. The solution astrology offers is: Be yourself, observe cosmic and karmic laws, and you will take your proper and thus comfortable material and psychological place in society. In doing so, you will promote a healthier, happier society. We can achieve social harmony if we bring the microcosm into harmony with the macrocosm, because they are related, they are one. This is how Irina describes it: "When one small cell (one person's life and understanding) is harmonized, then it will affect the rest of society in a fusion-like reaction. It will make a difference that will spread in a chain reaction."

Finally, astrologers in Montreal work to promote understanding and recognition of astrology by the general public. They believe that the adoption of its principles has a liberating and empowering effect both in personal and social spheres. While it implies greater responsibility for oneself, for community, even for humanity as a whole, it leaves room for exercising free will and being an individual, yet without violating divine authority. We are presented with the picture of a harmonious relationship with the ultimate reality. Furthermore, it maintains a positive view of the future. Since the universe is presented as an ever-fluctuating creation, there is no impending doom to anticipate. The belief in reincarnation reinforces this optimistic outlook and lifts the anxiety of fatalism, because it is interpreted as a possibility to correct one's past. Through these values a specific ideal character is constructed: free, strong and decisive, yet responsible and caring.

My small project leaves a lot of questions to be addressed by more prolonged and vast studies. How do clients perceive astrologers? To what extent do they adopt or share the astrological world view? Is the growing popularity of this world view a response to the confusion and fears of modernity, or simply part of humanity's on-going quest for meaning? What other attempts to construct a holistic all-encompassing paradigm can be found in the world today?

In the end, I would like to comment on the importance of the study of alternative ways of knowledge, not only in the distant exotic field, but also at home. If nothing else, it hints that our society is much more integrated than we tend to think and in ways that we may not have anticipated. If we consider modern astrology as representative of its time and culture, the similarities with the course of scientific developments are apparent. We notice corresponding layers of ideas like archaeological deposits: the strong positivism of the early twentieth century, the liberal dream of a harmonious society of free individuals of the sixties, and a growing postmodern trend to focus on particularities, rather than on maxims. Modern astrologers seek to accommodate in an orderly fashion the multiplicity of opinions and experiences without simplification. The way Liz Greene paraphrases Alexander Ruperti's quotation sounds very anthropological indeed and with it I conclude my report:

> There is no one Astrology with a capital A. For every individual astrologer today, astrology is not only a reflection of the kind of order our culture sees in celestial motions, and the kind of relationship it formulates between heaven and earth. It is also a reflection of the inherent temperament of the individual – our hopes, aspirations, personal histories, conflicts, fears, talents, and beliefs, both conscious and unconscious – and a reflection of the attitudes and perceptions that each of us brings to the story of our individual lives [Green 2008].

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Religious Clothing:
Its importance in Montreal Sikhism

Catherine St-Hilaire

Introduction

Our ignorance and misunderstanding of particular religious practices can make us behave in odd ways, especially towards immigrants. We see this fear in the province of Québec, Montreal particularly, through the creation of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, which toured the province to hear the fear or advice of every citizen and created a report of recommendations for the government. Historically, the Québec province has been a Christian Catholic province but now, in many spheres of society, there are religious groups that increasingly demand to have the same rights as Christians to publicly practice their faith. These demands manifest as societal accommodations, such as frosted windows, prayer time and permission to wear symbolic clothing. The reasonable accommodations issue occurred largely because a portion of the Québec population considered certain reasonable accommodations 'unreasonable.' Thus, to get the reaction of the population, the government created the Bouchard-Taylor Commission.

Sikhism in Montreal is only one religion among many others. Typically, it is not understood well enough to comprehend the importance of Sikh religious symbolic clothing in contemporary times. This study proposes to modify the situation; I attempt to demystify common Western fears of the religious symbolism of others that I have experienced and observed personally or in the media, especially with regard to Québec's policy of reasonable accommodations for religious minorities.

For my project, I decided to explore the issue of symbolic religious clothing in Montreal Sikhism. As a Westerner and non-Sikh, I was an outsider inside the Sikh community and I learned about their religious practices. Given recent issues in Québec and the negative images occasionally portrayed in the media, I want to explain what I learned to others. I feel that to stand on the Sikh side and explore their point of view about the importance of their religious clothing could help non-Sikhs understand why, for example, permission to wear the Kirpan in public spaces is not 'unreasonable' but rather respectful of their faith.

The subject of this paper is to comprehend the Sikhs' perspective on the recent politicization of religious symbolism in public spaces. The attempt is to discover if it is easier or harder to be a Sikh in Montreal now if one is part of the 2nd and 3rd generations of immigrants. I initially assumed that it is not necessarily harder to be a Sikh in Montreal, even if religious symbols and clothing are troubling to Western representation and meaning of objects. Further, the importance of religious clothing may have decreased upon immigration or lost some of its spiritual value through the generations that emigrated from India. The purpose of this paper is to inform and educate more people about the realities of immigrant Canadian citizens living in Montreal with a different faith, such as Sikhism.

Methodology

The structure of this paper is divided into different sections: what Sikhism is, an introduction to the religion; what the 5Ks are, which briefly explores the five religious symbols; the position of Canada, Québec and Montreal, a contextualization of the issue; the politicization of religious symbols, an analysis of how the issue has become political; what it means to be Sikh in Montreal for 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants, the ethnographic findings of my research; and how is it now, to show the update of the issue. My information was gathered through interviews, group discussions, fieldtrips, articles, book chapters, and websites. I further conducted research at the LaSalle Gurdwara[1] Guru Nanak Darbar, in Montreal, interviewing individually four different people: an assistant Granthi[2], one non-baptized easy-modern[3] young Sikh woman, and two baptized young women. Finally, I conducted a group discussion about Sikh identity and questioned the religious symbolism of clothing with a Sikh student group and their teacher at the LaSalle Gurdwara. Due to the date of arrival of Sikhs in Canada, 2nd and 3rd generation Sikhs are typically 30 years old and under, which is exactly the age group of my interviewees. My research focused on their distance from India, their degree of Westernization and, thus, their potential alienation from their parents' or grandparents' religion. One limitation of my work is that I only interviewed one man, the assistant religious leader. I was not planning to only interview women but my connection to the Sikh group was more with women than men. Although it was not my initial goal, I have to acknowledge that my understanding of the male perspective is limited to what the Granthi explained or the anecdotes the young women told of their male siblings.

What is Sikhism?

Sikhism is one of the youngest faiths in the world and is classified as a 'revealed' religion, since the original ten Gurus received their teachings by divine inspiration, which subsequently wrote their sacred text. The Sikh faith holds features of other religions like Hinduism and Islam but it is neither a fusion nor a synthesis (Singh & Sondeep 1998: 7). It is a monotheistic faith, preaching the existence of only one God and teaching ideals such as honesty, equality, compassion, humility, piety, social commitment and, most of all, tolerance for other religions.

Sikhism originated in the Indian province of Punjabi, where they currently represent about 1% of the Indian population. The word 'Sikh' is derived from the Sanskrit word ' ikṣa', which means a disciple, a learner, a seeker of truth. The founder of Sikhism was Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1465-1539); he was a poet, a spiritual leader and the first living guru to lead the Sikh Community in India. The succeeding nine Gurus

nurtured and developed his ideas and teachings. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Guru, brought an end to the line of human Gurus and, in 1708, installed Guru Granth Sahib, a sacred book, as the permanent Guru of the Sikhs. This book of sacred text is formed from a collection of devotional songs and poetry composed by the past Gurus. Guru Granth Sahib is the most important part of Sikh worship and is a timeless guide and reference book for all. The tenth guru may have incorporated the sacred scriptures into Sikhism but he also ordered that Sikhs had to wear the five articles of faith in 1699; the 5k's which collectively form the external identity of the Sikh devotee.

What are the 5K's?

The Five K's are the five sacred symbols that reflect the identity of any baptized Sikh. The word 'baptized' here is used as a rough translation from the Punjabi word *Amrit*, and it may happen at any time in life. A Sikh will go through this ritual when he or she is ready to pass to another level of faith practices. It is necessary to understand that not every Sikh is baptized, only those who desire it. However, a Sikh is no less spiritual if he or she is not baptized; within the Sikh community it refers only to different levels of practice. According to my informants, men and women are completely free when deciding to be baptized and follow the 5k's. One of my interviewees explained that she was not baptized but that one did not have to be "drastically baptized" to respect the faith of others and your own. She defined this as being an easy-modern Sikh; following some of the rituals, she goes to the Gurdwara and does some prayers but she does not follow all the 5k's, the wearing of religious symbols.

The Panj Kakkar, commonly known as the 5 K's are so called because the five objects' names begin with a "k" in Punjabi. Their appearance in Sikh religious tenets is part of a well-known story that explains why the tenth guru used them to identify faith. In brief, the five symbols were prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh to be worn by all baptized Sikh at all times: the unshorn hair, *Kesh*, resulting in the use of Turbans; the comb, *Kangha*; the steel bracelet, *Kara*; the grey underwear, *Kachera* and the ceremonial dagger, *Kirpan*. Together, the 5K's symbolize the dedication of a person to a life of devotion and submission to the Guru. They likewise provide a physical representation of equality among Sikhs; all baptized follow the same dress codes no matter their age, social class, economic situation or gender.

A very important issue that needs to be addressed here is the common opinion that the *kirpan* is a potential weapon. Despite this popular assumption, this symbol is not to be seen as a knife, a dagger, a weapon or an *arme blanche*. It is never referred to as such within the community. The *kirpan* is a Sikh ceremonial sword, a symbol of respect and justice and an emblem of courage and self-defence. It is kept in a sheath and can be worn over or under clothing. The *kirpan* can symbolize spirituality, defence of the good, defence of the weak, the struggle against injustice and a metaphor for God. This item of the symbolic religious clothing is the most controversial of all. It is also the one that will be most discussed in this paper.

Position of Canada, Québec and Montreal

The first wave of Sikh immigration to Canada started at the end of the 19th century. Canada was one of the first countries of immigration; thus, there are second and third generations of Sikhs in many major cities, especially Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa. Their reactions to migration are best summed up by Mark Juergensmeyer: "The large expatriate Sikh communities in England, Canada and America were especially sensitive to the message that the Sikhs needed to be strong, united and defensive of their tradition" (1991: 221). This message calls for unity among Sikhs to keep their faith, identity and community alive even after several Canadian-born generations of Sikhs. Likewise, this was an incentive for building Gurdwaras, to provide a place for everyone to gather and share the problems and solutions of their families in a totally new country.

In 2001, the Canadian Sikh population was about 278 000 Sikhs and it continues to increase (Statistics Canada: Census of Population 2002). In Montreal, there are about 12 000 Sikhs and in LaSalle where I conducted my fieldwork, according to the Assistant Granthi, there are about 2 500 Sikhs. This number could increase to over 10,000 during major celebrations because the LaSalle Gurdwara is one of the largest in the province. Furthermore, only 10% to 15% of Montreal Sikhs are baptized and, therefore, only a small percentage

of Montreal's minority population regularly displays the 5K symbols. This is a reality I observed inside the Gurdwara during my fieldwork as not all of the people attending were wearing the 5K's. Especially in major celebrations, Sikhs from all levels of faith, baptized or not, join together and enjoy the ceremony.

The Canadian governments' official position on Sikhs is that they are visible minorities, increasing in population every year. A visible minority status "applies to persons who are identified according to the Employment Equity Act as being non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Statistics Canada 2008: Visible Minority). However Sikhs are easily distinguishable and more visible because of their 5k's, especially the turban, which are meant to be the external affirmation of their faith. My point here is to present why Sikhs and their religious clothing are so often discussed in the media and in the governmental decisions. According to my interviewees, since their symbols are visible and used to identify baptized Sikh Indians, they become more visible and more marginalized.

Within the Québec province, especially Montreal, a more important identification of immigrants and the Sikh community in particular is happening and it has led to the governmental reasonable accommodations policy. Reasonable accommodation means an adjustment or change in a system to 'accommodate' a system for an individual when needed (CHRC 2006: Discrimination Prevention). By law, those could be religious, academic, or employment related. In the religious sphere, there were many crises based on the Canadian definition; examples include the need for frosted glass windows in a women's gym (YMCA) facing a Hasidic synagogue, the prohibition of Christmas trees in train stations, or elementary students wearing a *kirpan* in public schools. The Québec government reacted by creating the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, which toured the province gathering peoples' opinions about what the government should and should not do to accommodate people from other cultures. The final report was, in my opinion, very enlightening for the Québécois position on reasonable accommodations and proposed different solutions to the many issues often seen in urban centers. On the other hand, there were many parts of the Commission that were unsatisfactory and deficient, for example, the logistical difficulty in grasping an entire province's impression of other religions.

Presently, there are still many religious reasonable accommodations issues, such as the elementary school students wearing the *kirpan*. This is an issue for the majority of non-Sikh families who think that it is not safe to leave a child carrying a knife at a public school. With this in mind, I asked my interviewees to give me some insights about their own perspective on these reasonable accommodations and how they lived with them. The majority responded that they do not really worry about reasonable accommodations as long as it does not affect their own religious practices. It is also true that my interviewees are still young and uninterested in politics; therefore, they do not really pay attention to other religious reasonable accommodations issues. The only exception to this discussion was the *kirpan* issue. They did have an opinion on that. Altogether, even if this issue has already been determined at the governmental level I think that my informants still had the impression of not being accepted by everyone.

Politicization of the Religious Symbols

The debate over religious symbols and dress is often a proxy for more complex political and cultural concerns. Here in Montreal, one of the major events was the *kirpan* issue at Ste-Catherine Labouré elementary school, which resulted in a lawsuit that went to the Supreme Court. Under the law, the *kirpan* is perceived as a weapon or a potential weapon, which is, of course, forbidden in public places like elementary schools. The principal of the school wanted to forbid the child from wearing it to school but his family did not want their son to take off a part of his Sikh religious identity, particularly because other children are permitted to wear other religious symbols, such as a cross or a Star of David.

This issue began in 2001 and on March 26, 2006, the court ruled in favour of the Multany family and the ban was overturned by the judges in a unanimous consent of 8 to 0 in favour of allowing the *kirpan* in schools; "the judges also noted that there were many other objects in the public schools that could be easily obtained and used as weapons, 'such as scissors, pencils and baseball bats'"(Church and State 2006: 21). This decision is very much in line with Canada's 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was extended to freedom of association and freedom of religion. "The Supreme Court said the

argument that the *kirpan* was intended to be a weapon is 'disrespectful to believers in the Sikh religion and does not take into account Canadian values based on Multiculturalism'" (Church & State 2006: 21). The Canadian government and the country's Supreme Court ruled in a more open and understanding way than other countries, such as France with its public secularization and prohibition of religious symbols. One interviewee summarized her opinion of the issue with "I find that school is separate from my religion or my cultural event" and that basically no one should decide what she can and cannot wear.

My personal concern, which is also reflected in the media, is that even if the *kirpan* is a ceremonial dagger it could be used as a weapon. When this concern was addressed during my group discussion, the participants exploded with remarks like "since I don't consider it as a weapon, I would take any other object around me before using my *kirpan*" or "to defend myself, I would use my bag, a pen or even my high heels before even thinking of my *kirpan*." Their perspective is that they carry it the same way as a Christian cross necklace; they do not see it as a possible weapon. My interviewee even told me: "your cross has sharp edges too!!!" Thus, for Sikhs, a *kirpan* is like a piece of jewellery with a symbolic and religious meaning, one which is understood so young in life that even if a child is only 5 years old and asks to be baptized, it is with the condition that he or she is judged apt to understand this lifelong commitment.

Being Sikh in Montreal — 2nd and 3rd Generations of Immigration

According to Statistic Canada, 2001, of the 278 410 Sikhs residing in Canada,

70 670 are 2nd generation and only 19 700 are 3rd generation (Statistics Canada: Census of Population 2002). I questioned my interviewees whether it was easier or harder to be Sikh in Montreal if Canadian-born. This question could encompass issues such as the alienation of the family's rituals or faith, the distance from the Sikh homeland and the origin of their faith, the Western influences of where they live or the peer pressure to be 'impure' by taking drugs, drinking extensively, not going to their sacred sites, etc. I was surprised to hear that it was actually easier to be a Sikh in Montreal than in India. Their strong affirmation of the uncontrollable Westernization of India was enlightening of their responses. A common example is Bollywood, the term used to name the Indian cinema industry. Since India is becoming more Westernized, their cinema is almost a caricature of Hollywood movies; Sikh feel more free to practice their faith in the Western world, which is not as superficial as Indians think.

The Bollywood industry seems to copy, in an exaggerated manner, the style of Hollywood movies and contextualize them to Indian life. As my interviewee told me, "the trend to become Americanized and look more like Hollywood is strong." During the group discussion, several young women explained that, in India, there is a lot of pressure for boys to cut their hair, for girls to smoke, drink or lose their virginity at younger ages because these things are shown in Bollywood movies. The Sikh women I interviewed told me that here, in Canada and the Western world, people know that what is in movies is not reality and that you do not have to follow an 'ideal American life' to be happy because they live in Western society and acknowledge that this is not how their lives are lived. They also told me that "India is a corrupt country" where you "will find marijuana growing on the streets." The women felt that Canada is more permissive of their religious practices than 'Bollywood' India is and, thus, it is safer for them to practice their rituals without peer pressure. They do not find the pressure to be 'Americanized' as strong here as it is in India. The limitations of this response are obvious; my interviewees were not born in India and they typically travel to see family over on holiday. Their answers generally relied on what they see or hear from others. However, they still think that they are lucky to live in a country where they can follow their faith without many problems.

Basran Mandeep Kaur, a researcher on different generations of Canadian-born Sikhs, interviewed young Sikh adults living in Vacouver about their personal religiosity. They explained: "Sikh religiosity is a central explanatory force that influences and shapes the thought patterns of the three generations in different ways" (Mandeep Kaur 2005: 150), adding that "Canada's multiculturalism policy contributes to the Sikh community turning to itself and creating a 'Punjabi bubble', a segregated Sikh community, thus hindering integration into mainstream Canadian Society" (Mandeep Kaur 2005: 151). My informants disagreed with Mandeep Kaur's findings; they do not feel that they are in a 'Punjabi bubble' or put themselves in certain neighbourhoods such as in a ghetto (quite the contrary). Instead, they feel that there is a whole

community surrounding them that helps them stay in touch with the religious aspects of their lives. I asked my Sikhs interviewees if, after immigration, the meaning of the 5K symbols decreased or not. My initial impression that immigration leads to Americanization and, thus, the values or the religion would decrease in the lives of Canadian-born children was incorrect. All my interviewees, even the ones who were not baptized, told me that the symbols of their faith and the faith itself are still very important and meaningful in their lives.

Further, Sikhs consider Canada an easier place to live than India for those who want to follow the Sikh faith and the symbolic clothing because of the current situation of Sikh people in India. India's population is enormous and Sikhs only represent approximately 1% of the population. Thus, their religious culture is obviously far from the main religion of India, Hinduism, and the differences between these two religions are monumental. One prime example of their differences is the Sikh ideal of equality versus the Hindu caste system. When Guru Nanak, the first Guru, established the initial rules of Sikhism he wanted everyone from every caste to be on the same level despite their age, social class or gender. The last living Guru reinforced this religious tenet by introducing the five pieces of clothes (5Ks) that had to be worn by all baptized Sikh, in the same way, for everyone. In India, Sikhs are already marginalized within their own country as a religious minority through the lack of display of formal divisions of social class. The dominant Hindu group regard Sikhs as a different sect of Hinduism, as one of my informant told me, and they perceive them as hiding their difference under the 5Ks. Altogether, caste-system Hindu intolerance towards Sikhism and the gradual corruption of the country through Westernization as well as the insight afforded by Mandeep Kaur's research being contradicted by my informants in Montreal, coupled with its open policy of reasonable accommodation, diversity in religious manner and possibility of employment, makes Canada and Montreal a great place to immigrate and to be initiated to *khalsa*.

How is it now?

The context of Sikhism in Montreal and the reasonable accommodations that dictate the right to wear the *kirpan* or any other religious symbolic clothing is very relevant. Here, I will describe the insights that my interviewees gave me about how they see the situation in Montreal regarding their faith and religious identity. This last section deals with the general concerns of immigrating to Canada and the reasons for migration to Montreal, but on a more personal level, many of my informants had precise and different stories to tell.

For one of my informants, her father had a job opportunity in Montreal so her whole family immigrated to the province of Québec. For another, the move occurred in two parts; first to Vancouver and later to Montreal. For a younger woman, she was unsure because she is a third generation Canadian and never asked her parents why the immigration to Canada occurred. Her whole life is in Montreal and, in a sense, she assumed that this is what ought to be. I was trying to understand how they kept up their faith in this country when the government and social institutions seemed reluctant to accept religions other than Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Judaism. The unanimous answer was that it depended on the family unit, if your family is more religious, then you will be kept in touch with all the rituals.

Concerning the status of religious symbols here and now, there is still an immense feeling of misunderstanding about the 'other' religions and the reasonable accommodations between immigrants and non-immigrants. My two female baptized informants told me that they never experienced any type of prejudice at school when they started wearing their *kirpans*. I understand that they only got baptized around 14 and 16 and, therefore, they were not wearing the 5K's before high school. However, the issue is just as important in high schools as it is in elementary schools; it is just that adults consider teenagers more mature than elementary students about knives and the importance of religious symbols. One of the girls told me that her brother was laughed at because of the way his hair was tucked until he got his first turban; he was called "meat ball head." These examples are certainly not representative of all school environments now but they do give a small idea of how Sikh religious symbols may be perceived. As the law is official for the whole of Canada, all school children will be permitted to wear their *kirpan* at school, but the feelings of the population in general are not always in agreement with policy.

After the reasonable accommodation commission, after the *kirpan* affair and the others that will inevitably arise, one might wonder why Canadians experience so many problems around religious difference

and try to protect themselves from potential controversy. A socialist scholar explains: "An odd tension exists in Canadian culture. On the one hand, much has been written on the topic of Canadian Identity, or lack of it, and of a cohesive unifying trait" (Gereluk 2008: 71). The fear of losing Canadian identity may be reason for all these issues. There is still a subtle trend, especially online for those who blog about what they feel and what they think of all this, of the danger of losing our Canadian identity. Even if I think that I agree with the government's decision on the Multany affair, for example, I know it is not the same for all of my schoolmates, my neighbours and even some of my family. This is what drove me to choose this topic for my paper: I do believe that the *kirpan* is not a weapon within Sikhism but rather a constant reminder of the tradition's basic spiritual value (Gauvreau 2002/2006: n.p.), therefore, the emblem is stronger than the object. Hence, although not everyone thinks like me, if I can explain my point with the details I need, then maybe that it will change something in people's minds.

Altogether, the religious symbols of baptized Sikhs do not lose their symbolic importance because of immigration to Canada. Since the culture in India is changing, Indians practicing Sikhism find it more difficult to practice their faith in an extremely 'wannabe Westernized' country rather than a Western country like Canada. As explained by an interviewee, for example, girls can play sports and, over there, it is unheard of. The symbols of the *khalsa* not only represent a faith but an entire culture. Baptized Sikhs are respected within the community and are seen as committed people to their religion. And, of course, this brings gladness into the religious communities.

Conclusion

My initial hypothesis dealt with the importance of religious symbols and clothing of Sikhs in Québec and the ease of being a baptized Sikh far away from the religion's land of conception. The second main tenant of my hypothesis concerned the possible gradual decrease of the importance of symbols due to the many generations of immigrants here in Canada. After analysis and fieldwork, the first part of my hypothesis was verified; it is definitely easier for a Sikh to be initiated into *khalsa* in Canada than in India. It is acknowledged that the multi-faith country that we live in does not bring unanimous acceptance of religious diversity to the whole population. One of the principles of my paper is to clarify the determination of governments, Sikhs and others trying to change this ethnocentric perspective. Nevertheless, the citizens of this country are helping other religious communities to get organized and practice their faith even if sometimes our fear of loosing the Canadian identity makes us act in very unimpressive ways.

For the second part of my hypothesis, I was corrected in my assumptions. The importance of religious ritual and identifying symbols is not decreasing, in some ways it is actually more important. The community left what was in their opinion a corrupted country and came here to start again. Canada is a great place for them to live, despite the *kirpan* affairs in schools; Sikhs keep persevering to practice their faith and to wear their religious clothing in public. This leads me to the possible further studies on this topic. I had many limitations in this endeavour, notably space and time, and I left many questions for further research. One very interesting and complementary avenue would concern contrasting the mediascapes of Bollywood and Hollywood, using anthropological theories to explain how reality is distorted by the way it is shown on TV or in the movies. I also did not look fully into blogs and I think it would be a nice addition to this research. I believe that after having this paper out for people to read, my goal to make people more open and less fearful of Sikh difference will be realized. The information provided about Sikh life also deals with the issues of all Canadian citizens, and at some point, we will have to deal with those also.

NOTES

[1] A Gurdwara is a Sikh temple, a worship place where people gather for prayers and religious events.

[2] A Granthi is a Sikh religious leader.

[3] The term 'easy-modern' was introduced by one of my informant during interview. She qualified herself as such since she considered her involvement in the Sikh religion as modern, that is, she does not follow all the usual religious requirements but still remains very religious in her daily life.

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New Breed of Warriors

Bernard Oppliger

Introduction

"Ok come on, let's go! What are you waiting for? Just jump! JUMP!" The yelling was not helping to calm my fear. My arm was being held in a lock and the only way I was getting out of it was by jumping over my own arm and landing on my back and, hopefully, not on my head. If I didn't jump, my arm would be wrenched and my shoulder would dislocate. Talk about being between a rock and a hard place. I didn't like the idea of jumping but, then again, dislocation was not the better option. With a sudden burst of nervous resolve, I took a deep breath, cleared my mind and jumped.

Since I was a child I have had a fascination with martial arts. The kicking, the punching, the wild throws; it all seemed so exiting. I consider myself extremely lucky to be practicing *ninjutsu*, the ancient art of the ninja, with people who are devoted to refining their art and helping others do the same. This is why I chose to do my research project on the community I am a part of: the new breed of warriors.

When I started training with my teacher, Dorran, I noticed changes in my character. I was not as aggressive or as confrontational, I was

generally more confident in my dealings with people and less stressed out. I knew that the training I received in this environment had something to do with it but what was it exactly about this group of people that changed me? I resolved to find out. To do this, I decided to focus on how a specific community can change one's view of individuality.

Methodology

Participant observation was carried out during my regular class time. This was practical in that all I had to do was take notes at my regular classes; what was impractical was that I had to take notes while I was being used as a punching bag! But I would always make a point of scribbling in my notebook when something important happened. I coupled this with two interviews with teachers that were semi structured so that I could allow them to take the conversation wherever they felt it needed to go.

Literature review

The books I used to reference this paper mostly deal with martial arts; one is a history book and the others deal with learning martial arts. The chosen books were written by masters who lived their art, and no one is better equipped to tell the tale of the arts. I found it very difficult to find any relevant anthropological work dealing with this subject, as so little has been written about it. Instead, I will reference a paper by David F. Gordon that explores how self-abandonment to a group can actually strengthen the individual.

History

The history of the Japanese martial arts is complicated and steeped in mystery. The popular arts that we now know as Karate and Judo, prominent sports in both the East and the West, were once reserved for warriors. These arts, touted as born in a time when Gods walked the earth, grew up in an era when war was a constant threat and protecting one's self from an enemy was of the utmost importance.

It is generally accepted that the Asian martial arts originated in China at the Shaolin Temple and then spread out from there. The temple, located in the modern day Henan province of China near the Song Mountain, was founded by an Indian Buddhist monk named Batuo in 495 CE. He found that the Chinese monks were not strong enough so he showed them some exercises that later developed into Shaolin Kung Fu. (Kit 2002: 19).

This knowledge, along with a text on military strategy, *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, was imported to Japan around the 7th or 8th century. A Japanese book called the *Shoku Nihongi* has many references to it and dates to approximately 747 CE. In the centuries that followed, Japan would see a lot of war. Many civil wars broke out as people were trying to claim supreme power (Turnbull 1991: 15-18). During this time, rivals would use people with special skills as spies and assassins to overthrow or kill the opposing lord. These people were called *shinobi* or, as we call them today, ninja. The *shinobi* were crucial to the battle plans because a ninja clan could win a battle with smaller armies and thus fewer resources. They would often come from clans that hid in the mountains and the forests and who sold their services to the highest bidder. Since these clans would often perform dangerous and clandestine tasks that required spending an undetermined amount of time in the wilderness, they had to have a very good knowledge of survival techniques. Of these clans Iga and Koga are the two best known through historical texts (Turnbull 1991: 30).

Over the centuries, things became less tumultuous and the ninja warrior was no longer in such high demand. The teaching of their skills was handed down in secret from one teacher to the next until it found an individual known as Takamatsu. Takamatsu learned many martial arts and put them together to form a comprehensive school. During World War I he went to China where he fought several battles and became known and feared as "the Mongolian tiger" (Hatsumi 2004: 27). In his later years, he passed all his knowledge to one of his students, Masaaki Hatsumi, who popularized the art of the ninja. Many westerners flocked to Japan in the late 1970s and early 1980s to seek him out and it was during this time that a Canadian by the name of John Willson traveled to Japan and befriended the grandmaster, who subsequently taught him the secrets of the ninja. Willson eventually brought his knowledge back to Canada and started to teach. This is the story of our martial arts lineage and, though no longer used to fight wars, we learn how to apply this knowledge to our everyday lives in differing and transformative ways.

From a very early age, I had been obsessed with fighting. Not with hand to hand combat *per se* but with battles in general. Favoured playthings for young Bernard were water guns and wood swords; the imaginary adversary was always a dark and evil creature that needed to be conquered by someone virtuous and good. Television is largely to blame for these imaginative battles as I sustained myself on a steady diet of *G.I. Joe*, *He-Man* and, naturally, *Ninja Turtles* (much to the dismay of my parents). These shows all presented a simple good/evil dichotomy that taught my young self that there was always a good fight to be fought. Though I obviously do not see life as being that simple or black and white, the concept of the good fight has always stayed with me.

The first time I actually saw martial arts performed live I was probably three or four years old. There was a demonstration at a local community center that my parents brought me to, for reasons I cannot fathom as both have always been extremely anti-violent and have always discouraged aggressive behaviour. Nevertheless, we found ourselves standing around the door of a gymnasium watching two black belts throw a barrage of kicks and punches at each other. My father put me on his shoulders so I could get a better view and we both laughed at the spectacle of these grown men fighting and screaming while dressed in what looked like pyjamas to our untrained eyes.

Aside from the initial amusement, something from the experience stuck with me, and a few years later I asked my mother to enrol me in karate at the same community center. My memories of this time are hazy at best but, knowing me, I probably expected them to teach us flying kicks on the first day. When I found out that those were not part of the beginner's curriculum I was disappointed but nonetheless stuck with it. I had a few friends and classmates who were in the course, which acted as an incentive I suppose, but also tended to cause trouble! The Sensei was a bearded man in his forties who expected a lot of discipline from six and seven year olds. We often goofed around and did not take our training seriously, which resulted in punishment usually in the form of push-ups. When the end of the school year came around, the Sensei asked certain chosen individuals to do the yellow belt test. I was not one of those chosen and, subsequently, I decided not to enrol again, as it seemed there were far too many push-ups and little to no return!

Although I cannot clearly remember my motives in taking karate then, it is likely that it had to do with the television shows I was watching that influenced my conception of a good/evil dichotomy, as well as the *Karate Kid* movie. In all likelihood, I wanted to live out the fantasy worlds I saw in the media through the medium of karate. Whatever the reason, after dropping this from my roster of activities, I did not touch martial arts for a very long time.

It took nearly ten years before I found my way back to the martial arts. A school had just opened a quick walk away from my house and I took this as a sign from the gods, a divine intervention; thus, I went down to see what was being taught. The style, as it happened, was *aikido*, a Japanese art that focuses on joint locks and throws in order to 'harmonize' one's energy with that of an attacker. It is a soft art that emphasizes movement and has peace as a goal. The overwhelming sense of calm that presided over the classes was mystifying and enough to entice me to join.

The *dojo*, or class, was small and everyone felt the benefit of the headmaster's watchful eye. The Sensei, Frank Rhodes, was in his early forties and a very nice person. There was, in a sense, a community feeling and everyone got along well. However, I instinctively felt that something was lacking. After a year or so I passed my first exam, which earned me a black stripe on my belt. From that point on I was to be in the advanced classes, which just meant showing up more often for more training. Soon after my advancement, Frank introduced a new Sensei to teach the advanced class, claiming he could not do it himself due to an old shoulder injury. Thus, we were now stuck with a new teacher who, despite or potentially because of his high ranking in the systematized martial arts community, had a very big ego. The classes lost their flavour as he brought his own students, with equally big egos, and I decided it was time to end my engagement to this art.

The next encounter came only a year or so later as I returned to the community center that started it all, this time it was for a slower kind of experience: *Tai Chi*. Tai Chi is a martial art that was derived from Shaolin Kung fu by a master named Zhang San Feng (Kit 2002: 25). This new class was taught by a Chinese man with a calm demeanour and, of all his students, I was the youngest by far, which made it more difficult to form my membership in the class and relate to the others. I did these classes for almost two years but eventually gave it up

because I felt that my progress was as slow as the movements taught in Tai Chi. On the other hand, those slow movements taught me about balance, a skill that proved useful in my subsequent experiences.

After too much time being without an art to train in, I resolved to find something I could stick with. To choose my new path, I began with a grid that mapped all of the martial arts schools of Montreal I was interested in, along with their location and price, and got on the phone. I found very little in the parts of Montreal close to where I live and the schools in other parts of the island would have required me to have a car, which was feasible but not entirely practical. Just as I was starting to lose faith, I came across an advertisement for a school quite close to me. It simply read "Ninjutsu" with an e-mail address so, with a renewed sense of initiative, I e-mailed the teacher and asked if I could come by to try it out, going as soon as I got a reply. Much of what I saw there was familiar to me; throws and locks similar to aikido, mixed in with the strong punches I remembered seeing in karate as a boy, and always talk of balance. The people training together discussed techniques and how to improve them and themselves. Among them, I noticed a young man about my age that, intriguingly, seemed to have the best posture of the group. He simply stood out and I could see from his stance just how much he knew but I could never have fathomed just how much he would teach me.

Ninjutsu, Boxing and a Dream

I began attending the *ninjutsu* classes regularly in March 2007. Although many martial art concepts were familiar to me, thanks to my previous experiences, others were altogether foreign. I was having a real difficulty grasping some of the easier techniques and often relied on strength instead of technique, which was contrary to what I had learned in aikido and what was expected of me from *ninjutsu*. It was common for the black belts to point out my obvious flaws and tease me. Before this encounter, when I would get made fun of I would act like I was stronger, tougher, smarter or cooler than those taunting me or attempt to insult them with truly horrible phrases. And yet, I realized that none of those measures would work here. What use were words against martial skill? Besides, if I made these skilled warriors angry, then they would have a justified reason for being even rougher with me than before. I could have left

but then they would have won and I was too proud to let that happen, having raised myself on ideals of the good fight. I realized that I would just have to let it go and this was the first big lesson I learned. On the other hand, not everyone was against me; the green belt with perfect form I had noticed upon my first venture had taken a liking to me and was helping me with my techniques. His name was Dorran and I was to become his first student.

It started out in the *dojo*, as he corrected my posture and showed me how to do the techniques properly. After a few months, he asked me to accompany him to a boxing gym to do additional training on weekends. These new training sessions started with two hours of boxing and then proceeded to an hour or so of *ninjutsu* techniques. The boxing workout was, at the time, the most rigorous form of physical activity I had ever ventured to undertake. The owner of the gym instructed boxing with an iron fist; direct and to the point, just like his jabs. Here there was no room for taunting or for getting it wrong.

Things went on like this for at least a year until Dorran received his black belt, which meant he could now teach his own classes. And so, he started to do so at our regular *dojo* on weekends, gathering students beyond just me until there were enough of us for him to open his own. Dorran's *dojo* is a humble one in the basement of the duplex where he lives and, thus, he cannot accommodate many students at the same time. Due to the nature of his *dojo*, when there is a training session Dorran's students do not just enter his school, they enter his home and his life. Before or after a session, the people present commonly cram into his tiny kitchen to enjoy a cold glass of water, a beer or snack on something Dorran cooked during the day for us. *Ninjutsu* training is everyday and new students are urged to come as often as possible. Our training demands a lot of time and many students will give up many of their weekends and evenings to come and train. Because the goal of training is to gain greater control of one's body, our devotion can be compared to the type of "self-abandonment" observed in religious groups (Gordon 1984: 42). The common links that bind all of us together are, of course, the art and the teacher. Here, there is a fraternity. Here, there is a community.

Soke *Willson's Visit*

In the first week of March 2010, our group received a very special visitor. *Soke* John Willson, the grandmaster of our school of *ninjutsu*, who personally trained Dorran and every other instructor teaching

under him. With over forty years of martial arts training, he has a lifetime of knowledge to pass down to us. *Soke* Willson lives in Prince Edward Island, so visits are not frequent and when he decides to come down, it is usually for a weekend seminar that often brings various factions of martial arts together. Except, this time, he was coming just for us. There were to be three of Dorran's students, including myself, and one of *Soke* Willson's personal students at the special training session. So it was with great pride, and slight fear, that I took on the task of picking him up on Thursday morning to bring him to the *dojo*.

As we drove towards our destination, the conversation was light in nature and never once did we mention martial arts. After we arrived at the *dojo* it took nearly an hour before every one showed up. Each of Dorran's students seemed slightly on edge. We met in the kitchen prior to going downstairs to get ourselves mentally prepared for the day.

The training went well, each of us being corrected on stance and execution by our grandmaster. We were separated by our individual levels of understanding but unified in our desire to succeed. Each person got the tips they needed to perfect their form and, when everyone had instructive criticism, we moved on, as our progress was being determined by both the speed of the collective learning and by the grandmaster's patience. We could have been compared to four baby giraffes being taught to walk by their parent, clumsily stumbling around at first, before slowly becoming more sure-footed.

After long hours of training, we took a break for lunch. We all just sat on the mats we had been training on and feasted on breads, spreads, wine, cheese and meats that had been purchased by Dorran while we were training. The conversation, guided by the black belts, dealt with how other people teaching *ninjutsu* in Canada and the United States were not representing the art as well as they should. After the communal meal, I took the chance to ask *Soke* John a few questions about this. After all, if we are all doing the same martial art then and shouldn't we all be one big community?

"Many people want to commercialize the martial arts," he said of Western cultures, "They want to live off of it, so they make Mc*Dojos*," meaning that people start lucrative franchise-type of martial arts schools that can be opened in every city. This is obviously not the traditional way of instructing any martial art!

"In Japan, things are different. The masters there all have 'real' jobs, or day jobs." He explained that, in Japan, *ninjutsu* is not something to get rich from. Clearly, our training did not stem from this branch of thought, as the school when I first found it was almost hidden. So how did we compare to the rest of these *dojos*?

"We differ from the Americans because we want to know 'how well can you fight?' In this way, we follow the Japanese ideals." I had certainly seen this attitude before. The whole reason we were all in that basement that day was to improve our technique and ourselves.

As he continued to talk, I started to see a dichotomy of sorts. If the people with Mc*Dojos* only wanted money, then the quality of their teaching was sure to be lacking in comparison with a school where the objective is to see 'how well you can fight.' Similarly, if a student is just a paycheque, then there is a subsequent lack of the crucial teacher/student connection.

"I have a very close relationship to Ishizuka," Willson said of his teacher Shihan Ishizuka, the Japanese master who taught him the ways of the ninja. In Japan, I was told, martial arts teachers and their students have a much closer relationship, to the point where if a child performs poorly at school parents may visit the martial arts teacher to have him straighten things out! There is a Japanese proverb that states "the relationship between parent and child lasts for a lifetime, that between husband and wife for this life and the next, but that between master and disciple endures for three life times, the past, present, and future" (Hatsumi 2004: 36, 38).

I thanked *Soke* John for his insights, put my notebook away and readied myself for the next few hours of instruction. While I worked I mulled over his words. At its very base, the martial arts experience takes place between teacher and student. A community, then, can only exist if the teacher has many students to bring together. Thus, the group is not as important as each student's individual relationship with the teacher. The student's 'self-abandonment', then, is not to the group, as is the case in Gordon's paper about religious groups, but, rather, to the art and the discipline that he learns from his Sensei. Therefore, it is submission to him that is important and the relationship between students is entirely up to them. Community is only a by-product of various student-teacher relationships.

"Teachers who care, 'grow' good students," said Dorran. If anyone ever doubted that he cared about his students, the often-placed platter of smoked salmon, sausage and bread would have changed their minds. Of course, I was not one who needed persuading. I had been training for four hours and was spent. I had no more energy left. The sun was shining outside and it was unseasonably warm. And so, we sat in the kitchen, eating the feast he had prepared, while I asked him about his life.

Dorran started out with karate, just like me. Although he excelled at it, he didn't stay long as the rough environment and impersonal atmosphere of the classes did not make for his ideal learning conditions. A few years later came judo and this environment was much better. "Judo is better for kids because kids grapple naturally," he told me. The first tournament he ever enrolled in gained him first prize but this too was not pursued for very long. The distractions of life for this twelve year old were too prevalent to be ignored.

His third experience came in the form of a high school wrestling team where he dominated bigger and stronger adversaries with ease. "I have a natural talent for grappling," he said and, having seen him in many a ground fight, I had to agree.

When I asked him about all his teachers in these subjects, there wasn't much to say. Some were nicer than others but none of them really cared and he did not develop a close relationship with any of them. He did, however, have at least one teacher at the time that he grew close to: "my dad would wake me up with a bucket of cold water when it was time to go to work." When he was eighteen, Dorran left Montreal to be with his father in Toronto so that he could work in construction and the whole experience changed his outlook on life. In his words, "I learned to appreciate life by working hard."

Despite his busy schedule, he found time to enrol in another martial arts school, this time kung fu. He practiced five times a week and was soon promoted to assistant instructor. As with all things, though, this came to an end when he moved back to Montreal. He joined a new kung fu school but did not find it to his liking. Then he found *ninjutsu*.

"I remember thinking 'this is what I want to do,'" Dorran said of the first time he saw the class. He had thrown a kick at one of the teachers and instead of the block he was expecting, the teacher caught his foot and twisted, forcing him to fall and that was all it took. He was hooked.

At the time, there were two instructors at the school. Dorran mentioned that they complemented each other well as one was soft, both in his art and in dealing with people, while the other was hard and intimidating. The soft Sensei quit soon after Dorran joined, which left him with the one called 'the demon.' "It took two years before I felt accepted by him," he said. But this was necessary because, through this teacher, he was able to meet *Soke* Willson, with whom he found the authentic teacher-student relationship that makes martial arts special.

When I asked him about community, he said that he wanted to lead a group of people with real potential. "You guys make the community. I just lead you… it's all about passing the torch of hope. All that matters is brotherhood!" However, before someone can grasp the torch they must first have confidence.

This leads to an integral part of martial arts: health. Not just physical health but mental health as well, "a healthy body brings a healthy mind. Without these two, you have no chance of meeting your spirit." This mind, body, spirit trinity is very important in martial arts. It is a personal thing; the cultivation of a healthy body leads to a healthy mental state and, combined, brings about deep spiritual insights. A good teacher is essential to guide the student through the training and development of all three.

During training the emphasis for the individual should be on personal betterment and a good teacher will know where the need for improvement lies. "When I meet someone for the first time, I can feel all their weakness and their pain," Dorran says, but he can also see the strong points and he gives each of his personal students the name of an animal that fits their personality. All this is so that the student can develop into a better human being and so that they will have better control of their lives. In this way we see a parallel between this and Gordon's self-reconstitution where the individual reassembles his or her identity to create a happier, more efficient and stronger person (Gordon 1984: 49). The teacher should be the catalyst that guides personal transformation, and as I picked up another piece of smoked salmon, I had to agree.

The world was upside down only for a moment and then all was back to normal. I had soared through the air and landed in my break fall position without incident! I didn't hurt my head and my shoulder was still securely attached to my body. But most importantly, I had conquered a fear with the help of my teacher.

When I started this research, I was looking for how the community could change a person's idea of themselves and how it could enable them to conquer fear and become better at living life. If I was looking for an agent of change, it is because I went through that change without properly understanding where it came from.

The new breed of warriors is without a doubt a wonderful group of individuals. I have seen many of them change and transform into stronger and more confident people who can handle their problems and help others to get through tough times. However, it was not being part of the community that made them this way.

As I have mentioned at various times throughout this paper, the catalyst that creates personal change through martial arts is not the community they are a part of but a personal and enduring relationship to a teacher. The submission to authority is a submission to the art itself and a mark of respect for the knowledge of the Sensei. The training spent perfecting movement is actually the attainment of mastery over one's body and, ultimately, one's life. Just as certain 'born again' Christians submit to a religious authority in order to become more 'authentic', we let our Sensei guide our training so we can live our lives in a more authentic way (Gordon 1984: 51). It had never occurred to me before but I had failed to recognize that my early martial arts experiences were non-transformative. I was never challenged to face my fear or to be a better person. I was never encouraged to excel outside the *dojo*. When I compare Dorran's experiences with my own, I see the common ground in the personal relationship with a teacher who cared and forced us to grow holistically, mind, body and spirit together. I see this in all of Dorran's students as I witness their evolution.

I do not want to imply that the community is without a purpose. As Dorran said about passing the torch, the community is ours, his students; it is our duty to create and maintain it. We are dependent on the instructor's knowledge but we can do our homework together and revise lessons and principles. The community is integral as the second step in personal transformation. Once you know yourself, you can know others. This is a principal idea in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. I have just recently begun to understand this while training with Shawn, Dorran's roommate and student. We help each other with our training because we are in the same basket and the fact that we live these changes together allows us to better connect to one another.

The last thing my Sensei told me during the interview was this: "I can't make the world a better place alone, but if we work together, we can make a difference." What I take from this is that a martial arts community, like the one we are building now, is to be a place where you not only learn martial arts but skills that can help you transform yourself and others around you. Your teacher will guide you there and like-minded people will be there to provide support. By doing this, we can stick true to the new breed of warrior's motto: changing the world, one warrior at a time.

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Movement and Migration: Identities in Motion

Surf's up:
Couchsurfing and Questions of Cultural Capital, Authenticity and Hospitality

Danielle Riome

Introduction

The existence of the online hospitality network *couchsurfing.com* first came to my attention in 2008. As someone who was already enamoured with visions of low budget traveling, when I heard that there was a worldwide databank of people who would be willing to open their doors and allow me, a stranger, to spend a night or two on their couch, my first reaction was that it sounded too good to be true. I recall asking a string of incredulous questions, looking for the catch. Can anyone do it? Is it free? Do I have to host in return? Is it safe? This type of reaction was not unusual, as I found out later by talking to other couchsurfers. As it turns out, there is no catch, at least not in the immediate sense: it's free, it's open to everyone, no one has to host if they don't want to and it is relatively safe.

Couchsurfing.com, founded in 2004, is now the largest of several online hospitality networks of its kind. According to the website's statistics page, as of the end of 2009 the organization has 1 551 286 members in 232 countries and 67 747 cities; thus, 453 535 couches are available for surfing. To become a member of couchsurfing.com it is necessary to register online and fill out a profile page. Through the profile page, one can write a message to any other couchsurfer to request a stay, usually a night or two. The potential 'hosts' are never required to oblige but if they want they will offer a place to sleep in their home, which is arranged through further email or telephone contact. Similarly, the website functions as a social network: a personal page displays a couchsurfer's friends and contacts and all the references, positive or negative, that other couchsurfers have written about him or her. The website reveals a rather utopian conceptualization of the goals of couchsurfing. The organization's Mission and Guiding Principles reads: "We envision a world where everyone can explore and create meaningful connections with the people and places we encounter… The appreciation of diversity spreads tolerance and creates a global community" (Couchsurfing Project: 2009).

Couchsurfing is often seen as a simple notion put into practice via the Internet: willing hosts welcome travelers into their homes and hosts, in other moments, can be travelers themselves. However, far from simple, couchsurfing is also a practice that is filtered in nearly every way through the diverse people who engage in it: it varies tremendously from person to person and from encounter to encounter. And yet, there are certain official and unofficial protocols and certain online spaces that seem to tie this sort of travel together as a practice and perhaps they can tell us something about the social circumstances that surround and produce it. In 2010, when I decided to look at couchsurfing in Montreal from the lens of social science rather than as a traveler, a new array of questions surfaced. Can discussions with couchsurfers in Montreal about *why* they couchsurf and *why* they host be mined to reveal complex social underpinnings? This paper explores the motivations of couchsurfing, based on upon 7 semi-formal interviews conducted with experienced couchsurfers in Montreal, as well as 3 interviews with first time couchsurfers who were incidental guests of interviewees at the time. The names of the couchsurfers have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Literature review

What kinds of things are people looking for when they couchsurf or when they wish to host a couchsurfer in their home? The phenomenon of online hospitality networks has not been investigated to a great extent in the social sciences, with the exception of an in-depth moral interrogation of couchsurfing by Jennie Germann Molz (2007). However, in addition to Germann Molz's analysis, previous anthropological work on the motivations of tourists, travelers and backpackers make headway into these questions, as do works that explore the ethical complexities of hospitality and reciprocity. The following literature review has guided but not completely encompassed my theoretical leanings and is divided into three sections: the first section deals with the 'alternative' traveler's motivations for distinction and cultural capital. Building on the first, the second section deals with the notion of cosmopolitanism and the couchsurfer's relationship with cultural difference. The third section deals with the ethics of hospitality and reciprocity and how this has been related to couchsurfing.

Distinction

Many anthropologists turn to Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of cultural capital to help explain the motivations behind tourism and travel. Defined briefly, cultural capital is knowledge, which may be expressed as one's tastes, likes and interests or as one's social or linguistic competencies that give one social status. Different cultures have different ways of gaining status and within a culture there may be multiple and fragmented systems of cultural capital. This is illustrated by theories of social scientists like Sarah Thorton (2005), who elaborate on Bourdieu's ideas by developing the notion of 'subcultural capital.' The term 'subculture' describes cultural settings that could be considered underclass or non-mainstream but in which people reclaim a degree of control over their own identities by redefining the criteria, or 'subcultual capital', for belonging and status within their group. Subcultures often value the 'authentic', 'hip' and 'underground' in opposition to dominant criteria, which are considered phoney or mainstream (Thorton, 1995: 3-4). Cultural and subcultural capital are interesting lenses that have been used to look at the motivations of alternative trav-

elers, possibly because these concepts link people's individual choices and consumption patterns with what they may be trying to achieve on a social level.

Along these lines, Julia Harrison (2003) investigates the self-imaginings and social strivings of the so-called 'travel enthusiast'. Harrison considers her interviewees as people who occupy a newly emerged middle class because by displaying their resources, education and taste they distinguish themselves from those below them in the social hierarchy and, perhaps, certain of those above them as well. In other words, travel enthusiasts bolster their status by being ostensibly able to afford multiple overseas excursions. However, they also distinguish themselves from tourists by pursuing an aesthetic of travel that specifically emphasizes inexpensiveness, "anti-materialism" and "the experiential dimension" (2003: 10). In Harrison's approximation, only a part of the benefits of being a travel enthusiast are actually experiential; other parts of the benefits come from talking and showing off ones experiences, thus augmenting social standing. Similarly, anthropologist Camille O'Reilly (2006) investigates the practice of backpacking, or "long-haul, long-term independent travel," and posits that the practice is status enhancing because of the marginality and obscurity of backpacking and the fact that not everyone has the confidence to undertake it (2006: 1012). Benefits include social respect and increased hire-ability. O'Reilly argues that the spike in popularity of backpacking over the last few decades means that it has entered the "mainstream" and has lost some of the status-enhancing gloss of being "adventurous" and "alternative" (2006: 1014). I find it relevant to consider this work on travel enthusiasm and backpacking in relation to couchsurfing because, based on the website and my interviews, all of the qualities of inexpensiveness, anti-materialism, an experiential dimension and a sense of obscurity and marginality are emphasized when speaking of couchsurfing. Perhaps, as with backpacking and travel enthusiasm, there are social rewards in identifying oneself as a couchsurfer and recounting couchsurfing tales.

Cosmopolitan Difference and the Other

There are other values such as the importance of intimate cultural exchange and embracing difference, which appear prominently in the couchsurfing website, and are perhaps more connected with what is fashionable about couchsurfing. These values seem to resonate with what some call cosmopolitanism. As anthropologist John Urry explains, "cosmopolitanism involves an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards *different* national cultures. There is a search for and a delight in contrasts between cultures rather than a longing for uniformity and superiority" (1995: 167). Urry is critical of cosmopolitanism; he contends that by seeing and consuming through the lens of difference rather than commonality, the cosmopolitan may tend to exoticize unfamiliar cultures and reinforce a sense of entitlement in regard to the appropriation of cultural goods, practices and places. In "Cosmopolitan and the Couch: Mobile Hospitality and the Internet" (2007) Germann Molz makes an explicit link between the practice of couchsurfing and the romanticizing and consuming of 'other' cultures. She writes, "The notion of getting close to the other – close as to be invited into the stranger's home or to bring the stranger into your own living room – is central to the cosmopolitan desires of consuming difference" (2007: 69). Furthermore, Germann Molz problematizes the couchsurfing organization as purporting to endorse openness to difference while simultaneously policing and rejecting difference, simply through the fact that hosts filter out inappropriate guests through their own potentially biased subjectivities. She argues that this has the effect of "creating an enclosed cosmopolitan community – paradoxically, a closed community of open-minded and like- minded people" (2007: 75). In addition, Germann Molz contends that barriers to economic and political mobility are unspoken obstacles to being a part of couchsurfing. She asserts that having a home to host in, having "financial means to travel" and having "the political right to mobility" are some of the assumed prerequisites, while "the participants can claim to be forging an open global community" (2007: 78).

On the other hand, Pnina Werbner (2008) rejects theories that depict cosmopolitanism simply in terms of privileged mobility, imperialist projects and the opportunity to navigate multiple cultural norms without being rooted or accountable in any of them. She argues that such theories do not take account of cosmopolitanisms that embrace difference and promote ideals, such as openness and equality, but are situated in particular, historic and vernacular people and places, rather than only elite and un-rooted ones.

The difference-seeking values of cosmopolitanism seem to be very present in narratives of couchsurfing and I will explore further whether couchsurfers' desires to experience new cultures are rooted in particular traditions, histories and moralities or rooted in unexamined senses of entitlement to consume and exoticize difference.

Hospitality and Reciprocity

Traveling is only one aspect of couchsurfing; the other, of course, is hosting. Perhaps more paradoxical than the question of why someone would wish to travel as a couchsurfer is the question of why they would wish to host someone who may be a stranger in their home. Is the couchsurfing website simply a logistical aid that helps hosts to give the hospitality and generosity they would offer regardless of couchsurfing? How does hosting through couchsurfing affect the ways and reasons people open their homes to travelers? Jacques Derrida (1999) opines that hospitality by definition entails risk and that this hospitality, which asks something in return, cannot be hospitality at all. He writes, "If I am sure that the newcomer that I welcome is perfectly harmless, innocent, that (s)he will be beneficial to me… it is not hospitality" (Derrida 1999 c.f. Rosello 2001: 11-12). Germann Molz (2007) uses Derrida's definitions to argue that hosting through online hospitality networks does not really constitute hospitality. This is because the official and unofficial etiquette of being a good guest and the checks and balances of the online reputation system are forms of policing the conditions of couchsurfing to ensure that the guest does not become a parasite (2007: 74). Furthermore, she contends that couchsurfing hosts participate in order to pave the way to be guests through the organization in the future, although the same individuals who stay with them may not host, and therefore the phenomenon is reciprocal rather than hospitable (2007:68-70). This article investigates the types of hospitalities, reciprocities and generosities that my interviewees practice and experience.

Findings

When investigating the question of why couchsurfers host and travel through the website, I did not find simple or uniform principles running through the interviews. Many interviewees reported multiple, overlapping and sometimes even contradictory motives and principles behind couchsurfing. I have separated some of aspects of the interviews into the following sections as the literature review is divided: distinction and the insider view, cosmopolitan desire and policing of difference and hospitality, reciprocity and human connection.

Surfing Distinction and the Insiders View

Many of the couchsurfers I spoke with saw a clear difference between traveling via couchsurfing versus via tourism. One prominent difference is the comparative affordability of couchsurfing. Serge, an enthusiastic young couchsurfer, reported "obviously it saves on a hotel. Like you save a lot of money." Another couchsurfer, Lyndsay from Michigan, who was staying with Serge told me:

> the nice thing about couchsurfing is you can be like, "Where do you feel like going? Anywhere!" …It's Spring break – yeah, a week off school and where can we afford gas to?… I wouldn't travel nearly as much as I do without couchsurfing, there's no way I would have been able to afford a week of traveling without couchsurfing.

The affordability of travel by couchsurfing points towards its accessibility and away from the notion that it is an elite activity, as Germann Molz suggests, or one that distinguishes people from classes below them by signalling wealth. However, there are unspoken socio-economic prerequisites to practicing couchsurfing that are not immediately obvious. When I asked a few interviewees about the ways they found couchsurfing to be exclusive, a few ideas arose from their responses. One is that Internet access is a crucial precursor to using couchsurfing, one that is not available to everybody. Serge tells me, "I've traveled through all the countries of Central America, but unfortunately, there is definitely a digital divide there. Like, I would make a request and people would respond like three months later because they don't check the Internet a lot or they don't have money to check it." Another barrier discussed is that of language. The couchsurfing website is in English and one interviewee surmised that while most people who use couchsurfing around the world speak some English, there are many who do not. Thus, one has more couchsurfing opportunities as an

English speaker than a non-English speaker. None of my interviewees mentioned financial resources, passports or time to travel as an obstacle to couchsurfing, although I would assume this is a real obstacle for many people and overlooked by my respondents. However, as what seems to be an optimistic counter-example which points again to accessibility, when I posed the question of exclusivity to Frederique, she told me that a friend of hers from La Paz, Bolivia, went to Peru and Argentina using couchsurfing and that otherwise he may not have had the means to go. It was his first experience outside his country, she told me. "He wants to go to Brazil now. He wants to see the ocean."

In general, couchsurfing is affordable and thus may not boost someone's social status on the grounds that they appear wealthier. However, a possible social benefit that it does offers that tourism cannot is a claim to the insider's view. An insider's view is arguably cultural capital, or specialized knowledge, which distinguishes a person from others, like education, linguistic competence or knowing what's *'in'*. According to Serge: "What's cool about couchsurfing? I just, instead of opening up a newspaper and trying to figure stuff out for hours, I can just ask [my host], like, 'What's cool to do?' and just, kind of like, take it easy and just do it the way they do it." Frederique reports, "Couchsurfing is really good 'cause you get an insiders view… know all the restaurants to go to and the places … much quicker."

In conjunction with the insider's view, Samantha from Michigan, whom I interviewed on her first couchsurfing trip *en route* from Toronto, qualified couchsurfing as a way to see less superficial, more everyday aspects of a city, which are not as accessible to tourists. She told me:

> I think something that's really amazing about couchsurfing – well the day we arrived is also the day the Canadia – (laughter) Canada won the gold metal [in men's Olympic hockey]. So we went out to the bar and everyone was celebrating. So it was being able to see how people lived there. That's something – when I go somewhere I really don't like the touristy things 'cause I kind of feel like you can look at them and call it a day… In Toronto, it was the fact that we were with people who lived there and if we weren't there they'd probably be doing the same thing. That's what it was. That was really cool.

Frederique describes her particular mode of travel, which sometimes includes couchsurfing, using terms that emphasize her desire for intimate connection with her destinations, and implicitly disparage the reckless speed of tourism:

> I don't call it traveling – I go to live somewhere. [Now] I have friends and family there. Well, it doesn't really bring me anything to visit buildings, and I don't like the impact also, [of being] the foreigner, coming in with money and even sometimes damaging the local environment, the local culture at the expense of the local people. And I've always been interested in learning about other cultures… that's why I learn languages… I stay there until I understand the way. I stay there at least three months… that's the minimum to understand the place... And I've gone back to Bolivia a second time… I've gone back for three months twice now and I'm happy to go back next year in the same place… So, it's more my approach. I like to feel also at home, when I am somewhere… I've traveled a little bit in my stays and I don't like just having to prepare my luggage, go to another place and just get to know the good spots and then leave… For example, I'm learning Quechua. I'm trying to. I'm learning to say… "I don't speak English" in Quechua. When someone says, "Hey baby," I turn around and say, "I don't speak English," in Quechua, and leave before they figure out who I was.

Clearly, being identified as a tourist is not appealing to Frederique. She wants to get to know people but she would rather people wonder about who she is than put her in a box as a 'fly by night' tourist.

Gabrielle and Marc, partners living in East Montreal, value what they call an 'authentic' type experience, which is facilitated through couchsurfing: together they recount one such experience that they had in Slovenia when they were taken by their host to a out-of-the-way restaurant frequented by locals, and served some of the best fish they had ever eaten. Gabrielle exclaims, "If we hadn't met him, we wouldn't have found it." However, in an interesting twist, Marc added: "We are always tourists even when we walk in our own neighbourhood. We are voyeurs of interiors, very curious about the insides of homes, which are impossible to see when you are in a hotel." This suggests that he

identifies as tourist as much as a couchsurfer and that the difference between the two, for him, is not what kind of experiences he is interested in – intimate, authentic or new, but how easy it is to access them.

If practicing couchsurfing augments social standing, then it seems likely that this occurs only within certain, perhaps subcultural milieus rather than in society at large. I make this assertion because most of my interviews made a point to express that couchsurfing is a distinct activity from tourism or that they do not wish to be considered tourists. Couchsurfing is often defined in opposition to mainstream tourist practices and announced through the value of authenticity, inexpensiveness and 'experiential-ness', similar to Harrison's formulation of travel enthusiasm. I admit that the degree and precise qualities of the kinds of social benefits I am suggesting are unclear. None of the couchsurfers I interviewed specifically spoke of the feeling more respected or getting better jobs because of being a couchsurfer, as O'Reilly's backpacker subjects reported. However many couchsurfers seemed to invest a lot of importance upon having a good story to tell their friends, as we shall see in the following sections, which perhaps boosts their social standing, if only momentarily.

Surfing Cosmopolitan: Desire and Policing of Difference

Many of my interviewees expressed a deep interest in having contact with different cultures as one of their motivations for hosting couchsurfers. This type of motivation seems to be consistent with Urry's definition of cosmopolitanism, which he writes is "an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness" and "a search for and a delight in contrasts between cultures" (1995: 167). One of the main problems that Urry and Germann Molz see with cosmopolitanism is that it seems to be linked to superficial and possibly harmful knowledge, such as exoticized or romanticized views of other cultures, as well as a sense of entitlement to consume cultural difference as if it were a form of entertainment. There are some instances in my interviews where it seems that couchsurfers use exposure to cultural difference as a form of entertainment. For instance, when I presented Serge with the idea of that there was a sort of status associated with hosting people from as far away as possible, and that that might be a motivation, he said:

> I think that's certainly probably a factor for me … I've hosted a lot of people from northern Ontario for some reason, [from] small towns. Not to be mean, but I'm going to be anyway. The ones I've hosted, they've been, like, pretty boring. All they want to do is, like, go to a market and buy fruit, or, like, watch movies stuff. They don't really have any interesting stories to tell…It makes me sounds really selfish… Like, 'Give me some stories, couchsurfers, entertain me'.

As an illustration of the types of couchsurfers who are most appealing to him, Serge tells the story of how one couchsurfer's unusual knowledge and narratives of faraway places acted as a valuable bargaining chip:

> Like one guy…I didn't actually get to host him but I really wanted to, because he had gone to North Korea, and the Kashmir region of Indian, and Pakistan, and he had gone to Iraq, and all these war zones and stuff, and like communist countries. Like, places people typically aren't allowed to go. And I asked him, like... he probably had to pay a lot to go to North Korea, 'How'd you get there?' and he said, 'I'll tell you when you host me.' I had to bail at the last second cause I had to go to work or something like that, but I found him another place [to stay] in Montreal. But I'm so frustrated, 'cause I really wanted to know his story, 'cause it's so exciting.

It seems that, like many couchsurfing hosts, Serge revels in the opportunity to hear an interesting and unusual story, especially one that tells of remote or far-flung places.

For many of my interviewees, hosting seems to be a way to gain exposure to other cultures without having to travel themselves. Many interviewees wished to learn something about their host or their guest, or about the place they were from. For instance, in Frederique's words:

> Cultural exchange is really nice when I can't travel. I got to meet some Russian people, some people from the Netherlands. I get to know about their countries and I'll probably never go to these places. I get to know a little more about the way they live… this week I'm thinking of not hosting Americans that much… [they're] not that much different… I'd like it to be more exotic… if people ask me [to host them] from countries I haven't been, I'm more likely to accept.

The fascination with cultural difference clearly presents itself in many of my interviews and perhaps sentiments of cultural fascination without tangible connections with people from those cultures could be called romanticization, but the link between fascination with different cultures, couchsurfing as a practice and the perpetuation of superficial views of cultures is more difficult to ascertain. It is true that many couchsurfing encounters are relatively short and may allow a couchsurfer just enough time to confirm his or her stereotypes. However, as evidenced throughout my findings, several of my interviewees consider couchsurfing to lead to experiences that are rather intimate and certainly less superficial than those offered by tourism.

An important thing to note is that not all couchsurfers are primarily interested in fulfilling their curiosity about different cultures when hosting. Marianne likes to host people with "different interests." She says, "I'm really open minded like that... It doesn't necessarily need to be something that I am interested in, but it just needs to be something that might click, and set me off… in French we say, *'pique ma curiosité'*."

Furthermore, some interviewees spoke of common interests as one of the most important criteria when deciding with whom to stay or host. In choosing a guest or a host, Marc concentrates his attention on books and music, for example, if they read too much science fiction, then it will be difficult. No matter what the cultural background of his guest or host, Marc asserts, "when there is nothing in common, time is long." This is presumably because a lack of common interests may make for a lack of conversations. At another point in the interview, Gabrielle told me, "We're old-school couchsurfers. We like to talk to people."

Germann Molz's other major critique about cosmopolitanism among couchsurfers is that, while claiming to be completely open to difference, couchsurfers also police the right and wrong kinds of difference. For instance, Gabrielle appreciates when there are many languages in the profile of a potential guest because she is learning German, Spanish and Chinese. This is perhaps what Germann Molz would call the welcoming of 'the right kind of difference' because it is a cultural difference that is inoffensive and useful.

However, welcoming people who are 'very different' is an important part of couchsurfing to Marc and Gabrielle. They describe one prior guest as very odd and lacking many social graces. Presumably, this guest would be considered the 'wrong kind of different' because he is not endowed with desirable cultural difference and is socially awkward. Gabrielle says, "That's okay. It's fun to meet people [who are] very different… that is anticipated… expected." Similarly, Serge welcomes an element of risk when hosting: "There's a huge novelty involved, it's fun not knowing what it's gonna be like almost, your almost scared nervous, especially the first time."

Another 'wrong kind of difference' is parasitism, which Germann Molz asserts must be policed at all times through the etiquette that one finds on the couchsurfing website or through experience. Elements of my interviews show that wariness of strangers and parasitism are indeed considerations for most participants. According to Lyndsay, "A lot of people aren't that open to inviting people to stay at their house if they don't know anything about them." All couchsurfers I interviewed could talk in detail about the etiquette involved in being a good guest and most had stories about people who were poor guests because they left a mess, they were not sociable or considerate of the household schedule, or they were otherwise taking more than they were giving. In an unusual tale, Serge recounted a memorable couchsurfer who came back to his house days after being a guest in order to steal his mustard:

> So he came by and he said, 'Oh, so [Serge] said I could have the mustard in the fridge.' And [my girlfriend] said, 'Really? He said that?' He's like, 'Yeah, he said that.' So, he took it! And, so, I came home just a few minutes later… I was livid, I mean, I don't even like mustard, so if he would have asked me I would have given it to him gladly.

Yet, as the story goes on, Serge reveals reactions that cannot be explained in terms of policing difference or fear of parasitism. Of the same unusual guest, who stayed with him on three separate occasions, Serge says:

> He was getting really frustrated 'cause he couldn't find a place so he was almost like a homeless… Like, he told me, 'Last night I ate bread out of a dumpster cause I was hungry and I got sick afterwards'. And I said, 'Okay…maybe it's cause it was in a dumpster and it was rotting or something.' He wouldn't listen, and he was starving and I tried to feed him, but he wouldn't eat. He said, 'I'll look at the sun.'

Although Serge considers this to be one of his worst experiences with couchsurfing, it seems he experienced tolerance and annoyance rather than fear; the story also reveals a thread of openness to the needs of another person who has no home. Overall, Serge's reaction is to see the humour in this situation:

> To me, I kind of see life as... even when something unpleasant happens it usually makes a good story… even if you have to complain to tell it. Like the guy who stole my mustard – you don't know how glad I am that he stole my mustard… We've just laughed about it, how crazy it is to do that. So it's kind of a good thing that that happened. I mean, I was angry, obviously, at the time. But I don't like mustard so, like, who cares.

The openness expressed by Serge and by Marc and Gabrielle seems to go against Germann Molz's assertion that couchsurfing polices the right and the wrong forms of difference, and seems in line with Derrida's formulation of unconditional hospitality, risk and openness to the stranger.

One aspect of couchsurfing that I haven't yet touched on is the idea, posited by Werbner (2008), that a cosmopolitan ethic of openness to other cultures is not necessarily a value prescribed by only elite, or dominant, cultures. Werbner insists that cosmopolitanism can be rooted in and practiced by cultures that might otherwise be referred to as 'different' or 'other.' One of the implications of that idea for this article is that it makes for overlap between tourist and destination, between ordinary and exotic. An extension of Urry's and Molz Germann's critiques of cosmopolitanism is that when the members of a single dominant culture are constantly exoticizing a wide range of 'others', their own culture appears to be normal and unmarked. However, all of my interviewees, apart from two, are Francophone Québecois by origin. Québec culture does not normally pass as unmarked and they are all called upon at times as couchsurfers to represent Québec culture to their guests and hosts. They also may have distinct cultural understandings and underpinnings that are cosmopolitan but not mainstream. For instance, when I asked Camille, a 62 year-old cycling enthusiast from Montreal, why she hosts, she answered, "Because I can. *J'ai de la place.*" To her it felt "selfish, *egoiste*" to have a big home which was "*inutile, vide*" and she wished to have "*une maison qui vie.*" Adding an element of religiosity and tradition to her motivations, Camille reported that, for her, couchsurfing felt like an extension of the ethic of "*le banq de quitteux*," which she remembered from her childhood. She explained that "*le banq de quitteux*" was a traditional bench or place (both physical and figurative) in the homes of rural Québecois Catholics that was open to hungry or traveling strangers. Now, she applies this to travelers from all over the world. This seems to be a rather fitting example of rooted cosmopolitanism – openness to difference that springs from one's own particular traditions or moralities.

Surfing Hospitality, Reciprocity and Human Connection

Besides interesting conversations, stories to tell, exposure to cultural difference, opportunities to learn from others and rooted cosmopolitanism, are there other benefits of hosting a couchsurfer? Germann Molz claims that couchsurfers are motivated by the increased possibility of being hosted in the future if they act as hosts and, thus, hosting is not truly an act of hospitality but an act of reciprocity. Several interviews confirm that the reciprocity is indeed a big motivation for them. Two of my interviewees experienced a sense of reciprocity that was inspired in the reverse order discussed by Germann Molz: they were so moved by the experiences they had had traveling with couchsurfing that they felt inspired to 'give back' by hosting others in a generous way when they had returned or established living spaces of their own. Camille informed me that she usually does not host people unless their profiles reveal that they also host people when they are home. This is because, in her view, reciprocity is an integral but un-enforced ethic of the organization, alongside the importance of not exchanging money for hosting services.

Marianne considers making connections for future travel to be one of her strongest motivations for hosting. She told me, "Yeah, it's contacts" and added:

> The worst thing is really just people that I never really get to know anything about. Like, maybe they'll arrive at 8 and then maybe we'll have a drink, and then they're tired and they just sleep and then they just leave. […] It just ends. So these people are not part of my contact group.

However, even though she considers making connections for future travel to be a crucial motivation for hosting, she also takes tremendous pride and pleasure in showing people her individual point of view of the city. It makes her upset if they don't get a good taste of Montreal when they pass through. She tells me:

> I bring people to funky stuff, like we have a lot of weird activities in Montreal – like I love the fringe festival so I bring people there. Like there's slow dance night, stripping spelling bees, crowd karaoke, and just, um, Rocky Horror Picture Show, and free hugs and all these things that people might never do at home. And in Montreal we are funky like that.

One might expect someone who was receiving guests simply to have a couch to sleep on in some future journey would do so in a perfunctory manner. However, most of my interviewees, like Marianne, much prefer when they have time to get to know their guests, do some interesting activities and make a connection. As Marc put it, "If we do not talk and get to know each other, that time is spilled." This desire to connect could be reasoned down to the hope of getting a good reference from that guest, yet the investment of energy that goes into creating memorable moments as a host has no guarantee of being returned at any point. In fact, many of my interviewees spoke about hosting as rewarding unto itself, for diverse reasons, often emphasizing a desire to connect with other people and did not emphasize it as a means to travel later. For instance, Serge joined couchsurfing specifically for the experience of hosting, rather than a means of traveling. He speaks to the spark of human connection when he tells me about the internal controversy among couchsurfers over whether sexual relations are an acceptable outcome of couchsurfing:

> Couchsurfing is divided on many levels, and one level is like the sex question. Because people will say… one extreme will say you can't do anything unplatonic at all with people from couchsurfing because, it's *not* a dating service, a dating site. You can't see it like that *ever.* Just don't do it. That it breaks the rules and it makes it awkward for everybody. There's that camp […] And the other extreme is that we are all people, we're not just numbers: members of couchsurfing. We are regular people and regular people hook up and like if you are attracted to someone… I used to be at the extreme camp, like the first one, like the former, when I first joined but then I started thinking, like, I'm not just using couchsurfing, thinking, like, 'I hope I get a reference,' or something like that, and it's people!

Other examples of the valuing of human connection and friendship abound in my interviews, like Camille who wishes to fill her empty house with life. For Frederique, having company is a motivation; she said, "I am an only child… I've always wanted 12 people at the table… I think it's fun to always have someone over… it was like that before [I did couchsurfing] and I didn't look for it actively." Marc and Gabrielle said of their guests, "They illuminate our days, our living," and of a particular guest from New Zealand, whom he appreciated greatly, Marc said, "*Il a exudé quelque chose.*"

Conclusion

Based on nine interviews, my capacity to generalize about what motivates couchsurfers in Montreal is very limited. However, I hope I have shown that there is wide variety of reasons for hosting and traveling as a couchsurfer, even within my small sample group. Based on my interviews, I would argue that, within certain social circles, being a couchsurfer may augment one's social standing by giving one the momentary boost that comes with having a great story to tell and allowing one to distinguish one's travels from tourism. However, I don't think this is the only drive behind couchsurfing as it seems one thing that can make an experience worthwhile or make a story great for couchsurfers is the element of cultural difference. Yet, evidently, it can also be the element of surprise, humour, commonality or human connection that keeps people couchsurfing. That being said, there is nothing to lead me to believe that couchsurfing harkens the beginning of a utopian age of worldwide hospitality or is the solution to all prejudice and cultural discord. Couchsurfing is many things to many people but from my vantage point it appears to be a novel use of the Internet, which facilitates certain people to be a welcome interloper in the daily lives of others and potentially make new friends, especially if they do their dishes and have a few good stories to tell.

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From Gaspé to Montreal:
An Analysis of the Push and Pull of Migration

Angelina Leggo

"You never told us how to spend time alone in the midst of half a million people. Here, stars don't shine at night, trees don't speak" (Highway 1998: 104).

"You missed your happy places… you didn't have happy places in Montreal" (Interview with C, 19-03-2010).

Introduction

The conception of 'home' and what that means is a complicated term to deconstruct and is best exemplified through individual illustrations. For example, Lloyd Merriam expressed a sentiment that I have found in many Gaspésians who live away: "That little, insignificant place there, to me, is home … I live here and everything. I'm content to live here, more or less. But *that's* my home. And always will be. That's the way I feel about it" (c.f. Burrill 1992: 109). Allan Cooper said the same: "I know I always figure, when I'm driving down east, that when I get into New Brunswick, I'm home… It always seemed I was coming home" (c.f. Burrill 1992: 157). Similarly, under a picture of Percé Rock posted on Facebook, the comments read:

Person A: "nice pic, makes me miss home"
Person B: "Beautiful scenery…nice place to visit..but it isnt my home anymore…Montreal is"
Person C: "Your home will always be Gaspe. Mine will never be Mascouche. Or anything else for that matters…"
Person B: "… p.s your right"
Person D: "thats right…GASPE WILL ALWAYS BE UR HOME!!!u might live in Montreal but doesnt mean its ur home..its a place where ur living that's all… Gaspe will forever be ur home n in ur heart for that matter!!its where ur from and ur family!"

What these comments show is not only the strong attachment that the geographical place holds for people, but also the strength of attachment to a metaphysical space identified only as 'home.' Such ties to "home" depict the strength of attachment to a region, and further, denial of such an attachment is a denial of self. On the other hand, if we are so attached to these places and spaces, then what motivates us to leave them?

Rural out-migration from Gaspé is not necessarily a linear desire to pursue economic and educational opportunities, as is claimed by much of the English Gaspésian community, but a desire to experience something socially and culturally broader than what is found at home. Furthermore, it is necessary to realize that "living in… [the] city does not signal the rejection of [a] culture" (Fogel-Chance 1993; 105) but may evince a decision for personal betterment. On the other hand, it is fundamental to understand that this personal growth can only be achieved by taking aspects of home along for the ride.

No migratory experience is easy; each major move entails a re-negotiation of identity and belonging in a new setting. My experiences of migration have been complicated procedures entailing transition, manifestations of personal unease, and recognition of a need for change, which resulted in a lengthy process of self-recognition and negotiation. Over time, I arrived at a re-negotiation of self by learning to 'live in both worlds.'

Living in both worlds denotes an ability to mobilize the cultural elements that are the most influential on an individual's identity.

Since "culture is not a fixed and bounded totality, but is always in the process of being composed and recomposed" migration entails a re-ordering and simplification of cultural elements because "some features are more enduring" (Fogel-Chance 1993: 95) and thus have a greater impact on people's lives. This exemplifies how migrating individuals "are selective in their choices as they 'look backward at the same time they are looking forward'" (Fogel-Chance 1993: 95).

My experiences illustrate that the push and pull factors that make up a migration do not end once an individual has moved but continue to have effects into the future. Furthermore, these factors cannot be neatly divided into mere push and pull; they must be considered as part of a long dynamic process where both regions exhibit influence over the individual for a considerable length of time. Likewise, if the factors inherent in migration are analyzed statistically, then a higher percentage of push or pull from one region is not an automatic indication of whether or not that move will occur. Push and pull factors are not all equal in force; thus the cumulative number of factors is less important than the strength each holds upon the individual. Finally, I postulate that when the percentages of push and pull are more or less even, the individual is 'ready to leave' and the migratory experience will be successful because the person has, or will, be able to negotiate living in both worlds.

It has now been approximately ten years since I first moved away from my home in Gaspé. I feel that by studying the reasons why I have moved, I can help to complicate the issue of why young Anglophones leave the region for Montreal. A comprehensive look at why *I* moved may shed some light on the factors that induce *anyone* to move and ultimately help others understand what it is about the make-up of the region that inspires migration in the first place and how displaced Gaspésians see themselves outside of the communities where they grew up. Thus, this paper is an attempt to answer the question: Why did I choose to migrate between Gaspé and Montreal, and what have been the repercussions of these acts on my sense of identity and belonging?

To supplement my own recollections of my migratory experiences, recorded in a journal between January and March 2010, I spoke over the phone at length with my parents (henceforth referred to as M and D for the sake of simplicity) and interviewed Jodie Boyle several times

using a web-based chat interface between January 5 and March 12, 2010. The interviews constituted a mutual sharing of life stories, thus referencing them will take the format of Jodie: Interview, when it is from her perspective, and Angelina: Interview, when it is my own story.

Terminology

Due to the nature of my migratory experiences, it is necessary to re-define some terms so that they can be tailored to the specific context of Gaspésian out-migration. First, defining rural out-migration necessitates defining migration and its many different forms. Migration, then, is typically defined as "a long-distance move to a new location" (Knox, Marston & Marsh 2009: 108). However, "long-distance" is a questionable term: precisely how far does one have to move to be considered long-distance? Likewise, emigration and immigration are defined as migration from and to different countries, respectively (Knox, Marston & Marsh 2009: 108). Instead of being limited by international migration, I will consider "long-distance" migration, emigration and immigration as moving from one *region* to another, regions defined by various economic, geographical, and social factors. This allows me to define rural out-migration as emigration from a rural region and immigration into an urban region. Although the definition of internal migration seems more useful: "a move within a particular region or country" (Knox, Marston & Marsh 2009: 108), it can be applied to migration from Gaspé to Montreal *only* if one considers Quebec as one region. However, my distinction between regions, as stated above, would not place Gaspé and Montreal in the same "region" because the same economic, geographical, and social factors do not define both places. Internal migration must be re-defined as a move *within* a particular country, but from one economic, geographical, and social region to another. Thus rural out-migration in Canada becomes a form of internal migration, as individuals emigrate from rural regions into urban ones.

Moreover, Knox, Marston and Marsh (2009) consider push and pull factors as separate forces, i.e., a push from one region and a pull towards another (109), yet I argue that both regions inherently contain push and pull factors in and of themselves. One of the purposes of my research is to determine as many of these push and pull factors within separate regions as possible. Thus, push and pull factors will be considered in percentage form, that is, how many of each factor are found within each region, what is the difference in strength of each factor and to what degree do these factors induce migration.

Pushing and Pulling: My Migratory Experiences

As each region inherently holds both push and pull factors, so too does each factor contain both push and pull elements. I identified a list of push and pull factors compiled from my journals and interviews that express the nature of my migrations as a back and forth process. Below is the list of identified factors and what they refer to:

1 Opportunity – to grow as an individual;
2 Experience – to gain in knowledge and life skills;
3 Improvement – to better my personal status and to pursue more opportunities;
4 Pace of life – desiring either a fast or slow paced life;
5 Anonymity – to become a "face in the crowd" (Journal, January 10, 2010);
6 Peers – to either get away from my peers or to find them again;
7 Freedom – from either the constraining effects of Gaspé or Montreal;
8 Community – to belong to a certain group;
9 Education – to achieve higher levels of education both academically and through new experiences, or to pursue the academic education that I desired;
10 Culture shock – upon moving, which manifested in various ways, primarily homesickness;
11 Control – to gain better control over myself, my life and my future;
12 Identity – how to formulate it and how to change it;
13 Pride – in being Gaspésian or from Gaspé;
14 Defense – to justify who I was or would be against the criticisms of others and to defend my home from the criticisms of others;
15 Land – being attached to a geographical space;
16 Ambiance – to find a comfortable space in which to express myself;
17 Family – to get away from or to re-acknowledge myself as a member of a family;
18 Spirituality – to connect myself with my surroundings;

19 Economics – to grow financially or financial repercussions when deciding where to move;
20 Stimulation – a desire to be stimulated intellectually, spiritually, or culturally and;
21 Image – the actual and desired presentation of myself;

Montreal drew me in because of the opportunities, experiences, and personal improvement that the city offered. As opposed to the "slow pace of small-town living" (Jodie: Interview, 17-01-2010), Montreal offered an opportunity to "be a different person, sophisticated and worldly and part of a bigger, different community" (Journal, 10-01-2010). It likewise offered me a chance to achieve anonymity, freedom from "the 'goody-goody' image that I had acquired in high school" and from the constraints of a community who knew me too well (Journal, 7-02-2010). My place within my community, and that of my parents', began to feel more like a trap than a comfort zone. In order to "stretch my wings as it were" I felt I *had* to leave (Journal, 7-02-2010).

Ostensibly, I left Gaspé to attend the music program at Vanier College, to be intellectually stimulated in an area of which I had little experience and desired more knowledge of. Yet, it was not only a place to study but also a place where I had connections and something of a support network comprised of friends and family, even though I "refused any help from anyone" (M: Interview, 19-03-2010).

The culture shock that occurs during rural out-migration as economic, geographical, and social features change usually induces homesickness, "confusion, hostility, and anxiety" (Fedorak, Haviland & Lee 2005: 34). My difficulties adjusting to Montreal life were echoed by M, who explained that this shock was the result of unfamiliarity with the city, the young age at which I moved, the fact that I had never been on my own before and how my "sheltered life" in Gaspé made it difficult for me to be "dropped off in the city" (M: Interview, 19-03-2010). Culture shock, then, made me desire to be home even while I was "out to prove that [I] was mature and could handle it on [my] own" (M: Interview, 19-03-2010).

I struggled to reject "that 'small-town' identity that formulated who I became growing up" (Journal, 10-01-2010) while I simultaneously wanted "people to know what it was, where it was, and why it was so important" (Jodie: Interview, 10-02-2010). Thus pride became a factor that

mentally and spiritually pulled me back to Gaspé and caused me to resent "Montreal" for not acknowledging the uniqueness of my home, thus pushing me away from the city. On the other hand, because this pride grew at the same time that "I tried to deny its influence on me" (Angelina: Interview, 10-02-2010) its effect was not strong enough to pull me back. It forced me to reconnect more with an imagined Gaspé than an actual one and served to idealize the region more as a place than as a community that I belonged to.

My community both stifled the person that I wanted to be and represented a strong pull back to home. My parents thought that I was too young to leave, but they never tried to stop me. Furthermore, my relationship with my peers was a very strong push factor; as M said: "you were out to prove that you were more mature than them [and] you felt like all the people you went to school with didn't really want to be your friends so you wanted to get away from it all" (M: Interview, 19-03-2010). The combined pushes of family and friends induced a stubborn reaction in me where I felt challenged and defensive, thus, as M said: "[you had to] prove that you were adult enough to do it" (Interview, 19-03-2010).

In my first migration, then, the strongest pushes from Gaspé were my relationships with family, peers and the social make-up while the strongest pull factors to Montreal were the anonymity, opportunities, experiences and educational growth that the city offered.

After five years of living on my own, opportunity and experience became increasingly negative aspects of Montreal life as I slowly began to lose touch with myself. My identity, after five years of living in Montreal, was beginning to disintegrate as "I began to feel like a shell, with no inside substance, or like a chameleon, able to ape the behaviours of whomever I was around without having something all my own" (Journal, 15-01-2010). I believe this happened because "my intense rejection of a Gaspésian self meant that I had no past to draw upon. Thus, I had no way of forming a new self without adopting bits and pieces from others" (Journal, 15-01-2010) and I realized that the best way to re-experience myself *as a self*, separate from my peers, was to go back to Gaspé.

According to others in my life, however, ambiance and community were the prime motivators that both induced me to leave Montreal and to remain in Gaspé for some time. M said: "you were totally stressed, lacking confidence, and your self-esteem had hit almost the zero level"

but during the time at home "you became the person that we knew from before" (M: Interview, 19-03-2010). Thus, the ambiance in Gaspé, as opposed to Montreal, was a space in which I could take action and make myself feel good, and as D said: "you were welcomed and valued in the community" (D: Interview, 19-03-2010).

Yet, my sense of self did not only grow through interactions with others but also through individual experiences as a spiritual self located within a specific geographical area. Gaspé "taught me how to be alone… in a way I never learned in Montreal" (Angelina: Interview, 10-02-2010). M said: "I worried about you because you were always out alone", "you spent the whole summer [of 2006] on your own, always by yourself" (M: Interview, 19-03-2010). I needed that time by myself to "[interact] with my home" as a physical and geographical space (Journal, 20-02-2010) and to learn to be alone and more centered. The ability to pursue my spirituality and my sense of a located person in Gaspé represented a freedom I was unable to find in Montreal; a freedom not to *do* something but to *be* someone.

Hence, the factors that pulled me back to Gaspé had less to do with the region itself than with the negative implications of my time in Montreal. However, once I actually moved, Gaspé came to represent something much more important; it brought me back to myself as a spiritual, located member of a community that supported my personal growth.

However, as time went by I realized that I could not fully become the person I envisaged, largely due to the poor economic situation of Gaspé and the lack of people my own age with the same interests. Economically, "I was working as a cook in a restaurant" (Journal, 25-01-2010) for "little pay and renting out a couple of rooms in my parents' house" (Journal, 29-02-2010). I still had "plans, ambitions, goals… I [wanted] to have a family, a house, a property" and I knew that I could never have those things in Gaspé because I would never earn enough money with the jobs that I could find. Furthermore, there were no people in Gaspé my age that I forged a connection to. When M said that I spent all of my time alone, she was not exaggerating. Thus, even though I desired the slower pace of life in Gaspé and a place as a functional member of that community, the image of what I would become if I stayed there frightened me. I wanted more than what Gaspé could offer me at that time, which ultimately led to my migration out of the region again.

The strongest motivation to leave Gaspé was, again, to further my education, to find intellectual stimulation, to gain in new experiences and to pursue economic opportunities. "I had found myself again in Gaspé but I couldn't grow… there were few opportunities for me… I wasn't intellectually stimulated or challenged" (Journal, 25-01-2010). Montreal represented an opportunity to further pursue the image I had of myself in the future; I felt that I had grown as far as I could in Gaspé and part of taking control of my life was realizing what I needed to continue growing; indeed, "I moved back to Montreal again to further improve myself" (Journal, 29-02-2010).

Furthermore, I chose Montreal specifically because it was a familiar place and because it held people that I knew, loved, and missed. The most positive aspects of my first migration were the friends that I made who kept in touch with me in Gaspé. D made me realize that my second move also had the support of the community at home: "nobody felt bad that you left, they wanted to see you get ahead" but that I am missed there as well: "people feel a loss that you're not there anymore, but they know that there's not much future here" and that I owe my community for the person that I am now: "you should be thanking people" (D: Interview, 19-03-2010).

On the other hand, the move necessitated learning to deal with the culture shock and the other problems that had immobilized me before. Part of living in both worlds is accepting which elements from which life to take with you when you migrate. For example, my first journal entry begins with "sometimes I sit and try to think what it is about Gaspé that makes me miss it, that makes me think about it so much… it's more than just the people, it's the place" (Journal, 04-01-2010). Indeed, it is more than even just the actual place; it is the spirituality I found there and the freedom that that space represents. Even though it is difficult to mobilize the feeling that a geographical area can give you, through memory, I can recall "the smell of the air, the view from our kitchen window… the sound of the birds… the peace of being underneath the trees" (Journal, 04-01-2010). As opposed to my first migration, I can no longer pretend that these things do not matter or that I do not need to remember them because, now, "it's so much of me" that to forget or to trivialize is to lose something fundamental of myself (Journal, 04-02-2010). This manifests in Montreal in a couple of ways: first, I find myself consistently referring to

Gaspé in my relations with others, as a matter of fact, "sometimes I can barely sit through a class without mentioning it in same way" (Angelina: Interview, 10-02-2010) and second, I constantly feel a need to inform people about Gaspé: "when I tell people what it was like there, I always find myself telling people about the physical place… that's what comes out" (Angelina: Interview, 15-02-2010).

Even though I have been able to negotiate an identity that incorporates the best of both worlds, "I'm missing bits… I've fulfilled my need to be around others but not to be alone. This has been a chronic complaint of mine. There's nowhere in the city where you can go to be totally alone. There are people everywhere" (Journal, 29-02-2010). In fact, "the parts of me that hurt for Gaspé now hurt for… those days spent in the woods or at the water. Listening to everything… separate from people talk. Listening to myself" (Journal 20-02-2010). It is because these feelings are so geographically oriented that they are so hard to re-create; for example, when I want to know what is happening in the community, all I need to do is pick up the phone but if I want to feel again the wind off of the water or the smell of the trees in the summertime I have to rely on memory and wait until I can return for a visit. It's not just seeing *any* water or *any* beach but being in a specific place that's full of stories, memories and feelings.

Altogether then, my second migration from Gaspé to Montreal was an attempt to pursue my future as an educated and productive member of society as a whole. On the other hand, my strong ties back home allow me to be complete.

Yet, we must ask if the above information tells us *anything* about Gaspé, about Montreal or about migration as a whole? My interviews with Jodie help identify similar push and pull factors that others may experience. Out of the cumulative 21 push and pull factors that I identified in all three of my migrations, Jodie identified with 16, or 76%. In terms of total push and pull factors, Jodie's migratory experience more closely resembles my second move back to Montreal than my first one. I feel that this is because she felt more ready to leave in 2002 than I did in 2001.

Like myself, Jodie identified a desire to find new opportunities, experiences, and stimulation through education in an urban center. She said: "I was motivated by a desire to educate myself, not just academically but culturally… I was very eager to meet new people, and see things on a larger scale" (Jodie: Interview, 17-01-2010). Life in Gaspé represented limited opportunity for personal growth; as Jodie said: "I love being home, but there just isn't enough stimulus to keep me there permanently. I like the endless range of options, and the anonymity of the city" (Jodie: Interview, 12-02-2010). For us both, then, the city offered a more diverse array of experiences than Gaspé, a chance to learn about other ways to live, a way to grow as a person and a way to be indistinctive.

However, Jodie expressed the manifestations of culture shock when she spoke of how she felt attending university immediately after moving away. She said: "At school I was so self-conscious it was debilitating… I concentrated only on my writing, and how different I felt from my peers… I barely spoke to anyone either unless I had to" (Jodie: Interview, 09-02-2010). The shock of leaving home and the fear of life away from that security caused us both to withdraw from the world; Jodie remembered "being so paralyzed with fear, especially once I realized that I had been dropped… a thousand miles away from my comfort zone, and would have to work out the survival bit on my own" (Jodie: Interview, 17-01-2010), which is reminiscent of what M told me: "it's difficult for young people to be dropped off in the city" (M: Interview, 19-03-2010). An identity as a member of the Gaspé community, then, contributed to the shock of the migratory experience despite the rudimentary familiarity we both had with Montreal from previously visiting family there.

In contrast to myself, Jodie relied upon her Gaspésian family and friends who were living in Montreal. When I asked her if she spent more time with those she already knew in Montreal or if she tried to meet new people, she replied: "I knew several people in Montreal – lots of family – when I moved, and that was sort of a buffer for my new and uncomfortable situation. I leaned heavily on their support… in spite of the fact that I had never really spoken to them before on a personal level, and probably wouldn't have as much if the situation hadn't been so desperate for me" (Jodie: Interview, 09-02-2010). Because Jodie had that support network here and relied upon it, she was better able to transfer her Gaspésian identity to Montreal, whereas I rejected such networks and identity and subsequently had to return in order to re-establish my identity.

Furthermore, we both retained a strong attachment to the physical space of Gaspé that we try to share with those we know in Montreal. Jodie said: "Much the same as you, I find myself now trying to explain

to them how beautiful and special the place is" (Jodie: Interview, 12-02-2010). Such attachments have become deeply embedded in both of our self-conceptualizations and so, separation entails mobilizing the elements of Gaspé that are the most difficult to bring. Hence, Jodie expressed a similar connection to the specific geographical area where she grew up; "sometimes, I just have to stop and think about it, and I can imagine the smell of the beach… I miss how everything can be perfectly still and silent" (Jodie: Interview, 12-02-2010) and like myself, she had gone through a "temporary denial of who I was" but soon realized that "no matter how immersed I was in city life and all it's craziness, I wasn't changing… not as a person anyway" (Jodie: Interview, 12-02-2010) because of this connection. Thus, for both us, culture became mobile through memory, which became a reliable source for reconnecting with the space and ultimately, the Gaspé self.

Yet, no one can deny that the town's social make-up induces people to leave. The desire to pursue new opportunities, experiences, and stimulations seems to be the biggest push factors from the region. In my opinion, it is not so much gaining a higher level of education or pursuing better job opportunities that pushes people from Gaspé but a desire to experience different cultural aspects of the world. Jodie expressed it best when she said: "I was ready to leave home and the slow pace of small-town living. It sounds like a gross generalization now, but it was exactly how I classified everything Gaspésian at 19 years old – sloooow" (Jodie: Interview, 17-01-2010).

Conclusion

Although people believe that youth out-migration is motivated primarily by a desire to pursue economic and educational opportunities, the above analysis shows that in reality the decision to migrate is far more complicated. We do not migrate merely to "pursue post-secondary education" and "greater employment opportunities in the larger urban centers" (Fahy 2001: 46) but to gain in a range of experiences that are not offered in Gaspé. Furthermore, it is not necessarily true that "many of the young seldom return once their studies are completed" (Fahy 2001: 46); from my high school graduating class, approximately 25% are currently living in Gaspé (statistic based on personal information displayed on social network websites) and others, such as myself, have returned to the area for a prolonged stay. In the end, the decision to migrate cannot be simply seen as the result of poor social conditions but must be considered as a pursuit of personal growth that each individual negotiates. A study was performed in 2007 in Gaspé that dealt with this exact problem. The participants concluded that the English speaking populace of the region would only remain strong if the youth were encouraged to remain. However, believing that "knowledge of the region [was] necessary to have youth commit to stay… and see opportunities" (Sustainable Development Consultation 2007) is unfounded because knowledge of the region is one of the factors which ties migrants to Gaspé. It is the lack of opportunity in the area that motivates the out-migration, not the economic and educational make-up of the town.

Alternatively, Richard Element's (2003) study on the socialization processes that encourage youth to migrate from the region is an apt comparison with my own retrospective study of why we leave. His conclusion "that anyone who is young and wants to do something with their life, would have to leave the Gaspé" (107) is, in my opinion, true because the pull factors described above exemplify that leaving the area has more to do with finding new opportunities and experiences for personal growth than with a desire to reject the region entirely. In fact, it was because I attempted to reject Gaspé that I later returned. Likewise, it is true that "education becomes the justification motivating them to act" (Element 2003: 107); I have said in my journal writings that education was *ostensibly* the reason that I left, but in actuality it was far more complicated than that. Furthermore, I believe my analysis supports the notion that "youth are attracted to… images of progress, change, diversity and opportunity" and I would further suggest that these are the prime motivators, or push factors, from Gaspé.

My experiences show that the push and pull factors, which make up a migration, do not end once an individual has moved but continue to have effects into the future. Furthermore, these factors cannot be neatly divided into a mere push and pull; they must be considered as part of a long dynamic process where both regions exhibit influence over the individual for a considerable length of time. Likewise, if the factors inherent in migration are analyzed statistically, which can only be done retrospectively to fully identify them, then a higher percentage of push or pull from one region is not an automatic indication of

whether or not that move will occur. For example, the statistics from my second move to Montreal signify a stronger pull towards Gaspé than towards Montreal, yet I moved to the area with a stronger push. This phenomenon occurs because push and pull factors are not all equal in force; thus the cumulative number of factors is less important than the strength each holds upon the individual. Finally, I believe that when the percentages of push and pull are more or less even, the individual is 'ready to leave' and the migratory experience will be successful because the person has, or will, be able to negotiate 'living in both worlds.'

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Vouloir c'est Pouvoir:
Migrant Identity and Cultural Perception through French Language Learning in Montreal

Mona Magalhaes

It is another world. It is another culture, another country; it's not just the language.
- Vanessa
I think Quebecers are very much like young Spaniards, very liberal, but Montrealers are even more.
- Maria
I see that there is a conflict between Francophones and Anglophones.
- José
Vivre à Montréal c'est comme vivre à Disneyland!
- Desea

These are comments regarding perceptions of Québécois culture from four different newcomers to Montreal that I met during my fieldwork at a French language class taking place at a community centre in the city. With the various issues regarding immigration and language that have arisen over the years in Québec since the establishment of Bill 101[1] in 1977, I became curious to learn from the migrant's[2] point of view how they perceived the effect of language acquisition on their cultural identity, and whether the process of learning the language of their host country would influence their perception of Québécois society. I suspected that the political landscape may be a factor as this

province has two seemingly diametrically opposed mandates. The first is its commitment to preserve the French language and Québécois culture within a continent that is overwhelmingly Anglophone and a globalized world where English is now the primary language of communication (Pagé 2010, Vermette 2000). The second is its policy to increase population through immigration (Jedwab 2002, Pagé 2010). Although Québec prioritizes immigration from French speaking countries, it has an objective of francization of non-French speaking immigrants while allowing them to conserve their cultural characteristics in accordance with the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Pagé 2010).

I therefore wondered; would language classes equate an induction into Québécois culture? Would individual cultures be recognized? What effect would the classes have on migrant identity and their view of society here? I discovered that the philosophy of the program directors had an effect on the teachers it attracted, which in turn influenced their teaching approach and discourse with the students. Through individual interviews with students, I found that the students' own cultural symbols and their individual motivations to learn French contributed to identity and their views of Québécois society which also served to shape classroom discourse. Because my informants were not all immigrants but travelers and refugees as well, I also discovered notions of language as a tool for negotiation rather than a link to identity.

Methods

My goal was to engage in a qualitative manner with migrants who were attending French language courses here in Montreal. The fieldwork was conducted at *Maison de l'amitié de Montréal* (House of Friendship of Montreal), a Mennonite run community centre on Duluth Street in Montreal. They offer French language courses in six week blocks, and Mr. Rabus, Language Program Coordinator, graciously allowed me to observe a grammar class and a conversation class. It is important to note that these classes are not part of the *Programme d'intégration linguistique pour immigrants* (Linguistic Integration Program for Immigrants), which is sanctioned by the provincial government. I engaged in participant observation during five grammar and four conversation classes at the centre over the course of five weeks in January and February of 2010. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by email with two teachers, and face-to face semi-structured interviews were conducted with four students and the program coordinator. All informants were provided with consent forms assuring complete anonymity. Their names have been changed in this paper to protect their confidentiality with the exception of Mr. Gregory Rabus, Language Program Coordinator at the House of Friendship, who expressed a desire for the publication of his name. When necessary I translated informant interviews from French or Spanish to English.

Literature Review

My literature review uncovered various studies of French as a second language classes within the government sponsored *Programme d'intégration linguistique pour immigrants* in the Montreal public school system. While Pinet (2007) found that official French language courses minimized intercultural discourse, and Amireault (2007) argued that they did not foster an atmosphere of inclusion for immigrants, the unofficial class I observed allowed for intercultural discourse and presented but did not impose Québécois cultural representations. I believe there are three principal reasons why their conclusions differed markedly from my own. First of all, the French as a second language classes studied were sponsored by the *ministère de l'Immigration et des communautés culturelles du Québec*. In this context it was found that immigration policy and language preservation ideology was therefore of a stronger influence to classroom discourse.

Secondly, as the classes I observed were not restricted to migrants who had achieved permanent residence or refugee status, I believe that a wide spectrum of individual agency served to influence classroom discourse. Olwig and Sorensen have demonstrated how migration is often undertaken not as a permanent move but in order to "enhance and diversify livelihoods practiced and valued back home" (2002:1). They have suggested a greater anthropological focus on migration movement itself. Inspired by their work on migration practices, I explored my informants' links to their respective homelands to analyse how these links influenced both self-perception and perception of host society.

Vermette (2000) found that the official discourse of pluralism is only partially relayed to adult immigrants during government sponsored French language courses. She argued that the prevailing notion is to initiate immigrants into Québécois culture upon their arrival, assuming that thereafter they would be able to discover for themselves the multicultural aspects of the culture. In the classes that I observed, I would argue that notions of pluralism and interculturalism were implicit in classroom discourse, and this is the third reason why my results differed from the studies of government sponsored language programs. At the House of Friendship, the volunteer teachers did not initiate direct comparisons between Québécois culture and their own. Students were instead encouraged to share ideas from their own backgrounds as well as their experiences with other cultures. In this way, the discourse balanced all cultures, and the process was one of discovery of differences and similarities through language learning.

Anthropology of Place

According to Gregory Rabus (interviewed by author, October 28, 2009) the House of Friendship[3] offers students a "warm, safe place" to learn English or French without judgment, preconceptions or with any goal of cultural integration in mind. The students "take away what they need", and are comprised of refugees, tourist workers, tourists and immigrants who either do not have permanent residence status or have been here for a time but who have not learned French or English. The language courses are very much in demand and the centre teaches over 200 students each session.

Gregory has said, "The House of Friendship's message of peace and promotion" can also be felt "every day in our classrooms" (Rabus 2009). Souraya (interviewed by author, December 2, 2009), a volunteer teacher and recent immigrant herself, explained to me that it was very important to instill a sense of solidarity and community from the beginning of the course because of the heterogeneous nature of the group. This sense of community life advocated by the House of Friendship was transmitted through the volunteer teachers in all of the classes that I observed, and contributed to the various relationships fostered between the students, instructors and administrators of the centre. The philosophy influencing the atmosphere and discourse that occurs in the language classrooms is best summarized by Gregory:

> More broadly, language learning also has effects on the whole community. Peace and compassion, we believe, stem from learning to view others in ways other than abstract terms like "immigrant". Speaking the language(s) of one's adopted country helps one not only to find work, but also to be seen in the eyes of his or her compatriots as a fellow person and neighbour (Rabus 2009).

Cultural Differences and Universal Similarities

Direct action on the part of both the volunteer teachers and students also contributed to the sense of community at the centre. Upon observation of the discourse that occurred between teachers and students during both the French grammar and conversation classes, I came to the conclusion that there are two factors which contributed to this sense; the use of native languages in the class and the spontaneous sharing of both cultural differences and universal similarities.

The two teachers whose classes I observed spoke at least one other language that was common to some of the students in the class. Collectively Paolo[4] and Jean-Pierre[5] were either proficient or had basic knowledge of eight languages. The knowledge of language has a tendency to break down cultural barriers through the possibility of communication and the cultural frames of reference that it can offer. In both the grammar and conversation classes, the majority of the students were Spanish speakers. To facilitate understanding of French words, expressions and phrases, the teachers would often translate words into Spanish, regardless of the language spoken by the student asking the question. For example, when discussing the formation of interrogative phrases, Paolo explained how "*Puis-je*" was a formal expression of request that was similar to expressions in the Catalan language.

When interviewing Paolo and Jean-Pierre, both confirmed that sociocultural differences between Quebec and other countries are discussed during their classes. Paolo explained why he prefers that it be the students who broach this subject and why he is careful not to impose his own views:

…je préfère que ces sujets apparaissent par initiative des étudiants (lesquels sont des observateurs très doués), et non les imposer d'emblée. La raison de cette préférence, c'est que certains étudiants arrivent avec un schème très fixe de pensée et portent encore les préjugés sur les différences et les minorités de leurs pays d'origine. Le fait d'apprendre une langue est déjà un premier pas vers l'ouverture et l'échange interculturel. Les valeurs socioculturelles s'apprennent, à mon avis, sur la marche, à travers une intégration progressive et la participation active dans le multiculturalisme, et non simplement avec une exposition magistrale et abstraite qui, considérée d'un point de vue étranger, peut sembler doctrinaire.

I prefer it when these subjects are introduced by the students (who are very talented observers) and not imposed by the curriculum. The reason for this preference is that certain students arrive with traditional perceptions that still hold prejudices regarding [cultural] differences and minorities in their home country. Learning a new language is already a first step toward openness and intercultural exchange. In my opinion, sociocultural values are learned through a progressive integration and active participation within multiculturalism, and not with an imposition of abstract and dominant views that, considered from the point of view of a migrant, can seem doctrinal. [Paolo. Letter to author. Montreal, Qc, February 20, 2010.]

In order to encourage a lively discussion in his conversation classes, Jean-Pierre chooses to introduce topics that invariably lead to a discussion of sociocultural differences. He will also initiate discussion of environmental problems for their universal relevance and of gender relations, *"par humour, pour souligner les différences dans la vision de la vie"* [for the humour of it, to highlight differences in points of view] (personal correspondence, March 9, 2010). During one class, Jean-Pierre asked the students what their dream jobs would be. Desea, a student from Mexico, replied that it would be to work for Amnesty International in order to secure rights for homosexuals in Mexico. She feels that the Church's influence on the government results in continued denial of homosexual rights in her country. The students then launched into comparisons of the perception of homosexuality in Québec, Latin America, France and Poland. Another subject of discussion moved from the simple topic of roommates to a comparison of the cultural differences of how people live. Vanessa spoke of the challenges she had when she lived in Russia for a year with a host family. Jessica discussed her experiences of living in a warehouse co-op with 16 hippies, and

Jean-Pierre spoke of his stay with an Argentinean family. The sharing of personal experience and the prevalence of intercultural discourse enabled the students to find commonalities and to express different points of view within a safe environment[6].

It has been argued, and correctly so, that the globalization of culture is causing an erosion of local and ethnic culture (Dr. Roger MacLean, online lecture, University of Concordia, March 3, 2010). However, it served an advantageous purpose in this situation as students were able to take advantage of trends and images that have become universal through mass media. When discussing ideas for an oral presentation a Columbian student suggested to her American co-presenters that they use a concept that all students would be able to relate with. She suggested that their presentation deal with the discussion of Mario Brothers characters, and who fit which character the best. It is interesting to note that this discussion took place in English as it was the language that all three group members could communicate easily in[7].

Habitus

The French grammar class at the House of Friendship is structured to cover specific vocabulary, grammar as well as conversation useful for real life situations. But it is by no means static; it rather acknowledges "a kind of structure of social action by culturally competent performers" (Barnard 2000:142). Along with international French words and expressions, the teachers made a point of offering the students expressions commonly used in Québécois vernacular. I offer some examples in the table below:

International French	Québécois
s'amuser	avoir du fun
Ma mère me gronde.	Ma mère me chicane.
dodeliner	cogner des clous
Il va pleuvoir.	Ça va mouiller.
les lucioles	les mouches à feu
la boue	la bouette, la sloche
C'est mauvais.	C'est dégueulasse/dégueux.
football/le foot	soccer
haïr	détester
bicyclette	vélo

When I asked Paolo about this approach to teaching language, he replied *"Je m'intéresse à montrer les parallèles entre la langue écrite et normative européenne (le français de la France) et le français parlé au Québec. S'il est important de maîtriser le premier, le dernier est fondamental pour faciliter l'intégration aux nouveaux arrivants"* [I am interested in showing the parallels between written and normative European French (the French of France) and the French that is spoken in Québec. If it is important to master the former, the latter is fundamental in order to facilitate the integration of new arrivals.] (personal correspondence, February 20, 2010). Paolo recognizes that in the integration process it is helpful to use language in a way that is common to the dominant social group and also to understand its source. He therefore is providing the students with tools to acquire what Bourdieu named *habitus*, the process of socially acquiring tendencies that are culturally understood and that become automatic (Barnard 2000)**.** By understanding cultural reactions and the language used to express them, should the students remain in Quebec they would be able to interpret and respond to situations in a manner that is predisposed in Québécois culture. Paolo offered this information and explained grammatical and dialect structure, but left it to the students to decide whether to incorporate it or not[8].

The language classes at the House of Friendship create a multinational community made up of members who for individual reasons wish to include the acquisition of French and the experience of living in Montreal into their repertoire. A validation of cultural diversity is transmitted via teacher student discourse and allows for an exploration of the "socio-culturally interconnected nature of human life" (Olwig and Sorensen 2002:1) through language learning. I observed a surprising amount of intercultural communication that I believe empowered individual identity and fostered an understanding of different cultures. At the same time notions were provided for the formation of habitus through the teaching of Québécois vernacular, but it was by no means imposed upon the students. I now turn to examine the social processes and cultural dynamics individual students experienced when learning French in their host country.

Dynamics of Cultural Identity and Perception

> "Identity is a concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations." (Holland 2001:5)

Because of their individual agency, the people who so graciously accepted to be interviewed had varied interpretations regarding the effects of language and place on their cultural identity. They arrived at their conclusions in a common fashion, through what Ortner (1973) refers to as key symbols acting as vehicles for cultural meaning. These symbols hold collective meaning for group members and serve to order the world and determine proper behaviour. In my interviews I observed that my informants chose various symbols derived from their original culture and transposed them onto the host culture in order to decode and make sense of it.

Transnationalism: Shiori

Shiori (interviewed by author, January 20, 2010) is a 21 year old woman with dual Columbian and Japanese citizenship who has been in Montreal for six months on a tourist visa. A self-identified "citizen of the world," she has travelled since the age of 13 and has lived in Columbia, Japan and Mexico. As she spent her childhood in Columbia her native tongue is Spanish, but she is also fluent in English and Japanese. Shiori impressed me as a product of "the changing global configuration of postcoloniality and late capitalism" (Gupta 1992:63) in that national boundaries are transparent for her. She is travelling to "find a place that fits" by "following a flow of energy" that has thus far led her to Montreal.

Shiori explained that the French classes are an opportunity to understand the culture in which she is living through language learning. Wherever she is, Shiori wants to be able to "live the place." Having said this however, when asked about her social life and habits, I discovered that she does not use French outside of the classroom. Like many mobile people who will have a network of friends and acquaintances in the places they travel to (Olwig and Sorensen 2002, Paerregaard 2002) her primary relations in Montreal are with Columbians and Mexicans, as well as other tourists of various ethnic backgrounds with whom she speaks English.

It is therefore understandable that she does not reflect on my question regarding negotiation of cultural identity. Her self-perception is already one of transnationalism and although she does not use the language, she sees learning French as reinforcing a cosmopolite identity. Association with a network of like-minded friends and her status as a visitor to Québec ensure that she does not need to engage with the francophone Québécois, leaving nothing to negotiate. Shiori's self-perceived status as citizen of the world, a key symbol or form of social action defined by her family and social group, also colours her impressions of Québécois culture. Just as she sees herself as a cultural mix, she described Québécois culture as being a "blend of European and American influences and archetypes." Her identity is also reflected in how she thinks she is perceived by the natives here; "unusual but natural."

Assimilation: Vanessa

In contrast, Vanessa (interviewed by author, February 17, 2010) married a Québécois man and moved from the United States to Montreal one year ago, and therefore is deeply engaged with the local culture. Like Shiori, she has lived in other cultures but her approach is one that she describes as assimilation, and views language as the key for entry. Having previously experienced living in a small Russian town for a year, she feels that she is well equipped to negotiate her way through the exclusively French south west neighbourhood of Montreal where she currently resides with her husband.

> Mona: You used the word assimilation when talking about your experience in Russia. Would you consider yourself assimilating now?
>
> Vanessa: I try. Because the idea to me…if you decide that you want to go to someone else's land, someone else's place, someone else's country, someone else's homeland, you need in some way, make an effort to assimilate. You cannot just refuse to accept that culture; refuse to accept the language… I will always be an American, and I do love my country…but at the same time I can still keep that and adapt and assimilate and be part of the culture here. I'm not going to lose myself…I'll probably never relinquish my citizenship, but I do need to accept the language here and the customs…

Because she is committed to making a life in Montreal with her husband, Vanessa is developing multiple identities. She is acknowledging that a transformation to her identity is necessary for her to live happily here, but is firm in the belief that her root identity will not be lost. Although she uses the word 'assimilation' to describe this transformation, it implies an adaptation to Québécois culture but not an erasure of American culture. I observed the term 'multicultural' used when referring to her future children:

> I didn't have family when I was in Russia. I have a family now. I have a husband…I can do this, I can learn the language, I can learn the culture... It's also an added necessity that…my husband is Québécois, all his family is Québécois…they're not Montrealers…like they came from La Toque, Lac St. Jean….we're not kidding around! It's really important…we're going to be having children and everything in the future…you need to be able to raise that child in a, you know, multicultural background.

As Shiori defined Québécois culture according to her key symbols and her immediate surroundings on the Plateau, Vanessa's original perception is influenced by American views of Canadians and by interactions with her neighbours in Southwest Montreal:

> It's a funny joke in the US that we should just invade Canada and make it another state; it's the same thing… It is NOT the same thing. And especially French Canada, Quebec Canada. It is another world. It is another culture… it's not just the language …People don't know about their baggage…the history of all of that, why do they feel so demoralized. People don't even know they are demoralized…

Murphy-Lejeune (2002) explains that "when *in situ*, direct contacts…form the basis from which representation or attitudes regarding the foreign culture are derived and then often generalised as judgments and opinions" (182). As Vanessa's primary relation to Québécois culture is her husband and his family, she is able to delve more deeply to reach an understanding of the history that developed their view of the world:

> ... and then after a while… let's investigate a little further and see what's really going on here. I found out that historically they have been demoralized, been beat down….and so then there was this big resistance movement, and that's why the whole, like, language laws came into play to try to salvage and save that

> culture, and I completely understand that point of view but I also understand the difficulties that it causes everyone else from my point of view[9].

Like Shiori, Vanessa uses symbols that developed her root identity to describe how she thinks she is perceived by members of Québécois culture. She evokes the American Dream paradigm, a scenario that provides the basis for social action through myth (Ortner 1973). Vanessa is able to offer more insight than Shiori to this perception as she is actively engaged in her new community:

> M: How do you think you are perceived by people here?
> V: …. I live in the south west, so it's a lot of, you know, I am Québécois, I've been here all my life, I just accept things the way they are...and I'm a really progressive American who's just like, how can you just sit like a bump on a log, create change, you can do it, rise above! And all these people are like, whoa, that's one spunky foreigner, what is she doing here!

At first Vanessa felt like an outsider in her neighbourhood, but after a time has come to feel welcomed and supported by her new friends and family. In her view, the language courses at the centre help tremendously because there she is surrounded by people who are in similar situations, reducing the feelings of isolation that at times overwhelm her. She also appreciates that the courses are offering instruction in international French, which she will need when she pursues employment, and in Québécois French, which she will need in her daily life. In her words, "I need to learn two languages….it's ok for me because I'm a linguist and it's interesting to me…but for others it may be a daunting task." The formation of habitus is already present in her speech, as she punctuates her English phrases with Québécois expressions during our conversation: *"c't'assez la…c'est exactement ça…fait que…tabarnouche la."*

Language as Tool: Maria

Maria (interviewed by author February 24, 2010) left her home in Madrid three months ago for an adventurous year of travel. She chose Montreal as her first destination with the purpose of improving her French language skills. What struck me during our conversation was the attitude toward language learning in the Spanish educational system. Maria explained to me that as English is the international language of business, it is obligatory to take English courses at the secondary, collegial and university levels. French courses are also required at the collegial level. Language therefore has a social and economic value, and Maria perceives the acquisition of French as beneficial to advancing her career as a lawyer. By learning a third language, she is thus acquiring what Bourdieu termed *social capital*, which she believes will make her more competitive in the job market, improve her social standing, and allow her to expand her social network (Caprioglio 2006). As she says, "Knowledge of languages is very important. In Spain to get a job with a company it is obligatory to know English, and an added benefit to know French."

Language learning is thus a tool to enhance her identity back home, and Maria remarked that travel itself will have an effect on her self-perception. Language learning has also allowed her to discover other world views which she contrasts with the culture here in order to understand it. Like Shiori, Maria has formed a local network made up of fellow travelers who are Mexican. Her perception of Québécois culture becomes a contrast of Spanish, Mexican and Québécois social meaning and behaviour:

> I think Québécois are very much like young Spaniards, very liberal, but Montrealers are even more… I think they are similar to Spaniards in that education is important, they find it important for their children to study languages, important to go to university. When I speak of it with Mexicans… they know little of other people and cultures and do not think that it is important. They are materialist and are more worried about nice cars, clothing and houses than education. For me it's important to know a minimum of history of countries. It's interesting that I find that the Québécois are more similar to Spaniards than Mexicans, even though they speak the same language.

Maria's social and cultural background is one that prizes education and in searching to define Québécois culture she finds a similar value, and reinforces it by contrasting it with an opposing view. She does the same when commenting on social interaction:

> Even in the way they act. Spaniards are colder than Mexicans. I met some Mexicans through a friend and they kissed me on both cheeks. You don't do that in Spain! Yes, between friends and family, not with total strangers! It's like that here too, that's another reason why I think Québécois are more similar to Spaniards than Mexicans are.

One of the reasons why Maria's view of Québécois culture contrasts greatly with Vanessa's descriptions and experiences is because of the higher socio-economic status of the community in which she is living. Like Vanessa however, she feels welcomed in her Angrignon neighbourhood and finds that shop vendors are very patient with her French-speaking skills and go out of their way to help her. She feels that she is well perceived by virtue of her homeland, explaining that Québécois seem to have affection for Spain, describing it as a beautiful country with charming people. Maria once again compares reaction to her Mexican acquaintances to reinforce her notions:

Liminality: José

As a refugee claimant from Mexico, José (interviewed by author, February 28, 2010) is living the betwixt and between state of Turner's (1977) interpretation of Van Gennep's liminal phase, where his previous identity as a fully fledged member of his community in his homeland has been removed and is presently without an official or permanent status here in Canada. Turner has described liminars as those "who may be initiands or novices in passage from one sociocultural state and status to another" (1977:67). José left Mexico because of problems he had there, about which he respectfully declined to go into detail. He had hoped these problems would be resolved after some time out of the country. When this did not occur he applied for clemency shortly before the expiration of his tourist visa.

There is a certain heaviness to our conversation. Unlike my other student informants, José would not have left his homeland if he had not thought it necessary for his safety. Although uncertain if his application for clemency will be granted, and still hoping that he will be able to return home, he is determined to learn French. As a refugee claimant he has the right to take government sponsored language courses at no charge, but because there is a waiting list he has taken it upon himself to pay for courses. Like Vanessa, he considers the acquisition of language to be of utmost importance for integration should he settle here, even as he realizes the challenges of starting a new life in Montreal:

> For my personal life it is difficult. I don't know if I will be accepted or not. If I am accepted and can stay here, I have other problems. For example, I studied in finance and accounting. I won't be able to apply my studies here. I would have to re-do my studies to revalidate my degree. I can't have the career here that I would have in Mexico… I'm 39; I want to get on with my life. I want to have children and a family.

José has much affection for his homeland, and we discuss at length the history and cultural richness of Mexico. He explains how the strength of this history is reinforced through family and tradition and why he does not believe that his identity will change should he settle here:

> I think that Mexicans have a very strong identity… that comes from family, parents, grandparents ….they have a history that leaves its mark on them, on their culture and customs. That cannot be lost. And I see it here with the Mexicans that I know. I have friends that have been here for 7 and 13 years. They like living here, but in terms of food, family relations, celebrations, it's the same as if they were in Mexico.

Therefore as history and cultural identity are of high symbolic value to José, he describes his perception of Québécois culture in the same context. He explains that the differences between Mexican and Québécois culture are too vast for him to make comparisons. Like Shiori and Maria, his social relations are currently restricted to fellow Latin Americans, and he is unwilling to make a statement about the culture without first getting to know its members. "Nor can I question it or say anything bad about it. It's a culture that works for them as mine works for me." He has observed that Québécois identify themselves strongly with their language but at the same time has garnered the impression that Montrealers have no problem with the presence of other "influences and cultures." Indeed, José tells me that he feels that he has been well received here, and describes a sense of mutual respect with the Québécois citizens he has come into contact with. Perhaps because of his current liminal situation, where he has been unwillingly stripped of his original identity and awaits confirmation of his new status, José has also perceived that the preservation of identity is an issue in Québécois culture:

> I see that there is a conflict between Francophones and Anglophones….when I walk around the city I have observed that there are statues of English people situated in Québec culture. So I understand that there have been English and French colonies here….but I would have to read up on the history to better understand whether the situation is good or bad… I would have to read the newspapers more and talk to citizens more about their culture.

Conclusion

This ethnographic study offers a glimpse at the process migrants experience when learning the language of their host country in a non-official environment. My research shows that for my informants, French language classes often offered them a first view of the host society through discourse in the classroom. As the volunteer teachers were migrants themselves, the classes tended to offer discussion of intercultural similarities and differences as well as an introduction to Québécois worldview through Québécois language and forms of expressions. The philosophy of community and intercultural peace-building of The House of Friendship also contributed to the egalitarian and inclusive nature of class discussions. This anthropology of place in turn reinforced the student's cultural identity as it allowed for individual expression. Interviews with my students revealed how important both agency and cultural symbolism were in the process of interpreting a foreign society. Students tended to understand Québécois culture in terms of what they wished to acquire from it and by contrasting it with their own.

Responses to my probing of identity and cultural perception were therefore as varied as the number of interviewees. While Vanessa accepted the acquisition of multiple identities in order to negotiate her new life in Montreal, Maria saw herself as a Spaniard who would improve her career back home with a third language added to her resume. As a somewhat reluctant refugee claimant whose identity was in question, José chose the Anglo-French conflict to describe Québécois society, while Shiori transposed her transnationalist identity onto her perceptions of Montreal.

Although this project was of a short duration, it suggests that learning French does not always imply a cultural identity change for migrants to Quebec. It is rather a tool for integration for those who wish to settle here, and a tool for communication and the acquisition of economic and social capital for those who will return home or continue to travel. If I return to this province's dual mandates of preservation of the French language and increase of population through immigration, I wonder whether their perceived opposition may be reduced by a shift from the historical equation of language to nation (Schiefflin et. al 1998) to the branding of French language learning as a benefit to citizens of an increasingly globalized world, and as Pagé (2010) has said, as a tool for the creation of solidarity among a diverse population within the province. As immigrant integration is a serious debate within Québécois society, further anthropological studies that include a longitudinal view of migrant cultural and language perceptions as well as studies on globalization's effects on migration movement and notions of nationhood would be a pertinent contribution.

I greatly admire the courage and tenacity demonstrated by the students I met as they have undertaken a tremendous challenge to learn a new language, and in Vanessa and José's cases, to start a life in a completely different culture. When explaining semi-auxiliary verbs in grammar class, Paolo offered the expression, "*Vouloir, c'est pouvoir*". As if to illustrate the rewards of such a linguistic undertaking, and epitomize the courage of these students, a Portuguese student replied, "*Je veux apprendre le français: vouloir c'est pouvoir.*"

NOTES

[1] Bill 101 is The Charter of the French Language, which defines French as the official language of Québec and requires French to be the language used in government and law as well as in public communication. This implies regulation on the use of French and non-official languages within all business, teaching, public and private institutions.

[2] I use the word 'migrant' as an inclusive term to encompass people who leave their homelands for permanent resettlement elsewhere as well as those who will migrate for work or study while retaining their original citizenship.

[3] The House of Friendship was founded in 1973 by the Mennonite Central Committee and today represents the Mennonite Church in Montreal. On its Web site, its mission statement is as follows: "Supporting community life and peace building in our local neighbourhood and city". Being one of the original Christian peace churches, their stated intention is to work "non-violently for justice in our community" while addressing "both the physical and spiritual needs of newcomers". To this end it offers advocacy and reference services for refugee claimants, university student housing, community events, worship services as well as English and French language programs.

[4] Paolo is a 30 year-old immigrant from Columbia who has been in Montreal for over ten years. He learned to speak French in his homeland, and attended the University of Montreal. He has recently graduated with a doctorate in comparative literature.

[5] Jean-Pierre is a business student at the McGill University. From France, he is in Canada on a foreign student visa and plans to apply for permanent residence when his studies are completed.

[6] This is opposite to Pinet's (2007) contention that the government sponsored PILI (*Programme d'Integration linguistique pour les immigrants*/Linguistic Integration Program for Immigrants) presents a majority of Québec-oriented themes and minimizes intercultural discourse, which is then reproduced by the teachers.

[7] I often observed discussions taking place in English when the students did not share the same native tongue. Pujolar has explained that English is now the main language of communication of the globalized world, and is *"la langue de la mobilité"* in North America (Pagé 2010:5).

[8] This is vastly different from Allen's study of language and integration of immigrant youth in Québec, who perceived learning French as a "gatekeeper (rather than a gateway) for participation in the host community" (2006:195). In other words, they felt that they would be included into Québécois society only when they had learned to converse properly and appropriately in French.

[9] The difficulties Vanessa is referring to have to do with the bureaucracy involved in applying for permanent residence status. She and her husband have been trying to find a way for her to stay in Québec for over two years. Before they married, she did not meet any of the qualifications necessary for entry, neither as a student nor to obtain a work visa. Now that she is married, she is eligible to apply for permanent residence based on family reunification. However it has been so difficult for them to negotiate the confusing bureaucracy that they have hired a lawyer to take them through the process, which they hope will be completed by the end of this year.

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Sexualities:
Taking out the Ball-Gag

HIV 101:
Education and Prevention as a means of Humanizing HIV

Jade Cambron

The first cases of HIV/AIDS were detected in the early 80s. Today, "the prevalence rate for Montreal is 6.3 per 1,000 adults, which means slightly more than one per 200 adults is infected (with HIV)" (Prévost & Perron 2000: 8). Statistically speaking, if Concordia's 40,000 undergrad students consisted of a comparable demographic to that of Montreal, then theoretically roughly 250 students are currently living with HIV. This supports the idea that HIV is not just a thing of the past but rather an issue that needs to be addressed today. In fact, a new person is infected with HIV every 6 hours in Québec (ASO HIV 101 Workshop Kit 2006). Sexual health is a domain that cries out for attention from the public and school educators; HIV Education and Prevention is found within that sphere.

In this paper, I will outline the difference between HIV and AIDS using the same information that I used in my HIV 101 workshops. I will also discuss my experience as an HIV educator in Montreal with a local AIDS Service Organization (ASO), share insight from my colleagues and highlight the approach of the community organization where I completed my field-work[1]. Through participant observation, discourse analysis, formal interviews and a literature review, I come to the following conclusion: HIV and those that live with HIV/AIDS are often misunderstood, and this perpetuates false ideas of transmission and creates a stigmatized image of People with HIV/AIDS (PHAs).

At the 6th Canadian AIDS Society Symposium this past March, I remember listening to a seropositive[2] woman take part in a panel discussion on criminalization and HIV, and she said "I wouldn't wish this (HIV) on my worst enemy." We become allies to PHAs by offering our support once we have informed ourselves of the realities of what it is like to live with HIV/AIDS and how we can prevent transmission. Based on my experience, it is in our best interest to educate our general public, youth in particular, so that they can take the necessary measures to prevent transmission, but also to ensure the humanization of HIV within our society.

The term 'humanize' is used to indicate the process of familiarization that brings serodiscordant populations closer to the general population by demonstrating that seropositive people are humans with emotions, needs, wants and desires like the rest of us. People fear what they don't understand. While at the office one day, I heard of a seronegative man who was afraid to touch the doorknobs in the offices because he was scared that he was going to 'catch AIDS'. The ideal would be that everyone knows that you cannot catch HIV/AIDS through close, daily contact. Rather, serodiscordant people can live and work together with intimate contact (i.e. sharing workspace, food, utensils, and physical contact such as hugging) without any chance of transmission (San Francisco AIDS Foundation website).

Motivation & Methods

Initially, I wanted to conduct an ethnographic study on the correlation between identity and AIDS. After having a discussion with one of my advising professors, it was brought to my attention that using someone's fatal illness for my own academic pursuit was rather unethical. Nevertheless, I was continually intrigued by HIV/AIDS and the ensuing epidemic that is particularly strong in sub-Saharan Africa where the adult prevalence sits at 5,0% (CATIE 2008: 5). Currently, 1 in 3 people (33,4%) in Swaziland live with HIV, while the global average is 0,8% (CATIE 2008: 5).

HIV is still an issue for thousands of Canadians and as of 2002 the national average of HIV infection was up 12% from three years prior (Canadian Public Health Association 2005: 7). "It was estimated in 2005 that of the 58,000 people living with HIV in Canada, 27% (15,800 people) had not tested for HIV and (were) therefore unaware of their infection" (CATIE 2008: 7). It is alarming to think that over ¼ of PHAs are unaware of their status. It is during the first phase of HIV that one is most contagious, which is why it is of the utmost importance to get tested regularly (Pisani 2010; ASO HIV 101 Workshop Manual 2006: 26; ASO HIV Training March 2010).

HIV Education and Prevention (EP) is something that needs to be pursued in Canada, especially in Québec as funding for in-school sexual health education programs was cut from the budget roughly five years ago (field notes, April 28th, 2010). Ignorance of one's status, along with general misinformation perpetuates both HIV transmission and the associated stigma that accompanies it. According to "Positive: Living with HIV", 80% of people currently living with HIV/AIDS feel socially discriminated against and stigmatized (LaFontaine 2008: 30), forcing them to keep their status secret (Research Canada 2008: 7). EP coupled with antiretroviral therapy (ART) will not only humanize HIV and include those living with it into the broader social sphere, but it will also be more effective in eradicating HIV from the globe as a lower viral load reduces the possibility for transmission (CATIE 2008; Pisani 2010).

My motivation to continue with this subject was almost entirely of personal interest. I knew very little regarding HIV/AIDS prior to entering the field but felt that it was an area worth exploring, both for my own benefit as well as an academically valid research topic of interest and importance to the general public. This research was undertaken with the intention that it is simply the initial framework for a much larger and longer research project. I would also like to potentially expand my research to an international scale. The more I become in-

volved in the field, the more I would like to know. In some respect the amount of information seems endless.

To gather information for my ethnographic fieldwork, I spent over 15 weeks volunteering with a Montreal based ASO. During this placement, I received over 20 hours of training in order to become an HIV and Safer Sex Workshop Facilitator for youth and ethno-cultural community groups. The training included HIV 101 and HIV 201 workshops, along with ethics, active listening, role playing, harm reduction and trans 101 workshops, as well as testimonials from seropositive members of the community. This training was highly beneficial in terms of understanding and professional development towards becoming an animator, an anthropologist, and quite simply a more compassionate human being.

The data for this ethnographic research was gathered through questionnaires (despite sending out numerous copies, only three were returned completed) and informal interviews with HIV Educators, staff, clients, and volunteers. I also facilitated six workshops at different schools and community centres in Montreal, which allowed for participant observation wherein I became a source of information for my audience.

HIV 101

"So, can HIV be transmitted by saliva?"

There I am, watching my first Safer Sex facilitation at an alternative high school somewhere in the east end of Montreal. The classroom is small, with fluorescent lighting and the students' desks are in a U-shape facing a large green chalk board and the workshop facilitators. After the workshop, a Secondary 4 student asks me this very question. I pause for a moment, and then turn to one of the facilitators and ask him, because to be honest I don't know the answer. *Can* HIV be transmitted by saliva?! The answer is a resounding NO.

My colleague gives me a quirky anecdote; he says "Jade, you would have to drink so much saliva that you would die of over-hydration before you would catch HIV. You'd need to drink like three litres of saliva!"

"Did you hear that?!" I remark to the student, "three litres!"

While I feel this anecdote is accurate, I also feel that it needs a bit of clarification or further explanation. It is true that saliva, in and of itself, cannot transmit HIV. Furthermore, it is also theoretically true that "unless both partners have large open sores in their mouths, or severely bleeding gums, there is no transmission risk from mouth-to-mouth kissing" (AVERTing HIV and AIDS website). It ought to be said, however, that such a manner of HIV transmission is a rather unlikely occurrence and is thus considered a no-risk activity.

As previously mentioned it is vital to understand the basics of HIV to prevent the perpetuation of stigma and preconceived notions regarding PHAs. Along with having misinformation about the transmission of HIV, I am also guilty of previously interchanging the use and meaning of the words HIV and AIDS. I will briefly establish the different definitions, explain the essentials of transmission and the basics of antiretrovirals (ARVs).

HIV is what is known as a Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infection (STBBI). In order for HIV to be transmitted there needs to be at least two people (at least one of whom is seropositive) as well as bodily fluids and a point of entry. See the chart below:

Bodily Fluid	**Point of Entry**
Blood	Mouth
Semen	Injection Sites
Vaginal Secretions	Genitalia
Breast Milk	Opening such as anus or vagina Open wounds/sores Eyes

Healthy skin (i.e. without lesions or sores) acts as a barrier, therefore were HIV positive seminal fluid to be ejaculated onto the stomach of the other person, for example, there would be no risk of transmission (Lamore, Sandwell & Small 2006: 25).

HIV is an acronym for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. The word 'human' obviously connotes that this virus is inherent to human beings; HIV cannot be transmitted by mosquitoes as the virus dies once ingested by the blood-sucking insect (San Francisco AIDS Foundation website). Immunodeficiency relates to the fact that it causes a deficiency in the immune system. Finally, a "virus" as defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary is as follows:

> 2. any of a large group of submicroscopic infective agents that are regarded either as extremely simple microorganisms or as extremely complex molecules, that typically contain a protein coat surrounding an RNA or DNA core of genetic material but no semi-permeable membrane, that are capable of growth and multiplication only in living cells, and that cause various important diseases in humans, lower animals, or plants. [Merriam-Webster Dictionary website; San Francisco AIDS Foundation website]

The virus attacks the white blood cells, also known as CD4 or T-cells, which act as the immune system's front-line of defence. Once the virus has attached and copied itself roughly 10,000 times, the CD4 cell implodes. Therefore, if left untreated one's viral load will continue to rise as their CD4 white blood cell count will continue to decrease (ASO HIV 202 Workshop Training 2010).

Below are brief descriptions of the 5 basic phases in the reproduction of HIV:

1 Entry – the virus attaches itself to the CD4 receptor and integrates itself into the cell.
2 Reverse Transcription – is a conversion process where the virus 'unzips' itself and integrates itself into the nucleus of the CD4 cell.
3 Integration – at this stage the virus copies itself repeatedly within the cell's walls.
4 Assembly – the RNA of the cell is then recombined with the copied HIV strands.
5 Maturation and Budding – in the final stage the newly created HIV viruses leave their host cell and return to the blood stream, where they will continue to repeat the process.

About 10 billion new viral particles are produced daily in someone who is HIV-positive and not on treatment (Lafontaine 2008: 22). That is to say that someone who is not on treatment is guaranteed to progress towards and obtain AIDS at some point. AIDS is another acronym meaning Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome; 'syndrome' refers to a compilation of symptoms. When a seropositive person has a high viral load, with a very low level of white blood cells (usually under 200 per cubic mm of blood), and at least one opportunistic infection, their HIV becomes AIDS (Prévost & Perron 2000: 12). According to our training manual, it is important to remember that "HIV is the virus that attacks your immune system; AIDS is the illness that results" (Lamore, Sandwell & Small 2006: 23).

As I stress in the workshops that I give, one cannot 'catch AIDS'; meaning that someone who has AIDS can only ever transmit HIV. The terms are often used interchangeably during conversation, but it is important to remember that these are in fact two separate things. While having AIDS inherently means that the person has HIV, having HIV does not make the inverse true (Lafontaine 2008: 14). The HIV Educator at the organization where I volunteer informed me during a casual interview that it is actually possible to obtain AIDS, but then reverse the diagnosis by following a rigorous antiretroviral (ARV) treatment while simultaneously taking very good care of their health (ASO Training Workshop: 2010).

ARV medications inhibit the replication process from taking place at each of the five stages. Quite often people will follow what is known as tri-therapy: a combination of three different medications that target three different stages in the replication cycle to ensure the success of the regime. Generally speaking this tends to be the combination of reverse transcriptase inhibitors which target the steps two and three of the reproduction cycle blocking the HIV from 'unzipping itself'. The reverse transcriptase (NRTI or 'nukes') are paired with a protease inhibitor which stops the process of the viral strand from splitting up and being re-paired with CD4 RNA. (Prévost & Perron 2000 : 24). This ARV regime will never 'cure' someone of HIV, however if adherence is maintained they can live long and relatively healthy lives (ASO Training Workshop: 2010).

ASO Approach

Regarding the organization's approach to HIV education and prevention there was one thing that was abundantly clear to me from the very beginning and that can be summed up in two words: harm reduction. This organization does not preach abstinence to youth. Rather, they assume that teenagers are eventually going to have sex, if they're not already, and when they do they should be prepared with the necessary information to make choices that are right for them. From their

point of view it stands to reason that if a teenager is going to engage in sexual intercourse, that they should be prepared with the knowledge and skills needed to properly put on a condom, to negotiate boundaries and discuss consent with their partner, and about the consequences (both positive and negative) of engaging in sex.

Studies have shown that "comprehensive programs that support healthy sexual practices for sexually active teens have been shown to have positive behavioural effects" unlike abstinence focused programs (CATIE 2008: 31). However, for these programs to be particularly effective, they need to be implemented over the long term and consistently. (CATIE 2008: 31). Both young men (age 20 – 24) and women (age 15 – 24) are particularly at a risk of an HIV outbreak, due to their current 'risky' behaviour (i.e. not using a condom during intercourse), as well as the fact that they are the age group most affected by higher than average levels of Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea. The risk of catching HIV increases for women under the age of 20, as "their cervix has not fully developed. During this time, the protective tissues of their cervix are thinner, thereby increasing… vulnerability" (CATIE 2008; 30). These facts and statistics demonstrate a need for sexual health education in schools.

It is noteworthy to remark that 'my' HIV/AIDS focused organization is also very aware of the wording that it uses in its EP efforts. For example, my colleague is working on a project to encourage Men who have Sex with other Men (MSM) to get tested (for both HIV and other STIs) by offering incentives and rewards. Another volunteer and I had the task within the project to create or write sex tips that would encourage MSM's to get HIV tested. These sex tips will become part of a condom package that will also include a small package of personal lubricant, and that will be handed out at parties and events.

It was a harder process than I had originally anticipated. We had to pay attention to the wording; initially we had brainstormed ideas such as "keeping clean by getting tested". However, this obviously implies that those who are POZ (positive) are dirty, which was far from our intended message. Another example of a misrepresentation that we wanted to avoid is that one can only *catch* HIV, or rather one cannot *transmit* it to their sexual partner. This plays to the idea that each individual is responsible for their own sexual/personal health and does not put the responsibility solely on those who are seropositive (field notes, April 21st, 2010).

Here is an example of a positive sex-tip that we wrote:

> "Keep bath-time fun!
> You've had a great time at the bath-house! You met some cute guys and things got hot! Little reminder: Sex is the key factor in SEXually transmitted infections, so even if you've used a condom, getting tested is worthwhile. Then head back to the tubs for another round of pleasure!"

As discussed in a casual in-office conversation in early March, some of the people who work at the organization are also against the idea of "sero-sorting". That is to say that a person would choose to sleep with someone *only* if they thought that they were seronegative (or HIV negative). Equally, it could be the idea that one would opt to not use a condom *only* if they thought that the person was seronegative. Someone in the office argued that one can never really know one's HIV status with absolute certainty as it takes 6 months from exposure before a blood test would be able to confirm the serostatus of a person, and that during those six months it would be likely for that person to engage in sexual activity, thus recommencing a new 6 month waiting period. Therefore, those that serosort would be putting themselves at greater risk of catching HIV by not using a condom with someone who didn't know that they were HIV positive, than if they were to sleep with someone who knew they were seropositive, adhered to an ARV regime, and had a low viral load (field notes, March 3rd, 2010).

Working as an Educator

Working in Education and Prevention using the model presented by this organization has forced me to flip the way I thought about transmission and responsibility. It is important to remember to take charge of one's sexual health, instead of assuming that the other will do it for you. Having observed and facilitated HIV 101 workshops in youth group settings I was relieved to see that there was a desire for knowledge from those we were teaching. The students, in almost all cases, were eager to ask questions and listened with intent when we spoke. However, there wasn't simply a desire, but also a definite *need* for it. Both the students and the adults in charge of the groups had questions regarding transmission and misconstrued ideas. In one group in particular there was a large debate about the likelihood of getting HIV from

having a barber use a razor with someone who was HIV positive, and then shaving your head with it, which is highly unlikely due to the fact that by drying the liquid containing the HIV, the virus is "reduced by 90 to 99% within a few hours" (AVERTing HIV/AIDS website).

I remember in the first Safer Sex workshop I attended there was a sense of 'getting back to basics'. It seemed as if these teens (ages 15 – 17) weren't that informed on the fundamentals of human physiology and sex. In this case, there were also a lot of questions regarding consent. "Just get the girl drunk and then she'll sleep with you", was a comment that one boy made. These are loaded statements and they need to be unpacked by those in the field. I think it is perfectly okay to have misconceptions, but a large part of what makes it 'okay' is the ability to ask questions and find out the answers from reliable sources in a 'safe space'. Creating a 'safe space' is essential when working with people and sexual health education. It is done by respecting and listening to others, without judgement or ridicule.

A colleague of mine describes the apparent need for EP and how she creates a 'safe space' in an interview we had towards the end of May. She said:

> I live with 3 guys – my boyfriend and two other friends and it shocks me how little they know. For example, my one roommate asked if I was scared to start working here because I would be around people with HIV and might "catch" it. He then asked if my insurance would go up if I worked here because of the "risk". Another day it was "so you get HIV when you have unprotected sex with someone who as a different blood type, right?" That being said, all of the boys are super intelligent, university graduates, which is kind of scary to think that they know so little about HIV. They didn't learn about it at school. They didn't learn about it at a bar. Therefore, in my personal life, I just answer people's questions with a smile and without saying "oh god no, where'd ya hear that?!" I talk about my job a lot and what (our organization) does as a whole which also helps people feel like they can ask questions. [Interview, May 28th, 2010.]

I am still at the beginning of my role as an HIV Educator but what I feel is lacking, based on my experience in the EP field in Montreal, is the very human element that keeps seronegative individuals estranged from the realities of living with HIV. What I appreciate though is the frank curiosity people seem to have in relation to HIV. There are often comments

that begin with the statement "I've heard…" or "Is it true that…". As educators, we help demystify the world of HIV by providing information.

During the workshop training, we sat in a circle as we listened to stories about the experience of those living with HIV. There were tales of humility, but also of shame and embarrassment. "Why me? What did I do to deserve this?" was a question I remember one PHA recalling as he told his story about his horrible reactions to ARV treatment. Not everyone had the exact same outlook on life, some were definitely coping better than others, but it seemed to me that they had all been changed in some way by the experience.

This year I volunteered at the Canadian AIDS Society (CAS) Symposium that was held in Montreal this past March. There was one workshop on Saturday evening entitled "Survive to Thrive: Mapping Complex Journey with Multiple Loss" presented by Yvette Perreault, Anna Demetrakopolous, and Rick Julien. Yvette is one of the best grief counselors in Canada; she is based out of Toronto. She mentioned in the workshop that according to a survey they had conducted in the early 90s, one person loses an average of 156 people to AIDS in their lifetime. I couldn't even begin to image the kind of remorse experienced by someone who had lost 156 of their closest friends, one after another, throughout their lifetime.

Yet, somehow they manage. Perreault's group redesigned the process of grieving and mapped it out in an easy to follow chart. In their group discussion, which was held in a large basement suite at the Delta Hotel, group leaders and audience members discussed normalizing feelings. They used words like "holding" and "honouring" in reference to what to do with emotion. From my perspective as an observer, these seemed to be some of the most enlightened individuals I had met in a very long time. The following day, as I sat in the large banquet hall surrounded by hundreds of PHA, I didn't feel sorry for them but rather I felt inspired by their empowerment and sense of strength that they seemed to share.

Education and Prevention

I asked one of my co-workers what he thought Education and Prevention meant during an interview we had a few months later, and he replied:

> In my opinion, Education and Prevention in relation to HIV refers todemystifying the virus, breaking down barriers between those infected with HIV and those who are not, and forming allies within the community in an effort to reach a shared vision. When people are educated about the realities of HIV, it becomes much easier to empower them to protect themselves against transmission while remaining open to supporting and understanding those who are infected without judging. In this way, education, prevention, and support are closely linked. When people receive proper education surrounding HIV, they will be more likely to use protection in an effort to avoid getting the virus, and also be more likely to be tested. [Interview, May 26th, 2010.]

Along with my colleague, I think that the issue of creating allies is of utmost importance in order to humanize and support PHAs. However creating allies is also one of the biggest challenges that EP currently faces. By that I mean that there has been a lack of funding and attention in the media (Canadian Public Health Association 2005). "Over the past 10 years, Canadian Governments have spent less per capita on HIV than other developed countries that have achieved lower rates of infection (e.g. the UK and Australia)… HIV programs and services will always have to compete with other health concerns for limited resources" (Canadian Public Health Association 2005: 24).

When asked about what challenges my colleague thought EP faced she listed off a few: "lack of funding for new and creative programs, evolving at the same rate as technology, and HIV falling into the shadows in general, like right now cancer is in the limelight for the charity world" (field notes, May 26th, 2010). However, as ARV treatment continues to improve, as it has since the initial stages in the mid-80s, we need to continue our efforts to provide quality EP (Prévost & Perron 2000 : 22).

Elizabeth Pisani, featured on TED.com, makes a legitimate argument in her presentation entitled "Sex, drugs and HIV – let's get rational", which I quote here at length:

> We need to expand antiretroviral treatment as much as we can. What I am doing is calling into question those people who say 'more treatment is all the prevention we need'. That is simply not necessarily true. And I think we can learn a lot from the experience of gay men in rich countries, where treatment has been widely available for going on 15 years now. And what we've seen is, that actually, where condom rates were very, very high (the gay community responded very rapidly to HIV with extremely little help from Public Health Nerds, I would say), that condom use rate has come down dramatically since treatment.
>
> (There are) two reasons really, one is the assumption of "oh well, if he's infected he's probably on meds and his viral load is going to be low, so I am pretty safe". And the other thing is that people just aren't as scared of HIV as they were of AIDS, and rightly so. AIDS was a disfiguring illness that killed you and HIV is an invisible virus that makes you take a pill every day. … (There was) a dramatic increase in new infections in gay men a few years after treatment was released…
>
> What does that mean? It means that the combined effect of being less worried and having more virus out there in the population, more people living longer, healthier lives, more likely to be getting laid with HIV, is outweighing the effects of a lower viral load. … It means that we need to be doing more prevention the more treatment we have. Is that what's happening? No and I call it the "compassion conundrum" …
>
> What's happening really, is that people are unable quite to bring themselves to put in good sexual and reproductive health services for sex workers, unable quite to be giving needles to junkies. But, once they've gone from being "transgressive" (sic) people whose behaviour we don't want to condone to being AIDS victims, we come over all compassionate and buy them incredibly expensive drugs for the rest of their lives. It doesn't make any sense from a public health point of view. [Pisani 2010: 13:41].

According to Pisani, it is in our government and the population's best interest to take a harm reduction approach to HIV education and prevention, while offering improved EP alongside better ARV treatments. Both are going to be needed to obtain the "United Nations Millennium Development Goal to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015" (Canadian Public Health Association 2005: 43).

In Conclusion

Becoming involved in the HIV EP field has been an inspiration. HIV is not simply about EP, but it is also about criminalization, humanization, ARV treatments, safety in the workplace and at home, sexuality and sexual health, equal opportunities, solidarity, empower-

ment, community, etc. There is a definite need for EP, not only in the public health sector, but also in schools, offices and at home. We need to augment the amount of sustained EP available in secondary schools, but also to improve the quality and presentation of the information being offered at a large scale. We need to continue until HIV is eradicated and is no longer stigmatized, and even then we should maintain a presence at the forefront of the collective consciousness.

NOTES

[1] For confidentiality purposes the ASO that was the site of my ethnographic fieldwork will remain anonymous; as such sources from this site will be referenced accordingly.

[2] One's 'serostatus' refers to their HIV status. Seropositive indicates that a person is HIV positive; equally, seronegative indicates that one is HIV negative. Finally, serodiscordant refers to two individuals or populations with opposing serostatuses.

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Mononormativity and the Bedroom Closet:
Negotiating Consensual Nonmonogamy in Non-Communal Settings

Valerie Webber

Introduction

In the Western world, monogamy is the prevailing relational pattern. It is seen as the only acceptable means of being intimate and is regulated by *mononormativity*; "the dominant discourse of monogamy which is reproduced and perpetuated in everyday conversation and saturates mainstream media depictions" (Barker & Ritchie 2006: 584). Like other social regulators, mononormativity implicitly establishes rules of normalcy. It makes itself unseen by way of naturalizing itself to the point that is becomes insidiously omnipresent. We do not recognize the pressure it exerts on our lives precisely because it is so constantly present.

Despite its being so insidious, mononormativity impacts the lives of people in alternative relationship styles, and a growing body of work has looked at the lives of nonmonogamous people. However, these studies have tended to focus on people for whom sexual non-exclusivity forms a major part of their relational identification. By focusing on the more visible nonmonogamists such as avid lifestylers[1] or community-oriented polyamourists, the existing literature fails to recognize those who are engaged in consensual nonmonogamy on a more casual and individual basis, those for whom nonmonogamy is not the primary aspect of their relational identification.

My research, based on field work and interviews with people in nonmonogamous relationships, looks to uncover some of the ways in which mononormativity is felt by those who fall outside of its framework, and in what ways it is or is not influential in their lives.

Nonmonogamy as a Research Topic

Work on nonmonogamous partnerships is not unheard of, but is limited in many respects. Much of the writing that exists takes the form of instructional 'self-help' books geared towards people considering opening their relationships up. The key themes of such work are love, self-awareness, friendship, consensus, honesty, communication, consent, and conflict management. Influential texts of this nature include *The Ethical Slut* (1997) by Catherine A. Liszt and Donnie Easton; *Polyamory: The New Love Without Limits* (1997) by Deborah Taj Anapol; *Redefining Our Relationships* (2002) by Wendy-O Matik; and most recently *Opening Up* (2008) by Tristan Taormino. As Taormino points out, rarely do "people talk about the specifics of their situations" in most of these writings (xxi), but rather tend to speak vaguely about idealized relationships. Melita Noël (2006) additionally feels that such texts are elitist, and exclude many people by ignoring the impact of gender, sexuality, class, race, nationality, ethnicity, language, age and ability upon nonmonogamous lifestyles, stating "[polyamorous texts] do not practically provide methods for realizing these abundance [sic] models for all people, but rather just a select few" (604).

In terms of academic writings on nonmonogamy, existing publications are rare (Haritaworn, Lin & Klesse 2006: 517); however there is a growing literature that tends to focus on polyamoury. Terminology can be interpreted in many ways but 'polyamoury' tends to denote "a form of relationship where it is possible, valid and worthwhile to maintain (usually long-term) intimate and sexual relationships with multiple partners simultaneously" (Haritaworn, Lin & Klesse 2006: 515). Other works look at organized swinger and lifestyle communities (i.e. Frank 2008). My review did not turn up any academic work on more subtle or less community based nonmonogamy, likely because research is much more easily conducted among groups that self-identify and form communities, making themselves visible and accessible to researchers. It was this lack of interrogation and understanding of the 'in-between' state of those who are not monogamous but also do not identify and centre their lives on polyamoury that encouraged me to investigate this subject.

Methods

The project utilized semi-structured interviews, participant observation of events and informal discussions with club-goers. Informal discussions and observations were held at lifestyle events, and while that data does not appear in the findings below, they helped to structure and guide my research questions. More formally I engaged in five interviews comprising seven people (three individuals and two couples). The interviews were lightly structured by a few guiding questions but were left open to people's specific interests. Four interviews were done face to face and audio recorded; one was done via IM (instant messaging) and the text file was saved. Interviews lasted one to two hours. Five interviews were conducted in English, one in French, and one in both English and French. All translations were conducted by the author, and all names have been changed.

In terms of demographics, two participants are Francophone, one equally Franco and Anglo, and four Anglophone; one is from and lives in France, one a French native living in Québec, two originally from Québec, two from Eastern Canada and one from Western Canada. Ages range from 27 to 60. All participants are Caucasian and middle class. This sample homogeneity is often a problem found within sexuality research (Klesse 2006: 566) and is in part due to my own privileged positioning as white, educated, and middle class. More work on nonmonogamy and other sexual countercultures needs to be conducted with less dominant or privileged social groups.

The research adopts a multi-sited approach. As is the focus of this project, many of those involved in nonmonogamy are in no way part of a nonmonogamous community such as a polyamourous household or circle, a swinger's club, or an online forum for meeting new partners. Rather, many are only 'out' to close friends and lovers. On the other hand, those involved more heavily in the 'lifestyle' do have a community, but due to its 'deviant' nature it must find its expression in the private realm either via home parties, members-only clubs or thematic events, as "entry into the public realm (is) very difficult for those whose sexual lives are judged 'immoral'" (Hubbard 2001: 55). For these reasons, I utilized the multi-sited approach of following threads, connections, and webs of relations. As Gupta and Ferguson (2007) point out, anthropology sometimes adheres to "a seemingly unproblematic division of space" that sees culture as occupying "'naturally' discontinuous spaces" (337). More realistically, when engaged in multi-sited fieldwork the researchers "go where their research takes them to create an emergent field and study object" (Robben 2007: 331). Connections emerged between individuals as well as events, creating a unique web of relations to unravel.

Findings

Findings have been grouped into five categories; *Redefining the Terms*, which involves reworking common concepts of love and intimacy; *The Bedroom Closet*, which explores the impact mononormativity has on nonmonogamous couples, *Growing From the Ground Up* expresses the personal, sexual and relational benefits couples have gained from nonmonogamy; *It's Natural* looks at the discourse produced by participants of nonmonogamy as more natural or realistic; and finally *We're Not Rules People*, explains the way rules, if any, are established to organize the couple.

Redefining the Terms

The power of language to shape our realities can not be understated, for "our identity, desires, relationships and emotions are shaped by the culture in which we live [and] we come to understand ourselves in terms of the concepts that are available to us" (Barker & Ritchie, 2006: 585). In a society where very few models of healthy, consensual nonmonogamy exist, work is often undertaken to create representative language and to redefine relational concepts such as faithfulness, cheating, and love. Building new languages, which better suit the lives of nonmonogamous people, is key to creating a space in which to live and speak about themselves.

While creating such a 'safe space' with language is in many ways liberating and self-affirming, it can also create a hierarchical scale of nonmonogamous formations. Certain veins of polyamorous discourse focus on romantic love and deemphasize sexuality, and so risk becoming assimilated into normative monogamous discourse. This gives polyamory an intriguing place at "the conjecture of diverse normative and counter-normative discourses on sex and relationships" (Klesse 2006: 579). Thus for those nonmonogomists who do not identify with polyamoury there is an even greater difficulty to have their relationship style viewed as responsible and valid.

Interestingly, some of the couples interviewed did not identify themselves as nonmonogamous per se. Fabien (Oct. 30 2009) and his wife have had secondary lovers for much of their 43 year long relationship, yet he has never considered himself to be in a "*couple ouvert*" (open couple, referring to a couple open to other lovers); rather he considers his couple quite simply as "*un vieux couple*" (an old couple). The fact that they spend time and sleep with other people is not a major source of how they identify their relationship. He jokes that they are "*plutôt des gens assez fidèles*" (we are more or less very faithful people). For Fabien, fidelity does not mean sexual exclusivity but rather an agreement not to manipulate or lie to the other person. Likewise, Merv and Amber (Dec. 22 2009) do not identify highly with the fact that they may sleep with other people; this does not disrupt their interpretation of monogamy as living and loving in a contained unit. Similar sentiments were found with Violet and Luke (Feb. 2 2010); Violet preferred the vague definition of 'open couple' while Luke found it distasteful due to its association with swinging or a youthful 'phase'. For these three couples, defining their relationship along nonmonogamous terms was not very important for or reflective of their lives because extradyadic partnerships were neither a significant pursuit nor a disruption from the primary couple.

The redefining of other concepts, consciously or not, is part of the process of negotiating nonmonogamy. Merv defined faithfulness not as

sexual exclusivity but as "being faithful to wanting to work through everything." Chloe[2], who has been in a "hella nonmonogamous" relationship for ten years with her husband Pete, involving both sexual encounters and more long term secondary partners, noted that her concept of love itself has changed since becoming more involved with a secondary partner during the same period that her husband also had a secondary partner of significance:

> even my idea of what 'true love' was changed dramatically this year. I used to think it meant giving up anything to be with another person and now I think it's just loving another human being completely and wanting the best for them. Even if that isn't you. (Jan. 5 2010)

Likewise, the definition of 'cheating' for the couples interviewed had very little to do with sexual contact itself, but was rather determined by dishonesty and manipulation. For most cheating was understood as when one person was secretive about their extradyadic encounters; provided everything was honestly discussed either prior or after sex happened, or that crushes were discussed openly, no such transgression had occurred.

By reworking and redefining relational concepts such as faithfulness, love, and cheating, people engaged in nonmonogamous relationships challenge the idea that monogamy has a monopoly on the definition of these terms. They stake a claim on the parameters we use to define our relationships as healthy, and in doing so, challenge the judgements or stigma caused by misunderstandings of nonmonogamy.

The Bedroom Closet

While relational identification and redefining these concepts is an internal process, it is by no means conducted within a vacuum. The social pressure to be monogamous and the misinformation many people have about nonmonogamy has an impact on those involved in such relationships. Indeed, even Luke's hesitancy to identify as 'open' relates to how he feels this will be misread by outsiders. Much like the experience of queer people or sexual 'deviants', there is the very real issue of 'coming out' as nonmonogamous, and dealing with various reactions or interpretations. In her study of 126 nonmonogamous people, Tristan Taormino (2008) found a great range of 'outness' among participants. While 74% were out to all friends, only 21% were out to all friends, all family and all coworkers. Taormino (2008) writes:

> …all nonmonogamous relationships are alternative relationships. They contradict most people's expectations, and many people are against (them) for supposedly moral or religious reasons, or due to just plain ignorance and bigotry. Some people choose not to come out because of the stigma of nonmonogamous relationships and the fear of criticism or rejection… (230)

However, reasons that people *do* choose to come out are the ability to be open about all areas of one's life and the important people around them, to honour their commitment to honesty, or to educate people who are misinformed about nonmonogamy (229).

Generally speaking, all participants took some discretion in how and with whom they disclosed their relationship status. One telling example is that in organizing my interview with Merv and Amber, they asked to be interviewed in private, stating in email "Perhaps you wouldn't mind doing the interview at our place? That way we can be a bit more candid and comfortable, with no nosy [town residents] overhearing" (Dec. 16 2009). The fact that they are in a small town with a fair amount of gossip plays a major role in disclosure. They tend not to actively seek partners because of this, and just wait for people to "blow their way." In part this is due to bad experiences from the past. Amber notes that when some friends discovered she and Merv were open, "many people didn't understand… they jumped to some horrendous conclusions like that we were breaking up or that we weren't happy with each other." She continues, "I wouldn't want my colleagues knowing, the kinds of things that they would think. I wish it were different!" This kind of discretion was a common theme, and most people operated their disclosure on a 'need to know' basis, explaining the nature of their relationship to close friends, potential lovers, and partners. Chloe and I wrote about the issue:

> Chloe: I think it just comes down to who needs to know. Like, I would be 'out' to people at work, if they asked questions about it, or it was pertinent to the conversation.
> Valerie: Would you say that that social norm – mononormativity – ever affects your relationship? Either on an internal level or in how people relate to you?
> Chloe: Yeah. I would say that. For example, Pete's mom is the one person who doesn't know about our relationship

> status and it makes him feel a bit disconnected from her and he wants to tell her eventually. But, it'll change the way she sees us/our relationship

Aside from Pete's mother, all of their friend's are aware that nonmonogamy is "something they do", and it is generally approved of. Nevertheless, there can and does exist some moral strain:

> Chloe: I have heard a lot recently that it's not fair that I have two men who love me so much in my life from my single chick friends cause they don't even have one [and] I do feel a bit unworthy sometimes to be so appreciated and loved.
> Valerie: Do those kind of comments make you feel guilty?
> Chloe: Yeah. For real.

Children can be a significant influence upon disclosure. For Violet and Luke who have two young children, there was some disagreement about whether or not they would explain to their children that they are nonmonogamous. Luke expressed concern that children, candidly speaking amongst playmates, could lead to discrimination from schools or other parents. Violet on the other hand says she hopes she will be close enough to her children to speak openly about it, and would like to be able to provide a model of nonmonogamy so as to pass on the message that "*la monogamie n'est pas un but on soi*" (monogamy is not an end in itself).

For those who have been involved in very long term nonmonogamy, the historical moral context is very relevant to how comfortable they feel about sharing their status. Arthur (Jan. 6 2010) for example states that were his mother or sister to find out, he "wouldn't hear the end of it" because "they're from the old school"; his family's generational politics make it difficult to disclose. Likewise, Fabien felt at ease in the late 60's and 70's because that period in France (where he was born and lives) was much more liberal and open minded. He did not hide his relationship style from anyone. This has since changed, and now he would not disclose to new acquaintances for he has "*ni honte ni fierté particulière, c'est ma vie… mais je fais très attention*" (I am neither ashamed nor proud, it's my life… but I am very careful). In this case the fact that his nonmonogamy is not a major part of his identity plays a role, as does the moral and political climate which he feels has grown more conservative with time.

In sum, nonmonogamy requires a certain level of discretion for participants, which may be influenced by where they live, the political climate, the openness and understanding of their friends and family, the presence of children, and how important their nonmonogamy is to their identity.

Growing From the Ground Up

Despite the possible discomfort or consequences of being open about their nonmonogamy, many of the participants felt that nonmonogamy had been a catalyst for personal growth, both individually and as a couple. Chloe writes:

> I think a big part of it for me/us is personal growth because we have been together for 10 years; it's a way we can be our own people and develop more as individuals. Interacting with people closely or in intimate ways teaches you shit loads about yourself, and others, and the world.

The idea of personal growth and discovering one's ideal relationship style was key for many participants who had not enjoyed past monogamous relationships. Luke had had "*de la misère*" (difficulty, unease) with monogamy, and Merv realized that "life as a serial monogamist had not been all that good to me and I had a lot more work to do." Amber agreed that her consensually nonmonogamous experiences have been a sort of awakening, "I have always known about myself that I'm not very good with, you know, like just one sex partner, but I've also felt that because people aren't educated enough about how to love more than one person it can be very hurtful." Opening up the relationship creates a space to start this (re)education.

This personal growth is often related directly to sexuality. For example, some of the couples expressed that an open relationship allowed them to fulfill desires with the same sex. The issue of sexuality is highly relevant, for, while not a universal "bisexuality often brings nonmonogamy up as an issue" (Trnka 1992: 106 c.f. McLean 2004: 96) in order "to reconcile one's attractions to both men and women with the desire for a committed relationship" (McLean 2004: 96). For Chloe, who has always identified as bisexual, the possibility of never being with other women was a "deal breaker." For Arthur as well, whose wife is bisexual, their swinging allows her to express that part of her desire.

Orientation is not the only way in which sexual expression influences relational openness. For Amber the sexual dynamic of their

couple was a major factor in the decision to become open. She expresses some trouble being sexual, and says:

> Amber: so part of what drives us to allow for more flexibility is that um, I, I need to expand, I need to find ways to expand and I need to allow Merv to have some freedom to expand because I can't help him expand all the ways that he probably should be able to, and that I guess, I guess in a way is hard for me to sort of accept that I'm, I can't be everything, but it's also a relief that I don't *have* to be everything for Merv.
> Merv: It gives a chance to, y'know, in new [sexual] combinations it gives a chance to be more playful, to have a little more fun cause that's important when you want to expand.

Merv feels we have inherited a sort of insanity around sex, and for him the system of accepted rules doesn't make sense. Their relationship dynamic "gives a chance to imprint new ways of being", to become sane. "*Penetrating* new territory! *Probing* the boundaries!" jokes Amber.

As Klesse (2006) points out, love, friendship, and honesty are major tenets of nonmonogamous philosophy. Accordingly, clearer communication and stronger trust are some of the major benefits participants attribute to their relationship styles; indeed the mere act of discussing nonmonogamous options necessitates a very high level of communicating one's needs, desires, boundaries and fears in a way that brings partners closer. Whereas "agreeing to be monogamous can be relatively clear-cut, provided both partners agree, of course… negotiating an open relationship can be more challenging" (McLean 2004: 91). Chloe, in speaking about the initial talks she had with Pete when they first opened their relationship up after one year together, stated:

> We definitely talked everything to death. I have always kinda felt like the keys to our relationship being as strong as it is is communication, having separate goals, and having sex with other people. When we started dating separately it was kinda a great adventure we were both on together.

Luke noted that while their open relationship does not "necessitate" communication (as disclosure to each other is not a necessary facet of their extradyadic encounters) is does nevertheless "facilitate" more communication. Amber feels that their relationship style "managed to make Merv trust me in a way he never would have been able to before." Merv agrees, "I've never had an easy time trusting people… this has maybe been the only way that we could have been brought together." In these examples we see how the communication required of nonmonogamy has strengthened relationships in ways monogamy may not have achieved.

It's Natural

A theme among participants was a discourse of monogamy as not being 'natural' or realistic, and indeed they may be right according to David P. Barash and Judith Eve Lipton (2001), who via a discussion of biology and procreative techniques that is beyond the scope of this project, argue that polygyny is in fact the most biologically and evolutionary natural state for humans, with a single man mated to multiple women[3]. Their review of anthropological studies shows that in many societies polygyny and a number of other sexual organizational structures are the norm; monogamy is by no means universal, and when it does exist as the norm it is not always enforced (148-149). While Barash and Lipton do not disregard monogamy as a foolish concept, relenting that "human inclinations may be able to fit whatever matrimonial pattern happens to exist in the society they happen to experience" (153), they also note that monogamy is often adhered to out of comfort and reassurance, akin to "a womb with a view" (190) and suggest that because infidelity is "the baseline condition" of humanity, fidelity "is not natural, (therefore) it is not easy" (190-191).

It has also been stated that monogamy is not natural for what it demands of highly complex human relationships, for "the ideology of monogamy forces us to 'fit into neat, well-defined categories which don't allow for the complexity and reality of the diverse ways in which human beings relate'" (Robinson 1997: 145 c.f. McLean 2004: 85).

While not necessarily citing biological imperatives, many participants referred to their decision to be non-monogamous as following a logic of naturalness. Merv stated that "we're just trying to be sane reasonable human beings, have a little bit of fun and not have things that really don't need to fuck up our relationship fuck up our relationship because the TV says they should." Merv and Amber went on to state the illogical foundation of serial monogamy:

> Merv: living in a partnership involves trying to form something that is bigger than the sum of its parts, and you don't want to restart that every four or five years, and you espe-

> cially don't want to try and restart that just because after five years with someone they, y'know, wanted to hop in the sack with somebody… it's just, it's a *silly* idea. So I think faithfulness is being faithful to wanting to work through everything, that if one of us does sleep with somebody and for some reason it stings that time that we're not going to fall into that pattern that you see on TV, *oh we have to break up now*, we'll work through it.
>
> Amber: Have you ever noticed that? That there's a lot of that on Tel… on TV and in movies; where one person has an affair or something and the other person says *well then we have to break up*. There's no exploration of why they think that… why that means that you have to break up. I think that's a really big part of our culture and it's totally illogical. You can't even have a fling, you can't even get a *blow job* because it means you have to break up! It's a weird thing that we don't question in our culture.

Likewise, Arthur said that nonmonogamy fits his lifestyle because human beings have a sexual drive, and open relationships allow for a greater expression and experience of this innate desire. He had attempted two monogamous marriages prior, thinking his desire for variety would simply go away with the wedding vows. When he met his current wife and started exploring swinging, he "realized that's who I am, that's who I always was, that's why I was never happy."

Luke and Violet, who had decided very early in their relationship that they wanted to start a family, felt that to commit to only one sexual partner for what would inevitably be a very long-term relationship was simply not "*réaliste*" (realistic).

Such discussions of naturalness were not restricted to purely sexual encounters, but also to the possibility of loving and desiring more than one person at a time. Fabien, recounts his and his wife's astonishment early in their relationship "*que le désir pouvait passer ailleurs que dans notre couple, et en même temps l'amour qui était construit était fort*" (that desire could extend beyond our couple, while at the same time we had constructed a very strong love for each other).

Chloe also alluded to the unnaturalness of monogamy, writing:

> I kinda think it's (monogamy) bullshit, of course. It's just a habit that society has formed and people kinda stick with 'cause they don't know anything different. But I also am not opposed to the idea of being with only one person forever…
>
> I really feel like I figured out what love was this year. Like, to just want a person to be completely themselves and not hold them back. I think that's a big part of nonmonogamy for me... I like the idea of nonomongamy as rebellion even though I think it's probably more natural than what our society thinks relationships should be.

Referring to proposed conditions of human sexuality, illogical social norms, as well as personal and situational inclinations, participants often explained the need for and/or the success of their open relationships upon an argument of naturalness, realism, or logic, which flies in the face of mononormative assumptions that monogamy is the only 'natural' and reasonable way to experience a loving couple.

We're Not Rules People

For many, part of the process of creating an open relationship is the setting of certain boundaries, rules, or guidelines (McLean 2004: 91). In accordance with the idea that monogamy is not natural, often discussion of what guidelines had been set down was embedded in a discourse of 'common sense', the idea being that such rules were obvious, or in essence, more naturally met than monogamy itself. For most couples it is also important that regulations are "custom-tailored" to the specific needs of the people involved, as there is no one way to operate such a relationship (Taormino 2008: 121). Unlike strict monogamy, there is no one pre-established model for the functioning of nonmonogamy, and people are free to create highly personalized ways of being.

When asked what guidelines they had established in their relationship, Amber stated "we're not rules people", however, there are a few underlying tendencies, such as trying to engage in group sex rather than sex on the side. But the foremost of these rules is abstract and blunt, being quite simply: "don't fuck it up." Rules are negotiable and flux over time as issues wax and wane, but the overriding assumption is that one can discern, without clear protocol, how not to disrupt the couple by drawing on the basic building blocks of honesty, communication and respect. This is often the case in nonmonogamous relationships, where rules are built as problems arise. Rule making is a continual process, and eases as boundaries are crossed and then redefined. As

Amber pointed out, "we've been through a couple of fires with it so it's not quite as difficult now."

For Fabien as well, rule making has always been a process, created case by case, and minimal in rigidity. Honesty was a guiding theme; he and his wife agreed that it is not always necessary to share every gritty detail, but simply not to lie or be dishonest. Like the abstract nature of Merv and Amber's "don't fuck it up" rule, for Fabien and his wife love is the guiding principle. They have confidence in their relationship, and they are proud that there is this very strong love that binds them together and will see them through any potential hazards.

For other couples, the rules were more specific. Arthur and his wife for example, had some hard and fast rules, such as keeping the sexual encounters unemotional and short term, staying in the same room while swinging with another couple, agreeing upon the couple and making sure they are all mutually attracted to each other, and one of the most important – engaging in safer sex. Condom use was expressed as being absolutely essential, and interestingly Arthur was the only participant to express this. Merv did mention "don't get a disease" as a rule and Amber interjected, "that's never been a rule! You're just trying to make rules up," to which he replied "well, it's a good idea!"

For some couples, rules became progressively relaxed and abstract as time went on, trust was established, and boundaries became either less relevant or unconsciously clearer. For example, Chloe and Pete had a number of specific rules in the earlier years of their marriage such as "Love me the most. Disclose everything (even embarrassing details). No anal. Make them work for it. Hook a brother up… But now," she writes, "basically anything goes." The gender of lovers also played a role, as these rules were specific to Chloe's encounters with men, whereas she "was always allowed to do whatever [she] wanted with chicks." It is not uncommon for rules to be gender specific when members of a nonmonogamous couple are bisexual (McLean 2004: 92)

While the above shows that some couples create strict rules and some more abstract, there are also cases of couples making no rules at all. Violet and Luke, for example, stated that they have never discussed or created any rules for their non-monogamous situation. Violet states:

> *Ça sert à rien de mettre des règles avant, parce que les règles c'est le contraire de l'ouverture… pour moi c'est… mon postulat de base c'est on est libre, l'autre personne ne m'appartient pas, elle est son propre agent et si elle fait quelque chose qui me plait pas je vais lui dire, que ça soit coucher avec ma voisine ou ne pas sortir des poubelles.*
>
> It makes no sense to create rules, because rules are the opposite of openness… for me it's… my main principle is that we are free, the other person does not belong to me, they are their own agent and if they do something that makes me unhappy I will tell them, whether it's sleeping with my neighbour or not taking out the garbage.

The mere idea of creating rules in this case would be counter-intuitive to the whole purpose of nonmonogamy. No explicit rules were discussed, and disclosure of extradyadic sex was not required. Rather, Violet notes, "*on deal avec la situation si elle se present*" (we deal with situations as they come up). However, I did notice Violet and Luke referring to hypotheticals such as "I don't think we would ever…" and so am left with the sense that unspoken ideas stemming from similar expectations, desires and needs do indeed guide their couple, and if an issue arises it is spoken of and integrated into this set of principles.

Thus, over all, couples often moved from specific rules to more abstract ones, relying upon common sense, respect, and honesty to guide their way. Love and commitment were cited as ample resources from which to work from.

Conclusion

Nonmonogamy takes on a vast variety of forms. The more studied styles of nonmonogamy such as swinging and polyamoury are enlightening, but they do little to reveal the intricacies of non-monogamous couplings of a less political or communal nature. Couples who identify less with their status as nonmonogamous are made invisible by their lack of community affiliation and their outside appearance as 'normal' monogamous couples. Because they are less bounded by or influenced by communal codes of conduct, these couples are quite free to define and organize their relationships in a highly personalized way. Despite the fact that there are few models of nonmonogamy for people to refer to, especially those who are not involved in the more popular lifestyle or polyamoury, common themes do indeed emerge. These common trends are found to be effective means of managing such relationships. It may be argued that

these themes emergebecause the nonmonogamous model is a response to commonly perceived failings of monogamy and common means of correcting those failings.

Further research on less visible nonmonogamists would be enriching, in particular something is to be gained by interrogating how such nonmonogamy is felt by people in non-heterosexual couples or when intersected with issues of race, age, class, children and ability. It should be noted that in my research I did not uncover any significant differences between men and women's relation to and experience of their relationships except for the impact of motherhood; Violet noted that when her children were still breast-feeding, she felt much less free to pursue extradyadic sexual encounters as she was no longer the exclusive agent of her body. Further exploration of such gender divides in nonmonogamy would be valuable.

Part of what makes monogamy such a difficult norm to confront is its insidiousness. Nonmonogamy is only acknowledged when one is confronted with highly visible community or club oriented versions; groups which are easier to 'other' than seemingly 'normal' couples that appear on the outside as engaging in socially sanctioned monogamy. This illusion maintains the appearance that monogamy is the sole expression of intimacy, minus a few sexual 'deviants' safely sequestered in the swinger's club or hippie commune. However, despite appearances and more often than we may think, couples are in fact engaging in non-normative relationship styles. By illuminating the lives of those who are attempting and succeeding at alternative nonmonogamous relationship styles, we may uncover monogamy's monopoly as a tenuous and fragile one after all.

NOTES

[1] Speaking of those in the 'lifestyle' generally refers to people involved in nightlife and other events devoted to sexual liberation, often including consensual nonmonogamy such as swinging, as well as burlesque performances, dancing, and other kinky endeavors.

[2] It should be noted that my interview with Chloe was done via MSN, therefore there are some stylistic differences to her quotations, often interspersed with my own typed interjections. Some typographical errors have been corrected with her consent in order to ease comprehension for the reader.

[3] It is always important to view ostensibly 'objective' science through its appropriate cultural lens. While 'chicken/egg' discussions are difficult to determine definitively, it is essential to consider stereotypes regarding male and female sexuality as both reflective of *and* influential of 'scientific' findings.

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