

SOJOURNERS  
UNDERGRADUTE  
JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY

Volume 10 | 2018



**Published by the UBC Sociology Students' Association (SSA) of the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.**

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Sojourners: Undergraduate Journal of Sociology is a peer- and faculty-reviewed journal published annually by the Sociology Students' Association of the University of British Columbia. Our mandate is to provide a venue for the publication of outstanding undergraduate writing. Submissions are accepted in the fall of each year. Information regarding submissions, journal sales, and more is available on our website. For more detailed information about manuscript submission, please contact us.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Neil Guppy for his support and editorial workshop.

**The UBC sociology department** main office for their on-going assistance.

**THE FACULTY AND GRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AT UBC** for being staunch supporters of this journal, and for generously donating their time, expertise, and enthusiasm to our endeavor. Thank you to Dr. Amy Hanser and the Francisco Duina Scholarship selection committee for reviewing nominees and choosing this year's winner.

**THE UBC SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION**, which continues to see the value in providing undergraduate students with an opportunity to refine and showcase academic work, whether as authors or editors, thank you for ten years of unconditional support.

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:** Selina, Curtis, Kacey, Alex, Torun, Jessica, Siqi, Esmée: you are a group of talented editors without whose hard work this volume would not have been possible. Thank you to Susan Holmes for your time and help with InDesign, whom without this volume would be incomplete.

UBC's Point Grey (Vancouver) campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the **xʷməθkʷəy̓əm** (Musqueam) First Nations. While we are grateful for both the opportunity to publish this journal, we recognize the ongoing injustices caused by the continued occupation and reflect on much of our team's presence as visitors and settlers on this land.



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Dear Readers,

Sojourners is proud to celebrate its 10th volume where we take pride in advancing the bright ideas of undergraduate students in the social sciences. As the name of our journal suggests, our articles will take you on a journey towards topics that currently exist in liminal spaces. To be in transition between social norms, boundaries and spaces is at the core of our sociological inquiry aimed at understanding experiences in their uncertainty. Such liminality is inherently a part of studying our ever-evolving social world - one that requires accepting the fluidity of social interactions between people and their environment. While sojourning to places involves literal temporality, we must also recognize the endurance of our learning and memory of experiences beyond the spaces we interact with.

Between 2017 and 2018 we witnessed significant examples of complex social issues unfold. Our papers address prominent concerns to social inequalities that will make you ponder on your own involvement with everyday interactions and civic engagement. In this volume, Izani interrogates how portrayals of the Syrian refugee crisis inform ideas of Canadian identity, while Septembre investigates the attainment levels and perceptions of education among indigenous Peruvians in Japura. Ng will take you on a walk through the landscapes of Vancouver, Canada and questions the figure of the flâneur. Rocco explores the connections between motherhood and fashion, and Loh delves into the complex negotiations that maids in Singapore face between their intimate lives and institutional constraints. Ghosh unearths the underrepresented discourses of Indigenous voices by re-centering their narrative to understand mobilization against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Lastly, MacKenzie gives voice to the painful stories of sexual assault at Dalhousie University, Canada. All these papers share in common a critical outlook on controversial social issues that will inspire readers to question their own identities, categories, and social spaces.

Sincerely,



Andy Holmes  
Editor-in-Chief  
*Sojourners*



Emma Russo  
Editor-in-Chief  
*Sojourners*

# **VOLUME 10**

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2018



## Education Levels and Perceptions of Education in Japura, Peru

Stephanie Septembre

*Walla Walla University*

### ABSTRACT

Research has shown a major socioeconomic gap between indigenous and non-indigenous populations of Peru. Disparities in education appear to be a major factor responsible for this gap. In particular, indigenous Peruvians are less likely to graduate from high school and college than members of the non-indigenous population. This study seeks to evaluate the attainment levels and perceptions of education among indigenous Peruvians. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the Quechua village of Japura, Peru, to examine the role of education in this community. Results revealed that education is believed to be very important and often equated with life opportunities, such as employment, access to health care, and increased negotiating power both within and outside of the community. Despite their positive perception of education, participants had received little education and indicated that a higher-quality education must be made more accessible to rural communities like Japura. [TH1]

### INTRODUCTION

Although Peru has one of the largest indigenous populations in Latin America, with a proportion ranging from 15.7-74.8%, indigenous Peruvians have been systematically discriminated against and excluded since the arrival of Spanish colonialism in the 16th century (Pasquier-Doumer & Risso Brandon, 2015). Indigenous populations have limited access to human capital, basic services, infrastructure, productive land, and the financial market, which im-

pedes their ability to provide for themselves and their children. Disparities in education appear to be a major factor responsible for this gap as indigenous Peruvians are less likely to graduate from high school and college than members of the non-indigenous population.

This study seeks to examine education levels and perceptions of education among indigenous Peruvians, specifically among the Quechua community of Japura in Cusco, Peru. Quechua people make up the largest indigenous group in Peru, primarily inhabiting the central and southern highlands, and the Quechua language is the most widely-spoken indigenous language in the country. Through qualitative interviews with community members of Japura, this research examines such factors as education levels of men and women, accessibility to education, the importance and effect of education, and perceptions of the Peruvian education system. By examining individuals' experiences and perceptions, this research provides insight into factors associated with low levels of educational attainment among indigenous Peruvians.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Education promoting literacy and other Western forms of knowledge was not available to any indigenous groups until the mid-20th century, and formal education among indigenous Peruvians has only become widespread in the past few decades (Ames, 2012). According to Laszlo (2002), indigenous individuals with higher levels of education have greater diversity in sources of income and, in general, a higher income than indigenous individuals with less education. Having a high-school education is generally not enough to significantly influence an indigenous individual's socioeconomic status; a university degree appears to be necessary to drastically increase earnings.

Despite the potential economic returns of receiving a higher education, dropout rates in rural, indigenous areas of Peru have been notoriously high during secondary school. Only 41% of Quechua-speaking individuals have completed secondary education and only 10.2% of indigenous peoples have continued on to higher education as compared to 70% and 25.6% respectively of non-indigenous people (Pasquier-Doumer & Risso Brandon, 2015). According to Pal (2004), whether a child drops out or remains in school is also associated with the negotiating power of the child at home, whether the child attended public or private school, and the overall success

of the child in primary school. Indigenous children with dependent siblings or parents with low levels of education are also more likely to drop out of school by young adulthood (Garavito, 2015; Pal, 2004).

Peru has been largely successful in providing universal primary school education, but rural, indigenous schools typically have fewer resources; and students are less likely to perform at their grade level (Ames, 2012; Cueto et al., 2012). Rural schools, which many indigenous children attend, are less likely to have libraries or computer laboratories (Cueto et al., 2012). Likewise, they may lack electricity, running water, and sewage; this lack of resources has been shown to have a negative impact on student performance (Hernandez-Zavala et al., 2006). Areas devoid of such resources tend to be associated with high levels of poverty. A 2009 study revealed that 78% of indigenous children, whose first language was not Spanish, lived below the poverty line while that number was 40% among children whose first language was Spanish (Ames, 2012; UNICEF, 2010). Family income is highly determinate of one's access to education and may explain half of the university gap between poor and non-poor households (Castro et al., 2016). Children from poorer families are more likely to have limited aspirations than children of a higher socioeconomic status, which in the case of indigenous children, affects their Spanish language acquisition and their choice in pursuing higher education (Pasquier-Doumer & Risso Brandon, 2015). Those who do continue to university are often "othered" for a perceived accent when speaking Spanish, which can lead to low academic performance and a traumatic university experience (Zavala, 2011).

Gender serves as an additional factor in education disparity. Traditional gender roles are reinforced in school by teachers who differentiate in their treatment of girls and boys, which may prevent women from aspiring to careers requiring higher levels of education (Lopes Cardazo, Sawyer, & Talavera Simoni, 2015). Indigenous women who do continue on to higher education are less likely than men to make a leap in economic status and often experience long-term unemployment (Cortina, 2010; MacIsaac & Patrinos, 1995). The feminist concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) provides a theoretical lens for understanding indigenous women's complex experiences of marginalization. Their experiences with discrimination and oppression are influenced by intersecting identities, particularly their gender, ethnicity, and social class. Ethnicity and social class prevent many indigenous children

from receiving the same educational opportunities as non-indigenous children, but indigenous girls face additional educational barriers because of their gender, which make it even more difficult to access higher education and subsequent social mobility.

Moreover, language affects indigenous children's success in the classroom. Despite Peru's official bilingual policy, 63% of indigenous children study in a school where Spanish is the only medium of instruction (Ames, 2012). Most experts agree that children should learn to read and write in their native language, and studies have shown that Quechua children attending Quechua-medium schools perform higher in mathematics than those in Spanish-medium education institutes (Cueto et al., 2012; Hynsjö & Damon, 2016).

There are few rigorous studies analyzing the impact of bilingual education in Peru; however, Bolivia, which also has a high Quechua population, underwent major educational reforms under the leadership of its first indigenous president which have received more detailed analysis. According to Hornberger (2009), these reforms have been effective: Indigenous children are not only spending more time in the school system, but they are also learning in an environment tailored to their needs, which is reaffirming and revitalizing. Lopes Cardozo (2013) argues that the reforms are not as successful as they could be, due to lack of proper education for teachers and socio-political struggles at the institutional level. However, if the government can overcome these issues, the socio-political redirection of the teacher education sector's curriculum has the potential to create teachers who will act as "agents for decolonization and for developing social justice" (p. 17).

The major components of the new multilingual and multicultural curriculum in Bolivia are bilingualism and biliteracy, which strike against the domination of the Spanish language by giving the indigenous languages equal status in the classroom (Delany-Barmann, 2009). Research that has been conducted in Peru suggests similar institutional challenges and potential benefits for bilingual education (Björk et al., 2007), but despite these potential advantages, many indigenous parents in Peru are resistant to bilingual policies (Cueto et al., 2012; Garcia, 2003). Parents perceive Spanish as more useful and fear that teaching their children to read and write in an indigenous language will impede their ability to learn Spanish, which will in

turn prevent them from advancing their socioeconomic status. Spanish is seen as a tool for escaping poverty (Garcia, 2003).

According to the Young Lives study, which tracked a number of Peruvian children over a period of 15 years, education is highly valued among almost all Peruvians (Crivello, 2011). Many children saw themselves continuing with their education and “becoming a professional,” (pg. 16) in other words, having steady work, which brings security and respect. Those who continued with their education often had to migrate to urban areas, which sometimes instilled values that conflicted with the traditional values of their parents. In the words of participants, the greatest barriers to receiving an education were school fees, costs associated with materials, and family problems. Participants did not see any future in agriculture, and their parents wanted different, better lives for their children. They saw literacy as empowering and an education as a means of defending oneself.

This study builds on existing literature, particularly as it relates to the perceived importance, benefits, and effect of education among indigenous Peruvians. A large body of research on the topic is based on the results of quantitative research. In this context, little to no interaction has occurred with the population being studied. In order to offer a more complete picture of the educational experience of indigenous Peruvians, this study seeks to contribute to a growing body of qualitative research, like the Young Lives study, in order to assess the perceptions of education among the indigenous people of Peru.

## METHODS

This study included an interview of 15 questions, designed by the researcher due to an absence of similar studies. Slight adjustments were made to the questions by the researcher and interviewer as deemed necessary during interviews. Some questions required specific answers, but the majority were open-ended to allow participants to share their personal opinions. The questions were translated into Spanish from English beforehand by a native Spanish speaker. However, most citizens of Japura have a limited understanding of Spanish, so interviews were primarily conducted in Quechua. The interview questions, written in Spanish, were interpreted by Quechua translators and interviews lasted from eight to twenty-two minutes. To en-

sure high validity and reliability, the questions were worded in a clear, concise manner for participants. The interviews were also recorded.

### Participants

All interviews were conducted in Japura, a Quechua community located in Canchis province in the Cusco region of Peru. Japura, perched 13,000 feet above sea level, is a 45-minute drive from the district capital, Pitumarca, and from there it is another half hour to Highway 3S, which passes between Cusco and Puno. Because of Japura's extreme isolation, many community members also have homes in Pitumarca or family members whom they regularly visit in order to access resources only available in Pitumarca, such as medical attention, markets, or internet. Japura has an official two-room primary school and a multi-purpose building which is used for pre-school education. The nearest secondary school is four kilometers away. Parents especially concerned with their children's education will often send their children to study in Pitumarca. Qualified teachers (having five years training at a teacher's college) are hired by the government to complete one-year contracts, but they do not live in Japura. Some live as far away as Sicuani, approximately two hours by car. Teachers usually hitchhike to work, unless they have a motorcycle or other means of transportation, and children can be seen waiting in the morning for their teachers to arrive.

There are no precise demographics available for Japura, though approximately 100 families live within Japura's boundaries. The sample size included 22 individuals with 12 females and 10 males between the ages of 18 and 90. Half of the female participants were in their 20's, and there was a noticeable absence of middle-aged women in the community. One of the Quechua translators informed the researcher that these women temporarily move to the cities in search of work once their children are grown. Female participants had between one and four children, and all but one worked primarily as homemakers and alpaca herds women. One woman cooked in a small restaurant catering to tourists, but she did not live year-round in Japura and regularly commuted between Japura and Pitumarca. Some of the other women produced textiles to sell to tourists to supplement their income. Two female participants started secondary school but did not finish, the majority of women had completed most or all of primary school, and the oldest interviewees had never attended school.

Male participants had between one and seven children. The youngest male participant, who was unmarried and had no children, was visiting his family in Japura. Though Japura was his permanent residence, he spent most of his time in the town of Pitumarca to focus on his secondary education and also made pocket money there by playing the banjo and dancing. Two participants occasionally served as tour guides, and one participant was a construction worker. The eldest participant was retired. The remaining participants all worked as farmers. Every male participant had spent at least one year in primary school, two had completed secondary school, and the youngest was close to completing secondary school and intended to continue to university.

### **Procedures**

Interviews were conducted during two trips to Peru: one in March 2017 and the other in June 2017. The researcher was part of an Engineers Without Borders project to provide electricity to the community, which gave her access to Japura and built necessary trust with community members to conduct the individual interviews. Participants were identified through convenience sampling; selection occurred by going door to door or by encountering individuals throughout the village. As far as possible, the researcher selected an equal number of male and female participants from different age groups. Interviews occurred in homes, in the street, or wherever it was most convenient for the participants. They were almost entirely conducted in Quechua, though five interviews were held in Spanish. A Quechua interpreter was present for all interviews conducted in Quechua; two primary translators assisted in this study and a third assisted for one interview. The questions were reviewed beforehand to allow the Quechua interpreters to prepare. When possible, a native-speaking Spanish interpreter was present. For the majority of the interviews the researcher, who has an intermediate level of Spanish, took notes and recorded the interviews, which were later transcribed by native speakers to ensure accuracy. The Quechua interpreter facilitated all Quechua interviews, and a Spanish interpreter did likewise for the Spanish interviews.

RESULTS

Education Levels of Men and Women

Education levels of participants ranged from having no education to completion of secondary school. Levels of education among men and women did not differ substantially because neither women nor men had received much education. However, only female participants had never attended school, and only men had completed secondary school. Women who had never attended school were over 60; male participants who had some level of secondary education were all under the age of 40.

Table 1 - Education Attainment Levels by Gender

Education Level	Women	Men	TOTAL
No education	3	0	3
1st year primary	0	1	1
2nd year primary	0	1	1
3rd year primary	0	0	0
4th year primary <sup>1</sup>	2	2	4
5th year primary	2	0	2
Completed primary	3	2	5
1st year secondary	0	0	0
2nd year secondary	0	1	1
3rd year secondary	2	0	2
4th year secondary	0	0	0
Completed secondary <sup>2</sup>	0	3	3
TOTAL	12	10	22

<sup>1</sup>One male participant started his fifth year of primary school but dropped out before completion. He is included among those who completed the fourth year.

<sup>2</sup> The 18-year-old participant was in the midst of completing his last year of secondary school at the time of the interview. As he expected to complete secondary school by the end of the year, he is included among participants who completed secondary school.

Participants were asked how much education men and women of Japura received in general. There was a wide range of responses, though several patterns were identifiable. Over half the women agreed that men had received a greater level of education. The eldest female participant



stated that in her childhood, women were not allowed to go to school. Her male cousins attended school, but she was expected to tend the animals. She expressed that, "There was no use for a woman to go to a school at the time." By contrast, the father of the second eldest female participant had wanted her to attend school, but had died before being able to send her. This woman believed that educational opportunities were the same for both boys and girls. Four additional participants did not display any sense of inequality between men's and women's educational attainment. One woman elaborated on her opinion, maintaining that neither men nor women received much education at all. The data supports her statement, though it suggests that if anyone does pursue a higher level of education, it is more likely to be a man. One participant stated that women had previously wanted to attain a higher level of education than men but that men had come to realize the importance of education. Based on statements from male participants, it is likely that young men felt pressure to drop out of school to work. Men were more likely to describe education levels as equal between men and women, with more than half agreeing that education levels were equal. The men who acknowledged some discrepancy in education levels were all under 40 and all but one had completed secondary school. One man declared that women don't even finish primary school, but when they do continue their education, it is to find a husband. The youngest participant, in his last year of secondary school, estimated that about 30% of male children from Japura study beyond primary level while only about 20% of female children do. According to him, irrespective of gender, the individuals who studied in Pitumarca achieved a higher level of education.

### **Importance of Education**

Participants were asked how important it was for their families during their childhood that they receive an education. The majority said their parents thought education was important. Several participants' families did not view education as important, believing it would not be useful. According to one elderly male participant, who had completed fourth grade:

My parents didn't support my education because they thought it was a job for the lazy... That's why I stopped attending school. They didn't see education as being useful for anything. The most important part of receiving an education was being able to read.

A female participant stopped attending school because her mother did not see the purpose of an education and thought she would be more useful

tending to the family's alpacas. The opinion that education was useless and that one would be better off working appeared consistently among responses of participants whose families did not regard education as important. Additionally, among older women, gender was explicitly given as a reason why their parents did not view education as important for them. Besides these statements about gender, whether one's family regarded education as important did not depend upon one's age. Both younger and older participants expressed having parents who did not believe education was important, but the vast majority of participants of all age ranges had families who believed education to be significant.

All participants indicated that they personally believed education to be important or very important. Parents took turns holding weekly meetings with the local teachers to discuss improving their children's education. Those with younger children said they would like their children to receive at least more education than themselves. Some indicated they would be satisfied if their children finished secondary school, but the majority hoped their children would continue to university. Many expressed a desire for their children to become professionals instead of living as agriculturalists. Among older participants with grown children, almost all stated that their children had received more education than themselves. Some expressed regret that their children had not continued to university, and those who discussed their grandchildren indicated they would like them to receive a university education.

**Female participant:**

I don't want my children to be like me, so it's very important for them to have an education. It's becoming more important. Because I don't have an education, I can't help them, so I want them to be educated. If one of my children wants to go to university, I would like them to go.

**Female participant:**

It's very important because the more one is educated, the easier life is. I want my children to study because I don't want them to suffer like me. If I had gotten an education, I would have been able to help my mother with her health.

**Male participant:**

I would like a better future for my children. I wish my children could have

more education than what I received. I have every intention and desire to support them in their efforts to receive an education, as much as I can. If they want to go to university, I would do everything possible to help them. It is up to them what amount of schooling they themselves want.

### **Accessibility of Education**

According to the oldest participants, education has always been free in Japura. Students have not been required to wear uniforms and only have to pay for field trips and other small costs. One participant, age 80, remembered that four individuals founded the first primary school in Japura. Most participants did not remember when the current primary school, a modern, brightly-painted building constructed of cement, was built, but one claimed it was in 1994. Prior to that, the school was made of adobe and rocks. To attend secondary school, children must relocate to Pitumarca or commute four kilometers each way to the nearest secondary school.

When asked what challenges they faced in pursuing an education, most mentioned distance. Not everyone grew up in Japura: Some lived at a higher altitude, in more remote areas, and gradually moved down to Japura. Students who did not live in Japura would have to walk great distances to attend primary school – a one-way two-hour distance was mentioned by several participants – and they would become very hungry during their journey. Children would be punished for arriving late, and they would be punished for not completing their homework. One woman remembered, “When there was light, we had to bring back the animals. When we did try to study, we were wasting candles. So our parents would tell us to snuff out the candles because we were wasting it.” Distance was even more challenging for those who attempted to study in Pitumarca. Before there were roads and consistent traffic, students would have to walk for two days to reach Pitumarca, so they would be forced to live away from their families to complete their schooling. The participant currently studying in Pitumarca remarked that he had less contact with his family since cell phone signals are not available in Japura.

Many also mentioned cost as an issue. Though education itself was free, the cost of supplies was still too expensive, and families often needed their children to work and supplement the family’s income. According to one male participant:

The difficulty in attending primary school was primarily for economic rea-

sons. Money was not available to purchase necessary supplies, so many children dropped out, especially the girls. The same for secondary school, economic challenges make it too hard to afford education. When the money runs out, they may need to start working, possibly on a farm or in a store.

Among those who had completed secondary education, cost was the primary reason why individuals did not continue on to university. Education is only free in Peru through the secondary level, so those attending university must have the funds to do so. One participant with a college-aged daughter wanted to send her to university but lacked the funds. Another participant had a son who had studied civil engineering at university in Cusco. However, after he was robbed, he was forced to drop out of university.

A third of participants indicated personal reasons for not continuing school. A female participant had difficulty finishing primary school because her parents had moved to Lima and did not have the proper certificate to show what grade she was in. She was forced to redo a grade and did not finish primary school until she was 14. A male participant indicated that despite his father's encouragement to continue, he dropped out because he could not learn. According to him, it was not the teacher's fault; he was just not good at school. The youngest female participant, one of only two women to receive any secondary education, expressed similar sentiments but expanded on the impact of her parents' lack of education:

Education was very important for my parents; they wanted me to be a professional. Unfortunately, I could not go far because I thought it was all too hard. Because my parents were not very involved or prepared, we [she and her siblings] could not receive a proper education. So, when we became young adults, we began to experiment with new lives, just as any young person would. Young girls began to meet young men and young men began to meet young girls. For that reason, we could not finish school. My parents also could not encourage educational values in me and my siblings because they didn't have any of it themselves.

Though many expressed regret for having not continued with education, they did not see themselves returning to school, because they had children and families. One man remarked that youth are getting married younger than before. Pregnancies at an early age due to lack of access to birth control was a significant deterrent to young women continuing or returning to school.

Four participants dropped out of school to help their families after the death or abandonment of a parent. One participant was prevented

from ever attending school due to her father's death. These participants were needed at home to support their younger siblings and remaining parent, and some reported feeling so overwhelmed by their personal circumstances that they were not able to focus on their studies even when they were still in school. Primarily female participants were forced to drop out of school to help their remaining parent at home, though one man shared that pursuing an education was difficult because his father had abandoned him. Two participants found it difficult to continue with school because they had an alcoholic parent, and one woman could not attend school because she was raised by sickly grandparents. Altogether, a third of participants were hindered in their educational attainment because of family problems of illness, death, abandonment, or alcoholism.

### **Effect of Education**

The original interview included the question "How has education affected your life?" but in almost all cases, individuals had received so little education that the question had to be rephrased as "How has your lack of education affected your life?" in order to receive any sort of substantial response. Several participants expressed a general sense of disappointment over unachieved aspirations; one specifically mentioned her dream of studying in university and another had hoped to become a mining engineer. Overwhelmingly, participants expressed how their inability to speak, read and write Spanish, inhibited their ability to function. One man admitted he felt "less than others" because of his inability to write and express himself fully. According to one woman, her lack of education had "affected every area of her life" and made her feel "as if she were useless cattle." Her husband said that "a lack of education is like being blind" because he was unable to communicate with others. A particularly significant observation was made by one woman who shared how her lack of education influenced her health-care decisions:

Lack of education has really affected my daily life. I'm scared to even go to health centers, especially when [physicians] want to check up everything. Because of fear, I sometimes don't even go to clinics when I'm sick because I don't know how to express what I want or need.

Participants who had completed some level of secondary education generally expressed how education had empowered them by teaching them to read, write, and speak Spanish. A woman who had only completed a few years of secondary school felt her Spanish was limited, but it was enough to

communicate with. A man who had finished secondary school felt he was still limited because he had not been able to study at university, but the basic skills he had acquired in secondary school were very useful to him. Somewhat surprisingly, the participant most enthusiastic about how education had benefited him had only completed primary school:

What I have learned in school has helped me so much. The math I learned has helped me with my business and I can even read the Bible. I would love to continue learning more. Schooling has also helped me be useful in my community serving as a secretary.

Among interviews conducted in Spanish, three of those participants had completed or almost completed secondary school. The two additional participants either regularly interacted with Spanish-speaking tourists or government officials, but they were less eloquent than those who had attended secondary school. The men who had finished secondary school appeared eager to use their Spanish and were proud of their ability to do so. The young man finishing his last year shared that he was even learning English at school. He could not think of anything negative about his experience at school and was pleased that he had more knowledge than his parents. Overall, participants reported positive experiences attending school. Participants enjoyed school and enjoyed playing with their friends. An elderly man had particularly fond memories of being praised by his teacher in front of the class for his math abilities. Several participants expressed that they were able to find relief at school from family and money problems at home. A female participant reported:

What I liked about going to school was that I could forget about my problems at home, such as my grandparents' sicknesses, and play. If I could be a child and go to school all over again I would do it. I don't remember anything negative because I liked it all.

Negative statements about education involved the distance, cost, and difficulty learning. One young woman remarked how she had met her husband at school and had to drop out to care for their child. She considered meeting her husband a negative experience because it had disrupted her life and ability to pursue independent aspirations. The majority of negative memories, however, involved a lack of learning and poor quality of education. Teachers often showed up drunk or did not show up at all. Students spent most of their time playing and not learning. According to one woman:

I liked going to school but sometimes I didn't learn. My father was worried.

He would ask, "What are you learning?" I didn't want to say because I wasn't learning anything.

### **Perceptions of the Peruvian Education System**

All participants agreed that the Peruvian education system should improve. Common complaints included lack of preparation, materials, and consistency. Teachers were accused of showing up late – many times not at all – not being prepared, being irresponsible, having a low level of education, and not caring enough about the students. Teachers have only one-year contracts to work in Japura, so there is inconsistency in the children's schooling. The researcher had interacted with Japura's primary school teachers a year before the interviews were held and can confirm that both teachers from the previous year had been replaced. According to a female participant:

We need better teachers and more of them. Oftentimes we get one teacher to teach multiple grades, but that has not sat well in my mind. Teachers who come are usually contracted and it's not always known whether they are good or bad. There is so much instability.

Though Japura's primary school is a Spanish-medium school, students do not learn much Spanish until secondary school. Several participants mentioned that secondary school teachers are much better, and in general, that education in Pitumarca is much better. Children who attend school in Pitumarca are more likely to study longer, so some parents send their children to Pitumarca for primary school. In general, it was stated that rural education is far worse than urban education. In an informal interview, one of the primary teachers denied this, stating that the curriculum in rural areas is practically equal now with urban areas. One of the Quechua translators maintained that education in both rural and urban areas is horrible. Nonetheless, villagers in Japura felt they received poor-quality education in comparison with larger communities. According to one man, "If you live in remote areas it's as if you don't even exist."

Some participants, remembering the poor state of education during their childhoods, remarked that education had improved in recent years. Teachers are more consistent and better prepared than they used to be; the primary school has been modernized; technology has been added to the classroom; and there is a general movement towards improving rural education.

Male participant: The professors were not very prepared. Sometimes they

would come to school drunk. Sometimes they would come to school late. Sometimes they would not come at all. Sometimes they would come two days or even one... Now they're trying to train the system so they're acting. They're going to places... and claiming they need better teachers.

Though the majority believed that education was improving, one man remarked that the moral education was downgrading, that young people had less respect for their elders, and another participant felt the entire education system was much worse than before:

Back in my time, you only needed a high school education to be a lawyer. Now even with just secondary school, you don't know anything... Education nowadays does not come close to education from back in my day. In order for education to improve, Peru needs better teachers. The teachers who come to rural areas are often the worst teachers metropolitan areas have to offer and they often drink too much, if they show up to work at all. If at some point they do get a good teacher in the community they are transferred somewhere else.

Participants said they would like to see more teachers who are better-qualified, prepared, and punctual, who demonstrate a greater interest in the students, and who stay for more than a year. In addition, parents wanted their children to learn Spanish in school, and one woman mentioned she would like to see both Spanish and Quechua taught in the classroom[TH2]. Another man would like to see English-language classes implemented so community members are better able to communicate with visiting foreigners. The possibility was also raised of starting an alternative education program for adults so they can learn to read the alphabet and sign their names.

### **Higher Education**

Approximately half the participants knew someone from Japura who was pursuing or had pursued higher education, primarily in Cusco, the region's capital. Those with family and friends living outside Japura regularly kept in contact, but it was not generally believed that those individuals would return to live in the community. In the words of a female participant:

My nephew and cousin study in Cusco. They study mining engineering. It's a beautiful thing... I don't think they will ever return because they will find jobs elsewhere, but they will come visit.

A male participant, completing the last year of secondary school, said:

My vision would be to get an education, get a profession, get out of Japura. I want to make something of myself, to be someone important. I want



to better myself. I wouldn't want to do what my parents and grandparents are doing, working as agriculturists.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze the roles and perceptions of education in Japura, Peru. Results indicated that perceptions of education among community members are overwhelmingly positive, being equated with life opportunities such as employment, bilingualism, and access to health care, though the results do not suggest that attitudes towards education have changed drastically over the generations. In certain cases, it is not clear whether participants genuinely believed education to be important or whether participants gave their answers to be politically correct. Because of the researcher's prior experience in the community, she noticed an inconsistency between two participants, a father and daughter. The daughter indicated that her father prevented her from attending school because of her mother's death. The father said his children attended the first two years of secondary school and dropped out because they wanted to work. It is possible the father understood the Spanish word *hijos*, which can mean "sons" or "children," as referring only to his sons and simply excluded his daughter from his statement. Nevertheless, it may reveal an implicit bias that education is not as important for women as for men. It may also indicate societal pressure to educate one's children, which may have influenced the father's decision not to mention taking his daughter out of school. In a few other interviews, participants' responses did not strike the researcher as particularly sincere; they may well have been saying what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. The vast majority of participants' responses, however, enthusiastically advocated the importance of education and appeared to reflect their genuine opinions.

Approximately half of the participants identified an education gap between men and women, and participants' education levels support this claim, though further research would be required to determine the extent of this gap. Older women who had been denied education on the basis that they were female both described education levels as unequal; men of approximately the same age all said education levels were equal. Younger men also described education levels as equal, but all the men who had completed secondary education identified a difference. A greater sample

size of men would be required to determine if this is consistently true, but it is possible that men who manage to attain higher levels of education find themselves with fewer female classmates and recognize a discrepancy.

Previous research, which found that only a university-level education drastically improves socioeconomic status among indigenous Peruvians, is supported by this study (MacIsaac & Patrinos, 1995). The participants were impacted by their lack of education but not highly affected by their educational experiences. Those with the most education – having reached only secondary school – were literate and fluent in Spanish with slightly better-paying jobs; however, this appeared to be the extent of their social advantage over participants who had attained less education. One significant benefit of knowing Spanish was a greater access to healthcare; future research might include the extent of the relationship between education and healthcare.

According to interviews, individuals from Japura who attain a university education find higher-paying jobs in urban areas and do not return. The participant completing his last year of secondary school expressed a strong desire to leave Japura as he did not want to become an agriculturalist like the rest of his family. Such findings correspond with data from the Young Lives study and suggest that the pursuit of higher education leads to migration and urbanization (Crivello, 2011). This study also supports statistics which state that rural dropout rates are high (Pal, 2004). Education has not been very accessible to the community members of Japura due to distance, cost, and family responsibilities. Unlike the Young Lives study, distance was the primary barrier to education, though family problems and cost were also significant factors. According to interviews, teachers in Japura are poorly trained, frequently late to class, have few resources, and do not adequately instruct students. Participants claimed that rural education is of lower quality than urban education. Additional research should investigate the quality and disparity between education in rural and urban areas.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Research was limited by factors such as time, funds, and language barriers. Because no funding was available to the researcher, all interviews were conducted during an Engineers Without Borders assessment trip. The researcher was able to conduct research only as volunteer interpreters were avail-

able, which limited the participant sample size and amount of data which could be collected. At times, it was difficult to maintain standard research procedure as the participants and Quechua interpreter were not culturally accustomed to research formalities required before starting an interview, which resulted in deviations from the standard interview and consent forms. Participants' responses may also demonstrate desirability bias, such as the wish to be politically correct or adhere to social expectations of educating one's children.

Recordings for four of the interviews were lost because of technological malfunctions, so the researcher had to rely on her notes for these. Because interviews were interpreted two times, there is a greater possibility for error; however, the recordings, notes, and transcriptions by a native-Spanish speaker were all included to ensure the most accurate and reliable data possible.

## **CONCLUSION**

Education among the indigenous community of Japura, Peru, is regarded as highly important but is not considered readily accessible. Because Japura is a small community and extremely isolated, it is perceived that the government has not maintained a high standard for teachers or the quality of education. The primary school lacks necessary resources for instruction; until Engineers Without Borders installed solar panels, the school did not even have electricity to use the technological resources it had been given by the government. Villagers believe that children do not adequately learn skills, such as Spanish literacy, necessary to pursue education or work opportunities outside of the community, and they also believe it is often too expensive for them to do so. In addition, there is no special education available for children who may have learning disabilities. In order to increase education levels among rural, indigenous populations, the Peruvian government will have to allocate greater resources to communities like Japura.

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## Appendix A

### Interview guide:

1. How old are you?
2. How many children do you have?
3. What do you do for a living and where do you work?
4. How many years did you attend school? For those who attended school: Did you complete high school? If so, did you attend college?
5. How much schooling have most men in this community received – primary education, secondary education, or university education? What about women in Japura – how much education have most women received?
6. How easy or difficult was it for you to go to school during your childhood? What about now?
7. When you were little, how important was getting an education to your family?
8. For those who received a primary education, what challenges did you face? For those who received a high school education, what challenges did you face? For those who received a university education, what challenges did you face?
9. Would you share with me your experience going to school? What was good about going to school? What was bad about going to school?
10. How much schooling would you like your children to get? What about your grandchildren? Why? What difference would going to school make in their lives?
11. In your opinion, how important in life is education or being educated?

12. How has education affected your life?
13. Do you have any friends or family members from the community who have gone to university? If so, do they still live in Japura? If not, do they stay in touch with the community?
14. Please tell me what you think about the Peruvian school system in general. How would you like it to be different? What would you like to stay the same?
15. What else would you like to say/share?

## **Appendix B**

### **Spanish translation of the interview guide:**

1. ¿Qué edad tiene?
2. ¿Cuántos hijos tiene?
3. ¿En qué trabajas y dónde trabaja?
4. ¿Cuántos años asistió a la escuela? Para los que asistieron a la escuela: ¿Completo el colegio? Si es así, ¿asiste a la universidad?
5. ¿Cuánto escolaridad ha recibido la mayoría de los hombres en esta comunidad - educación primaria, colegio o educación universitaria? ¿Qué pasa con las mujeres en Japura - cuánta educación reciben la mayoría de las mujeres?
6. ¿Qué tan fácil o difícil fue para usted a ir a la escuela durante su infancia? ¿Qué se parece ahora?
7. Cuando era pequeño, ¿qué tan importante era recibir una educación para su familia?
8. Para aquellos que recibieron una educación primaria, ¿qué desafíos enfrentas? Para aquellos que recibieron una educación de colegio, ¿qué desafíos enfrentaste? Para aquellos que recibieron una educación universitaria, ¿qué desafíos enfrentaste?
9. ¿Compartir conmigo su experiencia con la educación? ¿Qué fue lo mejor de ir a la escuela? ¿Qué había lo peor en ir a la escuela?
10. ¿Cuánta educación desea que sus hijos obtengan? ¿Y sus nietos? ¿Por qué? ¿Qué diferencia haría la escuela en sus vidas?
11. En su opinión, ¿qué tan importante en la vida es la educación, o ser educado?
12. ¿De qué manera ha afectado su vida la educación?
13. ¿Tiene algún amigo o familiar de la comunidad que haya ido a la uni-

versidad? Si es así, ¿todavía viven en Japura? Si no, ¿se mantienen en contacto con la comunidad?

14. Por favor, dígame qué piensas sobre el sistema escolar peruano en general. ¿Cómo le gustaría que fuera diferente? ¿Qué se gustaría ser lo mismo?
15. ¿Qué más le gustaría decir / compartir?

# Canada's Internationally Acclaimed Project: The Acceptance of Syrian Refugees as an Opportunity to Promote Canadian Identity

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## ABSTRACT

The Canadian identity is not a straightforward nor stable notion. However, Canada's response to the current Syrian refugee crisis may offer insight into how Canadians conceive of themselves in the rhetoric of inviting refugees into the country. The question this paper aims to address then is the following: how is Canadian identity being presented in the public discourse of accepting Syrian refugees? In order to answer this question, this paper uses a mix of content analysis and framing analysis to examine Canadian news articles that invoke Canadian identity in relation to the refugee crisis. The most salient characteristics of Canadian identity that emerged from the analysis were comparisons to other countries, Canada's international reputation, and multiculturalism. Openly and proudly accepting Syrian refugees is presented as an act that puts Canada in a good light and subsequently strengthens a positive Canadian identity and image. The findings provide a useful starting point to understanding how Canadian identity is communicated and reaffirmed in the context of humanitarian immigration as well as some implications for what constitutes 'being Canadian' in general.

## INTRODUCTION

Immigration policies are closely linked to notions of national identity (Bauder, 2008; Fleras, 2012; Breton, 2015; Dauvergne, 2005), so in light of the current Syrian refugee crisis, Canada's response is an event that allows for



an examination of Canadian identity. Given our media-saturated world, one approach to investigate this relationship between the acceptance of refugees and national identity is to look at the news. There are many ways to communicate identity, but news media offers some unique insight into understanding Canadian identity as it tends to operate within the culturally palatable bounds of public discourse on a given issue.

Framing analysis of news media, and communication texts in general, is used to “make explicit the common tendencies [of public discourse] [...] and to suggest a more precise and universal understanding of [it]” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Subsequently, regarding news coverage of domestic issues with international reach, such as accepting Syrian refugees into Canada, the opportunity of news media to invoke implicit meanings of nation-building and nationalistic meaning-making of said events are present. Framing analysis, as a method of study, is particularly useful in this context because it “illuminates the precise way in which influence over a human consciousness is exerted by the transfer of (or communication) of information from one location—such as [...] news report—to that consciousness” (Entman, 1993, pp. 51-52). In other words, it offers a comprehensive and systematic approach to interrogating how mass communication texts work to promote ideas, in this case, what it means to be ‘Canadian’.

Benedict Anderson’s concept of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ in which “the mind of each [citizen] lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6) begs the question: where does this image come from? If the image is constructed, this implies that the notion of a nation—and what it means to be part of it—is unstable, permeable, and in constant need for reification. Being a culturally constructed and reconstructed image, and given the potential of news media as a means of reinforcing various notions of Canadian identity, I seek to demonstrate that aspects of this cultural image are indeed communicated en masse to the public, in part, via mainstream media and news reporting. This logic provides the rationale for looking at news media specifically in conveying Canadian identity. What Canadians learn about themselves is in how Canadians are told about themselves.

This paper examines 10 different news articles from different

sources, varying from opinion pieces to news reports, all with one thing in common: invoking notions of Canadian identity in the report of the refugee crisis. Focusing on this set of articles provides an overview of the nature in which Canadian identity is promoted via the media within the sphere of discourse of the Syrian refugee crisis. This will be done by looking at the salient dimensions of Canadian identity that are offered within said articles and how those dimensions can be represented in a variety of news sources, whether it be mainstream or alternative. In sum, this paper intends to answer: how is Canadian identity being presented in the public discourse of accepting Syrian refugees?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Harald Bauder (2008) denotes how humanitarian immigration “can serve the construction of a national self-image as positive or negative” (p. 85). In other words, the way in which a country responds to events such as a refugee crisis can impact its global image. With 34 million forcibly displaced persons in the world as of 2008 (Fleras, 2012, p. 252) and a media-saturated context, in which countries are observed more closely and national reputations can be scrutinized, how countries respond to humanitarian immigration is more pertinent than ever in terms of cultivating a national identity.

According to previous works, Canada is seen as a benevolent nation towards refugees (Bauder, 2008; Fleras, 2012; Breton, 2015, Dauvergne, 2005). For instance, Bauder (2008) makes note that through refugee admission, “Canada fulfills its commitment to humanitarianism and constructs a self-image as a liberal and compassionate nation” (p. 84). Catherine Dauvergne (2005) echoes the same sentiment by describing the link between humanitarianism and identity as follows: “Humanitarianism is about identity. The individual identity of the other who benefits from our grace is important, but only because of the light it reflects back on us” (164). Furthermore, Dauvergne’s (2005) argument, based on liberal political philosophy, implies that humanitarianism partially defines a nation. More importantly, it suggests that the project of humanitarian immigration has more to do with the country whose borders are open to these refugees, rather than the individuals traversing them.

Canadian refugee policies “are important positive aspects of the image other countries have of Canada” (Bauder, 2008, p. 91). This image can be seen in the 1986 event when Canada received the UN Nansen Refugee Award, an award given annually to either an individual or organisation for dedicating time and “going above and beyond the call of duty to help people forcibly displaced from their homes” (UNHCR, n.d.). Canada is the first and so far only country to earn such an accolade (Fleras, 2012). Consequently, Canada’s refugee policy is globally admired as a model to praise and emulate (Fleras, 2012). Fleras (2012) further elaborates that “Canadians for the most part have embraced immigration with the kind of civility and open-mindedness that is becoming a national trademark” (p. 258). Fleras (2012) does, however, state that such an embrace is predicated on the control Canadians have to choose who enters and the refugees being deemed “legitimate victims of state oppression” (p. 253). This further solidifies the notion that admission of refugees is a nationalist rather than internationalist project.

Charles Breton (2015) argues that Canada’s success with immigration can be explained by the fact that notions of multiculturalism are embedded in its national identity, making “Canadian national identity an inclusive force” (357). Fleras (2012) echoes this sentiment by referring to Canada’s commitment to immigration as a reflection of its official multiculturalism policy and “Canada-building” (p. 288). In other words, admission of refugees is interlinked with ideas of multiculturalism and identity. As Will Kymlicka (2003) puts it, “Canada is unusual in the extent to which it has built these practices into its symbols and narratives of nationhood” (p. 375). In fact, Breton (2015) notes that pride in Canada is positively related to support for multiculturalism and immigration. Similarly, “messages of denial and exclusion reflect badly on Canada’s much-vaunted reputation as an immigrant society that abides by the principles of multiculturalism” (Fleras, 2012, p. 289). Therefore, refusing refugees goes against the Canadian value of multiculturalism and its inclusive rhetoric.

Bauder (2008) argues that newsprint media “establishes the link between humanitarian immigration and national identity by making an association between immigration policy and Canada’s reputation of compassion and tradition of generosity” (p. 86). According to Bauder (2008), journalists and commentators strategically juxtapose Canada’s reputation

with global political and administrative practices to evaluate them “either as falling short of or overshooting Canada’s identity as a country of compassion and champion of human rights” (p. 91). Newsprint media promotes Canada’s own reputation of benevolence by contrasting it with other countries’ responses and using Canada’s system as the standard for dealing with refugees.

Comparisons with other countries play a large role in the way Canada builds its identity. As Citrin and colleagues (2001) argue, national identity consists of three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and normative. The last refers to “the particular set of ideas about what makes the nation distinctive, ideas about its members, its core values and goals, the territory it ought to occupy and its relation to other nations” (p. 76). This notion is also seen in Fleras’ (2012) work, where he states how “Canada has performed admirably in protecting refugees, especially in comparison with countries that perfunctorily deny entry or routinely deport those seeking asylum” (p. 274). How well Canada reacts to the refugee crisis partially depends on how poorly other countries respond, which further shapes Canada’s identity as a benevolent and inclusive nation. It should be noted that the actual integration of refugees into the conception of ‘Canadian national identity’, however, was rarely addressed in the articles that Bauder sampled (2008) when looking at how newsprint media promotes national identity in the discourse of refugees. In this way, accepting refugees into the nation alone is part of the identity-building project, not the actual integration of refugees or their resettlement in Canada.

## METHODOLOGY

### Subjects

The sampling strategy for my articles involved purposive sampling and maximum variation. As a result, the ten articles examined in this paper were selected in stages. It should be noted that due to the sample size, the results of this study do not necessarily represent the state of media discourse on Syrian refugees. Instead, it acts as exploratory research into the different ways in which news outlets discuss Syrian refugees in relation to Canada’s reputation and identity. The study also aims to look at the potential differences between mainstream and alternative media in terms of how they communicate Canadian identity within this context. This is to capture the nuances in the way this identity is conveyed, depending on the sources.

However, due to the limited sample, this work is, again, only exploratory.

In finding the ten articles, I searched in the Canadian Newsstand Complete database for newspaper articles using the key phrases 'Syrian refugees' and 'Canadian identity'. The articles I looked at were those published between September 2015 and March 2016. September 2015 was a historic moment as the news of three-year-old Alan Kurdi's drowning circulated around the globe. In the same month, the three main federal parties made commitments to increase the intake of refugees with the Liberals promising to bring in 25,000 Syrians immediately.

Upon specifying the date range, 256 results showed up. Out of those 256 articles, approximately 30 articles were read before I found at least five articles which explicitly referred to or invoked Canadian identity with regards to the Syrian refugee crisis. As I am interested in looking at the differences between mainstream media and alternative media in how Canadian identity is portrayed in this context, the ten articles are a balance of mainstream and alternative news. The five that I chose to represent my mainstream sample all came from my search in the Canadian Newsstand Complete database. For the purposes of maximum variation, they are all from different publications including one from a wire feed (Canadian Press). The five articles contain a mixture of opinion pieces and news report articles.

The other five articles of the sample were found using independent searches in several different alternative media websites. These include rabble.ca, The Tyee, OpenMedia, The Canadian, and The Georgia Straight. For each website, I used the keywords "Syrian refugees" to search for relevant articles. Given that I searched in specific websites, the term "Canadian identity" was unnecessary for finding relevant articles. Only rabble.ca, The Tyee, and The Georgia Straight had articles that included both the discussion of Syrian refugees and Canadian identity. In the end, I had three relevant articles from rabble.ca, one from The Tyee and one from The Georgia Straight. Although this does not entirely fulfill my maximum variation requirement, the three articles from rabble.ca were each written by different individuals and dealt with different events. Hence, for the purposes of my analysis, this was varied enough.

### **Procedures: Conceptualization and Operationalization**

I started with an open coding scheme to operationalize the concept of “Canadian Identity” within the scope of “what it means to be Canadian” and “Canadian values and beliefs”, making note of themes that stood out or vaguely pertained to these themes. Upon further inspection of those initial codes, I found a few recurring themes in all of the articles and used them for my focused coding. The four focused codes were: 1) comparisons to other countries (in responding to the refugee crisis not including Syria or countries in the Middle East), 2) international reputation, 3) multiculturalism and/or diversity, and 4) other values (other than multiculturalism and diversity). Based on the literature and my coding, I broke down the concept of Canadian identity into the four focused codes previously mentioned and they subsequently became my categories. I measured these categories using presence-absence dichotomies (1=present, 0=absent) and tabulated the data. As stated previously, the quantitative analysis here is not to make an assertion that this is representative of the state of media as a whole, but a way to keep track of the frequency of themes. These categories were searched for systematically in all aspects of the individual articles, including the body of the articles, captions, and headlines. In addition, I made note of the various spokespeople that were either consulted within or omitted from the articles.

### **Treatment of Data**

The data was analyzed using a mixture of both content and framing analysis. I use content analysis to count what is present and/or absent from the articles. Based on the presence and absence of a category, I use framing analysis to understand the selection and omission that is found within the initial content analysis. According to Robert Entman (2003), framing “entails selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (p. 417). In this case, I use this idea of framing to understand the significance of what gets selected and highlighted. Entman (2003) states how “the text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (p. 52). For the purposes of this paper, both the presence and absence are noteworthy.

## RESULTS

### Comparison to Other Countries

Most of the articles make a mention of other countries as a point of comparison to Canada's refugee resettlement efforts, as demonstrated in Table 1. Specifically, eight out of the ten articles use other countries to compare to Canada. According to Table 2, out of those eight articles, six of them mention the United States. Upon closer inspection, five of those six articles refer specifically to U.S. Presidents and the presidential election, with three (CBC, Toronto Star, and Georgia Straight) naming Donald Trump in particular. According to Table 2, in the same eight articles that make reference to other countries, five of them also mention countries from the European Union (EU).

In terms of differences between mainstream and alternative media outlets, the only two articles that do not compare Canada to other countries (see Table 2) are both from rabble.ca which is an alternative news source. In Table 2, the six articles that compare Canada to the U.S. are split equally among mainstream and alternative news sources. Only one (The Tyee) out of the five articles that mention a country from the EU come from an alternative news source.

### International Reputation

Looking at Table 1, all ten articles outline Canada's international reputation in their reporting of the refugee crisis. Upon further examination, Table 3 shows that four articles demonstrate Canada's international reputation by describing Canada as a globally recognized nation in the efforts of refugee resettlement. Two other articles demonstrate this reputation via acclaim by other media. Lastly, the four remaining articles express international reputation in more subtle ways, such as referencing previous Canadian refugee resettlement efforts. Additionally, Table 3 highlights how mostly mainstream news outlets (four out of six) explicitly mention Canada's international reputation.

In Table 1, half of the sample invokes notions of multiculturalism and diversity in their discussion of Canadian identity within the context of accepting Syrian refugees. Tables 1 and 4 show that four out of the five articles that do so come from mainstream news outlets. Looking at Table 4, Canadian Press explicitly mentions both 'multiculturalism' and 'diversity', while the

other four articles mention either 'multiculturalism' or 'diversity' and/or other words of similar connotation (eg. 'inclusivity' and 'openness').

### **Other Canadian Values**

According to Table 1, eight of the articles invoked Canadian values other than multiculturalism and diversity in the context of the refugee crisis. These values, as laid out in Table 5, include 'compassion', 'humanitarianism', 'security', and 'moral responsibility'. The Montreal Gazette (2016) article places Canadian values most explicitly onto Canada's response to the refugee crisis as it is the only sampled article that invokes all four of the aforementioned values. The most frequent value invoked, in addition to multiculturalism and diversity, is the notion of accepting refugees as a 'moral responsibility' or the right thing to do, which was tabulated in five of the ten articles. This value is mostly mentioned by alternative media sources comprising three out of the five articles that mention it.

### **Spokespeople**

In addition to the four main categories, I also examined the spokespeople involved in identity building within the context of the refugee crisis. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is quoted in three out of the ten articles (see Table 6). Trudeau is featured in a photo of the Toronto Star (2016) article and on video in the Georgia Straight (2015) article. Government officials are featured in 5 articles, with Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship, John McCallum, recurring in multiple articles. Trudeau and McCallum are both quoted in the Toronto Star (2016) article and the first rabble.ca (2015) article. In Table 6, it is evident that fewer of the articles from the alternative sources feature either the Prime Minister or a government official, with only one article quoting Trudeau and two quoting a government official. Only two articles quote activists or members from a non-governmental organization, while only one article quotes a refugee. The articles that include 'other' individuals quote academics and other columnists.

## **INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

In the sampled articles, it is evident that Canada is most often compared to its neighbour, the United States. Although many articles also make reference to countries in the European Union (EU), this is to be expected as the EU has been intimately connected to the refugee crisis due to its proximity.



The EU is therefore important in any discussion of the refugee crisis.

The selection of these specific countries and omission of others is significant as their choices imply which countries are important in this crisis and worthy of mention. The articles that mention the U.S. emphasize the 2016 presidential election and focus on Donald Trump in particular due to his rhetoric of closing borders. This makes sense because it is in diametric opposition to the Canadian government's approach to Syrian refugee resettlement. For example, the headline of the CBC article sampled reads, "Accepting Syrian refugees separates Canada from the Trumps of the world: John McCallum" (CBC, 2015). This headline serves to distantiate American refugee policy, as a kind of expression of cultural identity, from Canada's own in order to communicate values such as 'openness' and 'diversity' as being distinctly Canadian. Similar to Canada, the U.S. is seen as another country in North America which has the capacity to accept refugees, but have decided to play a smaller role. In this way, Canada's actions are further amplified by the inaction of the U.S. Therefore, the sampled articles demonstrate that in the media, Canada's national identity is conveyed through their relative effectiveness and openness to their American neighbours and highlights how Canadian identity is communicated by a negation of an American identity. This adds to the understanding of Canada's conception of identity and how that identity is mass communicated.

Canada's international reputation in dealing with refugees is a notion that is heavily touted in all of the sampled articles. All ten articles include explicit or implicit references to Canada as a global example worth following in accepting refugees, suggesting that Canada's global recognition is important in building a Canadian identity. This notion is explicitly highlighted in mainstream news while alternative news alludes to Canada's reputation as a way to call for social change and support for refugee resettlement. Nevertheless, both types of news sources frame Canada's international reputation as a source of national pride. This specific framing reiterates the notion that Canadian identity is partially a specific distinction and separation from other countries. In this instance, Canada's identity as a compassionate nation is predicated on the fact that it is compassionate in relation to other countries and as such, is deemed a global example.

Out of all the articles, only one (rabble.ca article #3) quotes a ref-

ugee, denoting the lack of focus on who is being helped. Instead, government officials, such as then-Immigration Minister, John McCallum and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, are featured more prominently. In response to the roll out of their refugee policy of accepting 25,000 refugees, McCallum said “[they] were right to step up to the plate” (CBC), while Canada’s multiculturalism policy was less pronounced in his speech. Instead, McCallum focuses on the generosity and openness of the Canadian peoples. The news report of Trudeau’s speech in the UK, after announcing the new refugee policy, however, emphasizes the notions of multiculturalism and diversity. In it, Trudeau is quoted saying, “[...] inclusive diversity is a strength and a force that can vanquish intolerance, radicalism and hate” (Cheadle, 2015). In all the articles, the predominant voices were these Canadian policy-makers and Canadian academics and columnists, and both mainstream and alternative news sources generally privileged Canadian voices over refugees. It should be noted that these selected Canadian voices are a specific fragment of the population, and are meant to be representative of the ‘good people of Canada’, though everyday Canadian citizens, along with refugees to Canada, are not quoted. Thus, the identity-building project that is interwoven in the rhetoric of accepting Syrian refugees appears to have a more ‘manufactured’ quality to it, as it is touted by those who have specific talking points that need to be conveyed, rather than the true sentiments of relatively disinterested Canadian citizens.

Although this imbalance of voices speaks to the nature of news which privileges ‘experts’ as they are more easily accessible and verifiable to journalists, the fact that Canadians are the majority of people speaking on this issue reiterates the idea that accepting Syrian refugees is a national project by Canadians that highlights Canadian identity at its best. The selection of certain voices and omission of others accentuate how accepting Syrian refugees is an endeavour done on Canada’s terms as a platform to showcase Canadian values.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

As previously noted, the sample itself is small and purposive, and is thus not necessarily representative of Canadian media as a whole. Potential directions for future research could therefore include gathering articles centered around specific news events related to refugees and examining the

ratio of how many of them actually invoke notions of national identity. This kind of research could provide a broader look at how often news articles invoke notions of Canadian identity with regards to refugee resettlement.

The sample might also have been too varied in terms of having no directly equivalent articles for comparison, such as having multiple articles covering the same news event, due to the purposive and maximum variation sampling choices, ranging from alternative to mainstream, and opinion pieces to wire services. Thus, there are issues of generalizability. A study focussed on multiple reports of the same news event, for example, could generate more generalizable data. Moreover, an analysis focused specifically on mainstream news articles or outlets, being a more ubiquitous form of media that reaches more people than its 'alternative' counterparts, could provide a greater insight on the impact of media in promoting Canadian identity. As this content analysis is exploratory, the multiple and nuanced meanings of Canadian identity cannot be fully captured. Focusing on content analysis came with benefits as it narrowed down the scope and highlighted how such a discourse plays out in the public. However, the limitations of this approach were most notably in how media reports could be read differently by other people and are thus influenced by it in varying degrees. To what extent Canadian citizens' conceptions of their national identity is influenced by the news they consume may also be a potential new direction for further inquiry. In addition to looking at a larger sample, another way to observe these sentiments among actual citizens would be to interview them to get their own interpretation of the news and how it fits into their conceptions of being Canadian.

Two of the articles in this study (the Montreal Gazette and Ottawa Citizen articles) come from newspapers owned by Postmedia, the single largest print news corporation in Canada. A larger study — with a greater sample size — could conduct a broader, more in-depth analysis of the potential differences in focus between alternative and mainstream media. More specifically, it could look into how different media ownership affects the content and therefore the messaging surrounding refugees and Canadian identity. Along the same lines, another potential direction for research would be in analyzing articles from the CBC specifically, as it is a state-owned entity, and examining how their portrayal of Canadian identity might differ from non-governmental news outlets.

## CONCLUSION

The way in which the Canadian news media conveys its national identity within the context of the Syrian refugee crisis is through comparing Canada's efforts to other countries, namely the United States, thus highlighting Canada's noble international humanitarian reputation. The Canadian media further promotes Canadian identity in this context by invoking Canadian values, including multiculturalism but also, more broadly, compassion and moral responsibility. The articles that promote Canadian identity in this context tend to give voice to Canadian government officials and experts more so than average Canadian citizens. As these spokespeople primarily work for the government, they have been primed to invoke notions of national identity suggesting that the interweaving an identity-building project to a refugee policy is a deliberate and concerted effort, with specific messaging and talking points that underline the sentiments found in this content analysis. The findings of this exploratory study suggests that the act of linking national identity and humanitarian immigration is one-sided, favouring the image of the accepting country. Accepting Syrian refugees is an act that puts Canada in a good light and subsequently strengthens Canadian identity.

The impact of centring the narrative of immigration and refugee resettlement around 'Canadian identity' and 'Canadian values' obscures the very people it intends to help. By focussing on what this means for Canadians, it shifts the focus away from the refugees who cross the border and their own unique set of challenges in integrating and resettling. It also takes away from the work that is still left to be done on the Canadian government's side after the refugees come into the country. Of course, one can argue that infusing Canadian identity into this project compels personal investment on the part of Canadians, e.g. it makes private citizens more willing to sponsor refugee families. In this way, it is not necessarily a negative. However, it does bring into question the sincerity and the lengths to which Canadians are prepared to provide to ensure successful integration and resettlement of refugees in its borders.

Moreover, as this acceptance of Syrian refugees brings out notions of diversity and multiculturalism, Canada's own history of oppression and subjugation of its indigenous peoples seem to be ignored. It is then worthwhile to consider the implications of how media conveys who it is that Cana-

dians should care for, and more notably, who we do not. The refugee crisis in Syria is not a Canadian-made crisis. From a framing analysis perspective, the 'frames' of news media must "define problems, (...) diagnose causes, (...) and suggest remedies" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). If Canadian news media were to focus on Indigenous issues, the root causes of those issues would not shine a favourable light on the Canada we see today. As such, Indigenous issues are overlooked as they implicate not only the responsibility of the Canadian government, but also call into question the supposedly 'benevolent', 'multicultural', and 'compassionate' qualities that contribute to the imagined national identity of Canada. Therefore, focussing instead on the Syrian refugee crisis — over other domestic issues — lends itself well to signalling how Canada is "doing the right thing" (CBC). Addressing issues pertaining to Indigenous or other marginalized communities, which require an acknowledgement of Canada's accountability does not convey the same sentiments and therefore are not used as a tool for shaping and communicating a national identity.

These interpretations are not definitive and require further examination. However, these findings do provide a good entry point to understanding how Canadian identity is communicated in the context of humanitarian immigration on a mass scale and have implications for an understanding of Canadian identity and society as a whole.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Debra Pentecost for giving me the opportunity to write and conduct research on this topic for her Canadian Society class. I am also indebted to Curtis Seufert, my editor, who showed me what I could do with this paper. Lastly, I want to extend my gratitude to other professors and friends who have shaped my writing and thinking throughout my undergraduate career, particularly Ana Vivaldi, Lindsey Richardson, and Tom Kemple.

Appendices

Table 1: Four Main Catego

Categories: Article	Other countries	International reputation	Multiculturalism/ Diversity	Other Value
CBC	1	1	0	0
Canadian Press	1	1	1	1
Montreal Gazette (Opinion)	1	1	1	1
Ottawa Citizen	1	1	1	1
Toronto Star (Commentary)	1	1	1	1
rabble.ca #1 (Analysis)	0	1	0	1
rabble.ca #2	0	1	0	1
rabble.ca #3	1	1	1	1
The Tyee (Opinion)	1	1	0	1
Georgia Straight (Commentary)	1	1	0	1
TOTAL	8 (80%)	10 (100%)	5 (50%)	8 (80%)

Table 2: : Comparison of Countries

Categories: Article	United States	Europe	US & Europe	Other	None
CBC	0	0	1	0	0
Canadian Press	0	0	1	0	0
Montreal Gazette (Opinion)	0	0	0	1	0
Ottawa Citizen	0	1	0	0	0
Toronto Star (Commentary)	0	0	1	0	0
rabble.ca #1 (Analysis)	0	0	0	0	0
rabble.ca #2	0	0	0	0	1
rabble.ca #3	0	0	0	0	1
The Tyee (Opinion)	0	0	1	0	0
Georgia Straight (Commentary)	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	4 (40%)	1 (80%)	2 (20)

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# **“More traumatic and humiliating than assault itself”: Exploring Students’ Perceptions of Dalhousie University’s Management of Sexual Assault Issues**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sexual assault on university campuses remains a pervasive issue, with Dalhousie University being no exception. It has been argued that universities regularly fail their victims of sexual assault as they do not adequately manage sexual assault issues on their campuses. Few studies, however, identify the perceptions of students on these university campuses. A qualitative methodology of nine semi-structured interviews was employed to explore the perceptions of Dalhousie undergraduate students regarding Dalhousie’s management of sexual assault issues. This study shows that Dalhousie University, in the eyes of its students, does not adequately manage sexual assault issues on campus. Students speak to the persisting rape culture and lack of resources on campus as well as the multiple barriers to these resources that exist. This research sheds light on the consistent rates of poor management of sexual assault issues on university campuses nationwide, from the perspective of the students, some of whom are victims of these sexual assaults.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The Perpetuation of Poor Management**

There is recent evidence of sexual assault on Dalhousie University (Hunter, Maxwell, & Brunger, 2015, p. 1), which makes this research timely. Specifi-



cally, in December of 2014, a Facebook group titled the “Class of DDS 2015 Gentlemen” was created (Hunter et al., 2015, p. 1) by thirteen male students from the Dentistry program at Dalhousie University with the original intention to use it as a resource for discussions relating to schoolwork. However, the use of the group took a sharp turn when posts began to appear that “included the thirteen men “joking” about chloroforming and raping their female classmates, taking a poll about which woman in the class they wanted to have “hate sex” with, and making generally sexist comments” (Hunter et al., 2015, p. 1). The story quickly made public news and a call for justice for the victims and their allies of these posts became a country-wide request. Dalhousie University responded to the issue by committing to a restorative justice program, where the perpetrators and victims participated in “meetings that allow harmed parties to describe how they have been impacted” (Karp & Frank, 2016, p. 145). However, the university received a great deal of criticism from the public with the chosen method of restorative justice by Dalhousie officials as they believed that it was not justice enough for the actions of these men.

A similar case at Dalhousie was made public in 2015 and was known as “The Dal Jungle” (Vaughan, 2015, para. 2). The Dal Jungle was an Instagram account made by certain men in the Dalhousie residence of Howe Hall. A woman reported the account to Dalhousie officials after she found out that there was explicit sexual content, including photos of students performing sexual acts, being posted on the account (Vaughan, 2015, para. 3). Dalhousie took differing actions towards the men depending on their involvement in the group, ranging from removing them from residence to changing them to a different residence and banning the men from drinking alcohol (Vaughan, 2015, para. 11). Dalhousie received the same criticism as with the Dalhousie Dentistry scandal; people were not satisfied with the management of the issue by university officials.

There is a consensus in the relevant literature that universities do not adequately manage the epidemic of sexual assault on campus (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006, p. 483). However, there is a lack of research regarding issues of sexual assault at university that is informed by the perceptions of students who are the actual victims of sexual assault. Sexual assault refers to forced or pressured non-consensual sexual acts that occur between individuals (Follette, Polunsky, Bechtle, & Naugle, 1996, p. 28),

with these sexual acts being either physical or non-physical. The following research, situated at the intersection of feminist sociology, criminology, and the sociology of our legal system, focuses on the prevention and management of sexual assault.

Through qualitative analysis, this research explores how universities deal with sexual assault issues on campus, through the perspective of their students. This article aims to answer the following question: "How do Dalhousie students perceive Dalhousie University's management of sexual assault issues on campus?" I explore this question by addressing relevant themes such as rape culture and institutional sexism, as well as the availability of and potential barriers to resources for students, and Dalhousie's efforts to inform students of said resources. I answer these questions by conducting a qualitative analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with nine current students at Dalhousie University, some who have been the victim of sexual assault.

By exploring the perceptions of students and their views of Dalhousie's management of sexual assault issues, it becomes evident that the results of this research fit with patterns in the existing literature which indicate that the prevalence of rape culture on campus, the lack of adequate resources to address sexual assault matters and the barriers in place to these resources all reflect poor management on the part of the university. The following builds upon existing literature by exploring how sexual assault issues are dealt with on university campuses by the management of a university, with the aim of the relevant university policy-makers obtaining a better understanding of sexual assault issues in order to meet the current needs of victims and their allies and to prevent assaults in the future.

Conducting research on this topic is crucial to the ultimate goal of bettering the management of cases for past, current and future individuals who will, or have had to, deal with the issues that come with being a victim of sexual assault. Ultimately, my research will aid in raising awareness about the management of campus sexual assault by universities. The following section gives a discussion of the research framework for this study.

### **Research Framework: Rape Culture, Resources and Barriers**

There is a consensus within the existing literature suggesting that universi-

ties do not deal adequately with sexual assault victims and their allies with three more prominent and recurring themes: rape culture, the adequacy of and ability to access resources, and the barriers to victim support. While tying into existing, generally quantitative, research on these topics, illuminating the finer details and experiences of students through the use of qualitative interviewing is imperative. There are three concepts at hand, which dictate the poor management of sexual assault issues on university campuses: rape culture, the adequacy of resources for victims and their allies, and the barriers that exist while trying to access these resources.

### **Rape Culture**

The term ‘rape culture’ not only serves as a theoretical concept that explains sexualized violence in a given culture (Rentschler, 2014), but also works as a tool for campaigners who utilize it as a new method for defining and tackling the issue of sexual assault as everyone’s problem, not just the problem of victims and their allies. The ‘cultur[al]’ aspect of the term is important to understand as there is a “system of cultural oppression that makes it [rape culture] possible” (Wunker, 2016, p. 55). Rape culture points towards the normalization of rape due to societal and cultural attitudes toward gender and sexuality (Stewart, Dobbin, & Gatowski, 1996, p. 161), having been identified by feminists as an ambiance that “condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm” (Wunker, 2016, p. 54). The alternative is therefore “consent culture”, with “consent” referring to “the unequivocal affirmative communication of voluntary agreement” to a sexual act (Vandervort, 1986, p. 233).

Understanding how rape culture may shapes the perspective of Dalhousie students or the university’s management of campus sexual assault issues, as well as whether students believe that Dalhousie adequately raises awareness enough about consent and/or enforces a consent culture on campus will help to answer my research question.

### **Resources**

Understanding how victims and their allies access and utilize available resources aimed at sexual assault matters. As Hayes-Smith and Levett state, “even if sexual assault resources are available at a university, it does not mean students are receiving, using, or learning from them” (2010, p. 350). However, most literature does not discuss how students are able to access resources, or whether the resources are indeed helpful.

The resources, policies, and other steps towards addressing sexual assault on campus that students request from their universities include a “a variety of programs or services such as Rape Aggression Defense classes, improved lighting, limited access to facilities/buildings, student escort services, etc” (Zugazaga et al., 2016, p. 34) as well as “installing security systems, sponsoring campus-wide prevention workshops, instituting tougher policies and sanctions, and disseminating information about rape and helping resources” (Ottens & Hotelling, 2001, p. ix). In their website content analysis of women’s resources and sexual assault literature on college campuses, Hayes-Smith and Levett note that not enough institutions have reacted adequately to promote preventative, educational, and mental health resources (2009, p. 110). However, as one of the interviewees in Mendoza’s study note: “out of all the campus priorities you might have, including information technology, your educational programs, your research, it doesn’t much matter if people don’t feel safe and are not safe on your campus” (Mendoza, 2014, p. 14). Prevention is also one of the best ways to dismantle rape culture by educating men and women before any sexual assault takes place. Ultimately, creating a culture of consent is fundamental (Mendoza, 2014).

Dalhousie University has resources for students on campus that have been introduced by the Human Rights & Equity Services office including counseling, harassment prevention strategies, sexual assault response guidelines, consent information and PEGaSUS, a psychoeducational group for victims of sexual assault. These resources are mostly available online and are accessible to all students. However, most literature does not note if students would be able to access these resources or if they would find them useful. Researching how Dalhousie students view campus resources, if and how they access them, and whether they find them to be helpful will aid in establishing new knowledge regarding Dalhousie student’s perspectives on their university’s management of sexual assault issues.

### **Barriers**

Lastly, I will discuss existing barriers to accessing resources that victims and their allies face comprised within two overarching types: institutional sexism and victim blaming. Institutional sexism refers to “acts or institutional procedures that help create or perpetuate sets of advantages or privileges for the majority group and exclusions or deprivations of minority groups”

(Korn, 1994, p. 90). In this case, the “institution” in question is Dalhousie University, while the majority and marginalized groups refer to men and women, respectively. Campuses condone victim blaming by “overemphasizing the victim’s responsibility to avoid sexual assault without balancing messages stressing the perpetrator’s responsibility for committing a crime and strategies bystanders can use to intervene” (Karjane, Fisher, & Cullen, 2005, p. 9).

According to a case study from the University of Saskatchewan’s response to two high-profile sexual assaults, Quinlan, Clarke and Horsley note “despite the alarming rates of sexual violence on Canadian campuses, universities are often unprepared and unwilling to take appropriate preventative action or provide a supportive response when sexual assault does occur” (1984, p. 46). University officials are often found to be unapproachable, creating an environment - through careless, victim-blaming words and actions - that makes it impossible for victims and their allies to seek the help they require (Wooten & Mitchell, 2016, p. 65).

Fisher and Cullen note how universities are commonly unwilling to help victims and their allies as victims because “cases exposed in the national media may bring scandal to the institution and its leaders, create distrust toward the administration among parents and alumni and erode fundraising efforts as well as legislative and philanthropic support” (2013, p. 367). This lack of support from the university directly relates to institutional sexism and the cycle of sexual assault cases recurring on campus as the perpetrators are not adequately dealt with. The literature reiterates how campus sexual assault policies need to indicate a zero-tolerance response in regard to sexual assault against their student population (McMahon, 2008, p. 362) in order to be effective. However, this is usually not the case. This relates to my research because exploring students’ perceptions of the barriers that are evident on Dalhousie’s campus, which hinder victims and their allies from receiving the help and information they need, will help in answering my research question.

## METHODS

My research was conducted at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I used qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with nine Dalhousie students to collect the data. I chose a semi-structured format for the interviews because, as Harrell & Bradley (2007) note, "this kind of interview collects detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational" (p. 27), allowing for important information to be brought up by participants. My research population consisted of then-current Dalhousie University students, specifically undergraduate and graduate students, of all genders. There were no further inclusion criteria outside of this as I aimed to ensure that I was reaching participants of various genders, classes, ethnicities, etc. I was not focusing solely on the experiences of women, as men also experience sexual assault on campus. Despite rates of sexual assault against men being relatively low, their experiences are also very important when conducting research on this topic. Additionally, men are crucial to this field of study as they need to be part of the solution to better managing sexual assault issues on university campuses.

I used mixed methods of recruitment and the sampling process was purposive in order to reach a variety of students at Dalhousie. I created and placed posters throughout the Dalhousie University campus. I also utilized my personal Facebook account, as well as the accounts of various Dalhousie committees and organizations by posting an announcement on their social media pages, as well as word of mouth, to recruit potential participants. I described the research and what it entailed to potential participants as they contacted me.

I was successful in recruiting participants, despite the challenges of it being an unappealing subject to speak about. Of the nine participants, two disclosed themselves as victims, eight were women and one was a man. All participants were between the ages of 19 to 28. I was successful in recruiting participants from across the range of years of study (first-year to those nearing graduation). One participant was in first-year, one was in second-year, two were in third-year, three were in fourth-year, one was in their sixth-year of study and one was a master's student. In terms of their faculties, all participants were in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. In terms of the participant's majors, one was majoring in Social Work, one was

majoring in Women's Studies, one was majoring in Political Science, two were majoring in Sociology and four were majoring in International Studies.

The students in my sample varied in their motivations for participating in the research. One participant was a friend of a victim and wanted to speak to their friends' experience. Two students participated because they were victims and wished to speak to their experiences. Two participants were involved in the Dalhousie Student Union and were activists who have been involved in campaigning on gender violence issues. Four participants were regular students who felt strongly about the subject and participated to have their voices heard.

The interviews lasted for approximately one hour and occurred at Dalhousie University in the Wallace McCain Learning Commons private rooms. Four individuals who were unable to meet in person for a variety of reasons were interviewed by phone. I also had an individual from the Senior Administration at Dalhousie express an interest in participating, however, when she saw the interview guide I had prepared in advance of the scheduled meeting, she decided not to participate.

I designed my interview questions to explicate participants' perceptions of Dalhousie University's management of sexual assault issues. The interview asked questions of the participants relating to how they think Dalhousie responds to sexual assault issues. I waited to see if the interviewees brought up any of my three core concepts (rape culture, resources, and barriers) spontaneously before I probed them with direct questions.

The data collected and analyzed consisted of transcribed interviews and interview notes. Through the data analysis, I looked for and coded according to recurring, evident patterns including the three concepts of my research as well as new codes that were generated as a result of new themes and patterns that emerged from the data. I was receptive to new findings that did not fit with the concepts I had initially associated with this topic, due to the flexible nature of qualitative research. The data collected was audio-recorded on a password-protected iPhone and did not include participants' names as each participant was identified through codes: P1 through P9. Prior to beginning the in-depth interviews, all participants were asked to sign a consent form, which stated that they were free to withdraw

from the interview or entirely withdraw their data from the research with no negative consequences.

The risks and discomforts experienced by participating in my research were not expected to surpass those that would occur in the participant's everyday life if they were to have a conversation about this topic. Strong feelings may have been aroused if the students felt passionate about the topic, or if they or someone they know was sexually assaulted. These risks were mitigated by creating a safe private space for the students where they would not be judged for their reactions, emotions, or experiences. I also had on hand a list of formal sources of support for sexual assault (e.g. Dalhousie Counselling contact number, etc.). A direct benefit of participation in my research included the opportunity for individuals to express their perspectives regarding a relevant and timely topic that is directly related to their university. An indirect benefit included their contribution to new knowledge on the topic. The following pages discuss the findings of the research.

## RESULTS

### **Personal Experience: Victims and Notorious Events**

Through my research of sexual assault at Dalhousie University, I was interested in learning how the participants' personal experiences, if any, with sexual assault on campus shaped their perceptions of Dalhousie's management of sexual assault issues. When conducting interviews, it was evident that two participants had direct experience with assault on campus as they acknowledged they were victims of sexual assaults that occurred at Dalhousie and spoke to those personal experiences. Moreover, there have been two notorious sexual assault events at Dalhousie that stand out: the Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal and the Dalhousie Jungle. These two events were spoken about at great length during each interview and the majority of participants were aware of both scandals.

### **Victims**

To begin, I will discuss the personal experiences of individuals who came forward as victims. Two participants chose to identify themselves as victims and speak to their personal experiences. In both victim cases, the participants noted that Dalhousie University officials had failed them in the man-



agement of their sexual assault cases and that nothing had come of the cases they brought before Dalhousie. In particular, one victim shared her personal experience as she read an email she sent to the university, speaking to her experience. The email is as follows:

I remember that back in August [the university] invited me to discuss my experiences in reporting so that I could provide some insight as to the barriers I faced [cries]. Um, this invitation meant a lot [sniffs] as I found it very difficult to express and [cries] politicize events in a safe space where I could feel like my voice was being heard. I hope that this opportunity [cries] is still on the table [sniffs] as I hope to outline the difficulties I have faced in this email [cries]. I feel as if I need to disclose these struggles even if it is via email so that there is an insight in improvements, even small steps [sniffs] can be made in the Dalhousie community by anyone who wishes to help [cries]... Throughout the last few months, I've learned many things. Most eye-opening lesson I have learned is that the reporting process [sniffs] along with the difficulties [cries] in poor service delivery on the university's part... are far more traumatic and humiliating than assault or harassment itself [cries]. To exemplify this in personal terms, I am now struggling with the effects of [sniffs] post-traumatic stress disorder [cries]... Unable to continue [cries] my studies, while my assailant is still walking the Dalhousie campus. This thought alone is very frustrating and is true for many other survivors. After doing some research I have learned that Dalhousie as an institution is not alone in this. Many institutions across North America have failed their students when it comes to reporting sexual assault [cries]. The failures in reporting only contribute to rape culture and counteracts the consent culture we preach about [...] my decision to transfer schools was one that was made so that I can heal at home with the greatest supports in my life while continuing on with my education. Um, I hope to get involved with the sexual assault support center of [university name] region and the University of [university name] women's center. I hope that I can act as a drop in the bucket to dismantle rape culture and ally with survivors. Thank you again for the opportunity to return and more importantly I thank you for your time to read this. Best of luck with your future endeavors, P1 [sniffs].

(Participant 1, 2017)

The email above had been sent to a Senior Administrator of Dalhousie three months prior, while the participant has at this point received no response. The victims made it evident that they thought that the university officials to whom they reached out had failed them by not addressing their cases and properly punishing their assailants. When the victim who provided the statement above was later asked what the university could have done to better manage her individual case, she said the following:

Looking back what I would have wanted the most and what I did want and still want is just to be heard and to be believed and to be taken seriously. I

just felt that I was a complete joke and by the end of it all I was so embarrassed and so humiliated, like, its like I said in the email earlier, the whole reporting process was so much more embarrassing and humiliating than the actual assault themselves.

(Participant 1, 2017)

The victims wanted to be acknowledged and believed by university officials. They recognized that the university did a disservice to them by not hearing their story and taking the appropriate action against their assailant. This participant demonstrated the case of a victim of sexual assault believing that the university did a poor job of managing a sexual assault matter. Likewise, another victim who came forward noted that they too were looking for more directed resources to ultimately gain the support they required. The participant stated, "I was looking into more resources actually for Dalhousie, I was sexually assaulted, [...] I guess I was just looking for more, more support" (Participant 4, 2017).

In this instance, the participant further noted that they had trouble accessing timely sources of support as they were unable to make an appointment with counseling services or to seek any other alternative support. The participant shared with me the frustration and resentment they held towards Dalhousie for not properly managing their case. The victims unanimously agreed that they wanted to be heard by university officials and they ultimately wanted to be given the support and justice that was required after their assaults occurred, yet in all cases, the victims felt the university failed them as they poorly managed, and in one case, did not manage the sexual assault issues before them at all. This was also the case for the two notorious events of sexual assault known on Dalhousie campuses.

### **Notorious Events**

The Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal and the Dalhousie Jungle were two publicized cases of sexual assault on Dalhousie campuses that the majority of the participants were aware of. In terms of the Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal, when asked the question, "Do you know of any cases of sexual assault on Dalhousie campus?" all nine participants brought up the Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal. The majority of the participants also knew about the Dalhousie Jungle. One participant stated:

Okay, so, what I know about the Dalhousie Jungle was that it was an Instagram, I believe it was a private Instagram, some of the posts had included

videos and photos of these guys, having sex with girl and the people who were involved in the videos didn't know they were being recorded, and there's a problem there, there's no consent, and then number two was then that some of these individuals were under age.

(Participant 1, 2017)

This case was less publicized and smaller in scale than the Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal, which may be why certain participants were unaware of this matter. All participants believed that Dalhousie did not manage either of these issues adequately and that more needed to be done in both instances, to provide justice to the victims who were at the center of the suffering in both of these cases and to serve justice to the perpetrators of the sexual assaults. When asked, how Dalhousie could have better managed the Dalhousie Dentistry scandal, one participant said the following:

Personally, I think they shouldn't have been able to get their Dentistry, any of them. I'll say this because they weren't like history or bio majors, they were dentistry majors that had, now have access to drugs that will basically... put... someone incapacitated and the idea that if I went to a dentist who had made sexual, like, rape jokes and like, trivialized sexual assault and, like even, kind of hinted that they would do it...like that would be so, terrifying and I would never go to them again if I learned that. I don't necessarily think that they deserve to be dentists with that type of power.

(Participant 2, 2017)

The nine participants held corresponding views that the method of restorative justice employed in managing this case was not adequate and the majority of participants agreed that the men involved in the scandal should not have been allowed to graduate and become dentists. They expressed their dismay with the choice of restorative justice:

Restorative justice... I don't think this is the right time to use it, because they were, there weren't 18-year-olds, they were very much adults in a professional program and if they were going out in the world and weren't punished for the harassment they did [...].restorative justice, I think, just didn't quite meet it.

(Participant 3, 2017)

In the case of the Dalhousie Jungle, when asked how Dalhousie could have better managed the issue, one participant noted that "a lot of people think that Dal, like many universities—I don't think I've heard of a university that has a perfect reporting [system for] sexual assault... that it doesn't have all the right infrastructure in place" (Participant 2, 2017).

The participants consistently agreed that the Jungle was not adequately managed either, as the men were still allowed to attend Dalhousie. One participant noted:

I don't think that was enough because I don't think it ever resolves the situation and the offenders, I really don't think they learned what the issue was. They were kicked out of res, or moved to a different one, they were still in classrooms. Like, I've heard from a couple people 'cause they were in commerce... they still go to Dal [laughs] and they're still in classes with the girls that they assaulted.

(Participant 3, 2017)

As discussed in the research framework of this paper, there is a widespread consensus that universities do not adequately manage issues of sexual assault. This consensus was also evident across all nine interviews that I conducted. When asked the question "Do you think Dalhousie adequately deals with sexual assault issues?" the answer from all nine participants was no. It was evident that their answers stemmed from their difficulties with their personal experiences as well as the perceptions students held about the two scandals that occurred at Dalhousie. When asked to expand on their answers, one participant stated, "I don't know, to me, I believe that it's more about image than... the safety of students" (Participant 6, 2017). Several of the participants mentioned that they believe that Dalhousie put more effort into public relations than they did in eradicating the situations and providing justice for the victims.

### **Support: Lack of Resources, Existing Barriers, Rape Culture and Consent Culture**

#### **Lack of Resources**

As the interviews progressed and the participants were asked to discuss available and accessible resources to address sexual assault, all nine participants held strong opinions. When asked about the resources that the participants were aware of on campus, one participant noted:

Yeah. So, [sighs], I know, part of the health professions, the health promotion something or other, they're trying to introduce like, group, support groups. and that's I think then with social workers, so they're peer support groups. So if, if you're a survivor, and I think they're weekly and they're drop ins, I think that's one resource... I don't remember what they're called. They are advertised at the Dal clinic, that's how I saw them. And I think they're held Tuesdays and Thursdays, different focuses for different

groups, there's an Equity and Accessibility Office in the DSU, that is somewhere I might go. Or the DSAS, which is the Dalhousie Student Advocacy Service so if I needed help interpreting a policy or finding out where I need to go to make a complaint or work through that, I would probably go there, and obviously, the counseling unit and my physician probably.

(Participant 3, 2017)

The majority of participants spoke to almost all the resources that were available on campus. However, one participant highlighted a common theme that was evident in all participant's answers, noting "yeah, I mean what I remember is that the South House dealt with like, with far more cases than Dal, like it was really obvious that people felt more comfortable going to this body that wasn't so closely associated with Dal" (Participant 7, 2017). South House is a volunteer-driven sexual and gender resource center run by Dalhousie University and University of King's College students. The participants explained that the students felt more comfortable utilizing student-run resources as they were more beneficial in managing sexual assault cases, in terms of response rates and compassion shown for victims.

As the interviews continued, the majority of participants who were knowledgeable about these resources also knew that the Dalhousie Sexual Assault Phone Line had recently been defunded and when asked about that, one participant stated:

I sit on the DSU council and the reasoning that the DSU didn't want to keep trying to fund it through like increments of money is because they wanted consistency for the people that used the phone line. So not to have it on one month and off the next. It was, they wanted like a flow of money... And so, they were depending on the university to match half of what the cost is. Which I think is only \$30,000. That's like chump change for the university. And I think the phone line, you can't look at as how many people you get per month calling in, or how many people per week you help because that's not particularly the point of it. You're not trying to say like yes I want more, [laughs] sexual harassment survivors calling.

(Participant 3, 2017)

The participants who spoke about the phone line expressed their frustration with its removal. Participant 3 provided an explanation as to why the phone line was defunded —due to the lack of use— but none of the participants believed that that was sufficient to measure the usefulness of the phone line. Another participant expressed her anger as she stated:

So the sexual assault helpline I knew a person that was really involved and their report was that they had gotten like, over the last year, that they

were running like, like they got many more reportings of sexual assault than the Dal Security. So... When, when a resource like, when a program is getting more responses um, or more reports of sexual assault than the Dalhousie Security team, you know that, that resource is filling a void... that the Dalhousie Security team is not. And the fact that Dalhousie was presented with those numbers and then basically rejected the fact that they were filling a void with this hotline and said that those people don't matter is like an absolutely ridiculous thing. It just goes to show like how little Dalhousie actually gives a crap about their students... And gives a shit about the people that have gone through sexual assault. It's absolutely brutal, I was appalled [laughs].

(Participant 9, 2017)

It was evident that participants were angry not only because there were not enough adequate resources on campus, but because a resource that was available and being used had been defunded, making the process of reporting and seeking help that much more difficult for victims and their allies. They expressed that the phone line needs to be reinstated to ensure that victims and their allies have the peace of mind that there is a resource available to them if they feel the need to use it.

Next, when asked if they thought the resources were useful, a participant mentioned how although these resources are in place, their usefulness "will more come down to how they actually work once you're in the system, or, actually needing the resources" (Participant 8, 2017). Another participant spoke to this and noted:

"I know people who have sought out resources, but I know in terms of like, maybe the 3 or 4 resources that I know of on campus, those being the Human Rights Equity and Harassment Prevention Office, Dalhousie Security, Dal Health Services and the sexual assault and harassment phone line... probably like 2 or 3 of them weren't helpful whatsoever" (Participant 1, 2017).

These numbers display the poor management of sexual assault issues by university officials who fail their victims by the lack of, or non-existing support. Hayes-Smith and Levett (2010) allude to the biggest issue with resources, which was also identified by the participants. That is, despite resources being available on campus, students and victims are truly not receiving, using or learning from these resources (2010, p. 350) ultimately contributing to the poor management of sexual assault matters.

### Existing Barriers

When asked what hinders people from accessing these resources, a participant noted the following:

I think, making the information about what their rights are as a student, making that accessible to the average student [is]... definitely like a point that needs to be concentrated on. I think, creating a more cohesive and inclusive policy... about sexual assault or harassment or violence on campus needs to be done and that can be done through the ombudsman person office, the Human Rights and Human Resources, through the administration, and I think for that information to be accessible and for the university to have an accurate picture, it needs to not just include top-down, it needs to also look at what's already available on campus, and be able to like bring them together, because I feel like this university has a lot of initiatives and I feel like they may not be working because people don't know they exist, or, it's not working for the people that we have on campus.

(Participant 3, 2017)

All participants provided similar answers in relation to the barriers to these resources. Another participant argued in favour of, "having it, actually advertised a lot. Make people know that there are resources, but also make them accessible. I mean if you have counseling but it's the wait is so long that it's completely useless, then... you don't really have counseling in my opinion" (Participant 5, 2017). This participant expanded upon the issue that there is a lack of advertising on campus, contributing to the lack of knowledge and use of resources. One participant posited that the lack of advertising was "more about image, and so by talking about sexual assault they're bringing up that you know, it could happen on campus and that kind of stuff" (Participant 6, 2017). The participant stated that Dalhousie cares more about maintaining their image than they do about speaking about sexual assault in order to help their victims of sexual assault. This represents a barrier as victims are hindered by Dalhousie from seeking the help they need. Moreover, accessing these resources and the usefulness of them can be partly attributed to the barriers that are in place that hinder students from accessing or learning from them. Students and victims are unable to access these resources as there were long waitlists, rendering individuals unable to make appointments.

In their research, Wooten and Mitchell highlight a significant barrier (2016, p. 65) to be university officials' lack of support and belief of sexual assault survivors. Wooten & Mitchell note that officials are often unap-

proachable in terms of sexual assault matters as they victim blame and do not provide support to victims (2016, p. 65). Participants held corresponding views with Wooten & Mitchell's argument. One participant noted:

I feel like people in those positions [university officials], I mean, and I even know them, like you have compassion for them and know that they're human and do care deep down, but I feel like people in those roles, they're playing the roles more than being human, like they're accountable to a certain, like they're accountable to making money. So, it's really, I feel like it's always going to be a push and pull against them like trying to cover up things and trying to make Dal look good and trying to erase any kind of shadow on campus.

(Participant 7, 2017)

The lack of belief and support from officials inhibits the reporting of sexual assault and consequent treatment of the matter from the victim's perspective, as well as the delivery of justice to the perpetrator. Ultimately this fosters the perception of the poor management of sexual assault issues on campus.

### **Rape Culture**

In the discussion surrounding barriers, the concept of rape culture was also mentioned. When the participants were asked if they knew what the term rape culture meant, all nine participants were aware of it. One participant defined it as the following:

The kind of mythology that our society undertakes, normalizing sexual assault and sexism, and sexual, like over, sexuality. How we take it as like, almost, a commodity and instead of a privilege or right, so, there's a lot of well, I deserve to have sex with someone because we, like I, we talked or we dance or she, we had sex this one time, so that means she must want to have sex with me, or he, must want to have sex with me again. Or I took her to dinner, this idea that sex is like something that you can like, earn, or take. And that it's no big deal to talk about somebody or go after them sexually without their permission. Joke around about it, rape jokes or sexual assault being normalized and trivialized I guess.

(Participant 2, 2017)

Students were aware of rape culture and all nine participants were able to adequately relay the definition to me, indicating the same definition identified in the literature review by Rentschler, that of rape culture being sexualized violence (2014, p. 936). When asked if rape culture existed at Dalhousie, all nine participants said yes. One participant stated,



I think it's like, any other university campus where it's just cohorts of young people experiencing freedom from home for the first time and there's just this misogynistic attitude and normalization of assault. It's just what happens at parties, or, it's, it's just something that.... Happens, it seems. And, I don't really know how to quantify it but it's, just like a pervasive mentality that it's okay and this shit just happens and that's fine.

(Participant 5, 2017)

Another participant noted, "Well, I think that the Dalhousie administration's lack of responses or lack of adequate responses is the perfect example of rape culture on campus" (Participant 9, 2017). Participants noted that Dalhousie did not educate their students about rape culture and it was not something that was commonly discussed on campus, similar to the lack of discussion surrounding consent culture.

### **Consent Culture**

The concept of rape culture tied in with participant's views on consent and all nine individuals agreed that Dalhousie does not do an adequate job of fostering a consent culture. All nine participants were aware of what consent meant and identified consent similar to the definition provided by Vandervort in the literature review, that of the confirmation of voluntary agreement (1986, p. 233). One participant stated that they "couldn't really pinpoint any explicit ways that they support consent culture" (Participant 8, 2017). When asked if Dalhousie enforces a consent culture, a participant said: "I don't think they do. Um, because it's not really a thing, it's not, it should be, but I don't think it's really something that is actively being encouraged or nurtured amongst young university students" (Participant 5, 2017). Students also noted that there were no specific resources directed at explaining or focusing on consent. Another participant noted:

Consent like I don't know if I've seen or heard anything on the Dal campus about consent... which is important [laughs] because that should be like plastered on every wall in res [laughs]. And... Talking about it and normalizing... I wish consent was as normalized as rape [currently is]. Like... Consent needs to be; we need a consent culture [laughs].

(Participant 5, 2017)

When asked if participants knew of any resources relating to consent, all nine stated they didn't know of any on campus that were tailored to educating students about consent.

## **FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Consent Education**

When asked the question, "What are other services that Dalhousie could offer to students?" one participant offered that:

Information on consent is a great idea. I think probably the idea of consent is a little hard for a lot of kids to grasp, especially when you're coming to a new school, you're already kind of out of your comfort zone, you're freaking out a little bit all the time about everything (Participant 8, 2017).

The participant noted how consent education is a crucial element in preventing sexual assault on campus.

### **Reinstating Hotline**

Another participant suggested reinstating the hotline, which was supported by all nine participants. The participant said the following:

I think that having like reinstating the sexual assault helpline, um, would be amazing for Dalhousie. Just that not only is it helping people that are going to be using it in the future, but its giving other people piece of mind that.... They can go somewhere and report sexual assault without being fear, fear of being, like basically fear of going to the police.

(Participant 9, 2017)

When asked about their thoughts on the removal of it, one participant shared "I thought it was brutal. just garbage" (Participant 9, 2017). As a result, the majority of participants agreed that reinstating the sexual assault hotline would be a great way to improve the management of sexual assault issues on campus.

### **Sexual Assault Center**

One common suggestion was the creation of a sexual assault center for victims and allies. Another suggestion concerned the formation of some sort of office or team dedicated towards tackling rape culture or promoting consent culture on campus, among other things:

I think if Dalhousie wanted to make this campus a safer place with resources trying to decrease the amount of harassment and violence as well as decrease rape culture and increase consent, I think there needs to be a centralized body that has this, so that can include an equity officer, that can, it can include a social worker, a psychologist, group workshops. But those need to be together.

(Participant 3, 2017)

All nine participants unanimously agreed that a center on campus was a great initiative for the university to take on. On March 16, 2017, voters passed a levy initiated by the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) to create a Survivor Support Center on campus. The DSU noted that the levy will allow “the DSU to establish a robust in-house support program dedicated to service delivery, education and advocacy for survivors of sexual assault, violence, and harassment” (DSU, 2017). This levy was necessary as the DSU provides support for students currently with the sexual assault phone line, however, without funding from the university, these resources are unsustainable (DSU, 2017).

The DSU notes that they “recognize that dedicated, long-term support for survivors must be accompanied by education and advocacy to ensure safer and more supportive campuses for all members of the Dalhousie community” (DSU, 2017). While this is wonderful news, and a major advancement for victims and their allies, the levy was not a result of the effort of university officials. Rather, it was initiated by the DSU, which is student-led. As the DSU made evident, the student unions are only capable of doing so much, they require support and funding from the university to make the changes that need to be made at this point.

## CONCLUSION

### **Perceptions of Students Infer Deficient Management**

This research explored the question of how Dalhousie students perceive their university’s management of sexual assault issues on campus. I would argue that my research is being completed at a particularly important time in Halifax, given the recent publicity of sexual assault matters at Dalhousie University, and will contribute to the existing literature on the topic of sexual assault on university campuses. I would like for my research to stand as a reminder that victims and their allies are not alone in the fight against sexual assault: they are heard, believed and taken seriously by individuals such as myself. Despite the disservice that has been done to the victims of sexual assault by university officials, their fight is valid and worth pursuing.

The research concluded that the perception of the participants is that Dalhousie does not adequately manage issues of sexual assault and this in turn leads to greater issues for victims. The conclusion drawn stems

from the personal experiences of victims, and the participants' perceptions of how the Dalhousie Dentistry and Dalhousie Jungle scandals were managed by the university. One participant shared,

I barely even think about the assaults now, I think about... what they said to me and what they were doing and what they were thinking and all that other stuff and how, you know, now my assaulter is studying and is like, you know, almost done his degree and will probably be done his degree before this whole process is you know, finished.

(Participant 1, 2017)

It was concluded that university officials are doing a disservice to their students through their poor management, or lack of management, of sexual assault issues on their campuses. In terms of personal experience, from victim stories to the notorious events, it is evident that students do become victims of sexual assault on campus and they feel as if Dalhousie did not manage their sexual assault cases adequately. Likewise, all participants agreed that Dalhousie officials did not adequately manage the two public scandals as they failed to provide the adequate justice for the victims at the center of each case. In terms of support, students report feeling a lack of adequate and available resources on campus for victims and their allies to utilize. Despite a few resources being available, students feel that they are not truly receiving, using or learning from them, leading to the perception of poor management of sexual assault issues by Dalhousie University officials. Likewise, there are barriers to accessing these resources, making the reporting process and the support process difficult for victims and their allies, including the existing rape culture and lack of consent culture on campus. The lack of support and belief from university officials in sexual assault cases contributes to poor management of sexual assault issues on campus.

In terms of future considerations, certain steps could be taken to improve the management of sexual assault issues at Dalhousie. These steps include enhanced services needed on campus for students and victims such as consent education, the reinstatement of the sexual assault phone line, and the creation of a sexual assault support center. By exploring the concept of rape culture, accessible resources for victims and their allies and the evident barriers victims and their allies may experience, I am able to contribute to the future considerations that universities may take when addressing their management of sexual assault issues on their campuses. Further, I may provide a condensed version of this research, the conclusions drawn and the future considerations suggested, to university officials to allow them

to understand how students perceive their management of sexual assault issues and where improvements can be made to better meet the needs of victims of sexual assault.

It is important to bear in mind that this study is exploratory, with a small sample and therefore is not representative of the whole Dalhousie population. Therefore, the conclusions being made cannot be generalized to Dalhousie as an institution. If this study were to be replicated, but done so to be representative of the population, the sample size would need to be larger in order to be representative of Dalhousie as an institution. A representative study may be conducted through the use of anonymous surveys, as this is a less invasive and personal approach and individuals may be more inclined to participate anonymously. This kind of study would be beneficial in reaching a larger sample and drawing more representative and generalizable conclusions than this study was able to draw from a small sample.

However, it is important to still consider the benefits of conducting exploratory small-scale research through interviews and rendering a small sample study. The advantages of exploratory small-scale research allowed for more personal information to surface through a small sample size. The other advantage was the ability to read the participants body language and make inferences from it. In addition, small-scale exploratory studies using in-depth interviews can be helpful tools for formulating questions in larger-scale surveys as the interviews may render pertinent themes for further questioning in a survey. Small-scale exploratory studies are useful when researchers are attempting to obtain personal, detailed stories from the participants.

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# **“Keep it in the Ground”: The #NODAPL Fight for Indigenous Resurgence and Environmental Justice**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Standing Rock struggle has become a significant symbol in the fight for Indigenous self-determination and environmental justice, against an unsustainable economic system. However, the fight is bigger than a single pipeline. In this paper, I aim to understand why this social movement is considered worthy of attention, and its connections with coalitions and conscience constituents. I will be looking at the following research questions to address diverse views arising from the #NODAPL movement: Who are the #NODAPL protesters, and what motivates individuals to participate in such events? To counter an ongoing colonial practice of discursive erasure of Indigenous voices, I hope to consciously re-centre the perspectives of Indigenous scholars and activists, alongside existing social movement literature.

“Protesting is about hope. Even a single voice in the dark is a sign of bravery.”

– Dan, First Nations elder (#NODAPL Day of Action event)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every turning point in the history of humanity has involved echelons of people banding together to fight against injustice. Social movements are a vital lifeblood in the drive for change (Wilkes, 2006); the results of social justice activism diffuse throughout society and its success is to everyone’s benefit. Collective action is therefore one of the most tangible ways in which civilians can shape the society we live in.

This paper aims to assess the #NODAPL social movement, a pivotal series of protests in mid-2016 in opposition to the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline, at the Standing Rock Reservation in the United States. This case encompasses intersectional issues of race and class, through an examination of marginalized Indigenous populations asserting their political sovereignty. It simultaneously pushes back against insidious capitalist practices, which are an evolution of the historical colonial legacy enacted on Indigenous groups. The #NODAPL movement is thus a site that intertwines two major causes that are often considered separately: Indigenous rights and environmental justice (Nov 15 #NODAPL Day of Action, ActionNetwork.org and Jacobs, 2010).

I will be looking at the following research questions to address diverse views arising from the #NODAPL movement: Who are the #NODAPL protesters, and what motivates individuals to attend and participate in such protest events? These will allow me to examine collective identity politics, providing a broad understanding of this movement through the levels of participation and commitment that people have dedicated to this cause over time. Furthermore, what makes this social movement worthy of attention and urgency by protesters, and what connections can be made about coalitions and conscience constituents (those who are not directly affected by the cause of a protest but still willingly support it)?

I aim to answer these research questions in part by using my field notes from a protest event, the “#NODAPL Day of Action”, held on 15th November 2016 across North America (I personally attended this event in Vancouver, BC). To counter an ongoing discursive erasure of Indigenous ‘authentic’ voices – which strips them of their political agency in a context where they are always objects, not subjects of governance (Palmer, 2006) – I hope to centre the works and words of mostly Indigenous scholars and activists in this paper using brief interviews from the event, alongside existing social movement literature. This is a conscious attempt to re-centre Indigenous perspectives as the authoritative voices of their narratives, as they are the ones fighting on the frontlines for their collective rights. While my analysis does not engage with how the #NODAPL protesters framed this particular social movement, the interview quotes which speak to this can be explored in Appendices A – C, which contain my field notes, interview quotes, and photos from the event.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Colonialism and Indigenous Resurgence

Social movements are sustained and organized interactions of political struggle that allow members of marginalized populations to challenge the dominant infrastructures of “institutions, elites, authorities, or other groups” (Wilkes, 2006 and Tilly, 1997). These include, but are not limited to, an emerging crisis and concern over the deprivation of rights (Wilkes, 2004) of the marginalized group by the system’s elite. In a majority of cases, the system of oppression occurs over an expansive amount of time. As Asafa Jalata (2013) argues, in the case of Aboriginal and Indigenous populations in North America, it began over five centuries ago; the first contact with European settlers and the ensuing process of colonialism. Denied their very existence, Indigenous populations were stripped of their land, dispossessed through relocation to reserves, and forced to assimilate into ‘civilized’ (which was defined in eurocentric terms as white and Christian) society. The erasure and degradation of their age-old traditions and cultural practices (Jalata, 2013) in residential schools is an often-ignored aspect that was central in the formation of the Canadian nation-state and the image of the ideal Canadian citizen. Many have called colonialism a form of genocide, given the drastic shrinking of Indigenous populations’ numbers down to a fraction of their original, from 75-100 million to about 4.5 million in the first hundred years (Jalata, 2013). Such practices can also be considered a form of colonial terrorism. According to Jalata (2013), violent subjugation of the Indigenous population is “the main political tool for dispossessing, destroying, and/or suppressing Indigenous communities and establishing settler colonialism and its institutions in the Americas” (p. 132).

Today, many descendants of settlers are convinced that colonialism is a thing of the past, with a reluctance or refusal to take ethical and political responsibility for the present plight of a grossly marginalized Indigenous population (Jalata, 2013). However, colonial legacies and inter-generational trauma continue to scar the lives of Indigenous people today. First Nations and Native American communities continue to face hardship on different levels: the loss of their land and sovereignty, police brutality, overrepresentation in prisons, and severe levels of poverty among others (Wilkes, 2004).

Rather than a passive acceptance of these imposed injustices, Indigenous resurgence against the debilitating process of colonialism has been resilient (Jalata, 2013). Indigenous communities across North America continue to articulate their grievances against a system that is stacked against them, expressing a collective sense of being wronged, engaging in unprecedented and wide-scale waves of political mobilization over the last fifty years (Tilly, 1997 and Wilkes, 2004 and 2006). One central concern of many protests are the attempts to re-establish their “legitimate status as sovereignty” (Jalata, 2013, p. 145) and reclaim the political rights to their homelands that were previously lost. An interesting point to note is that Indigenous resurgence is one of the few assertions of collective identity by an ethnic group that has insofar been characterized by a peaceful protest style and operates on a grassroots, community-driven basis (Wilkes, 2004).

### **Capitalism as the new Colonialism**

“Colonial sickness is the disconnection [from our land].” – Earnest C., Aboriginal activist (#NODAPL Day of Action event)

Due to rapid industrialization, Western countries saw the dominant perspective shift from a colonial system to a capitalist one. During the colonial era, a variety of discourses were used by white European settlers to justify their occupation of Indigenous lands and its consequences, such as Christianity and the doctrine of divine duty. The perception of Indigenous races and cultures as inferior (Jalata, 2013) also justified the way they were treated as it meant “they” (i.e. Indigenous groups) could not possibly govern themselves or follow the same path of progress as the settlers. European settlers declared that although “Indians” had a natural right to the land, they had failed to “subdue” or “tame” it, and therefore they did not deserve legal and civil rights to it (Jalata, 2013, and Pflug-Back and Kesīqnaeh, 2016). This mode of thinking was central to early colonialism. Arguably, those rationalizations have not been resolved as misconceptions nor disappeared into the abyss of history: settlers continue to disseminate various ideological pretexts in order to continue expropriating Indigenous lands (Jalata, 2013). Western capitalism became the new colonial force, with historical violence repackaged as ‘economic development’ (Jalata, 2013, and Palmer, 2006). In the public sphere, advertisements for pipeline projects erase the presence of Indigenous reservations that would be disrupted, while focusing on

the economic benefits the pipeline will bring. This is one example of how institutional elites and corporations continue to justify their interests over Indigenous lives in the public sphere (Jalata, 2013). Much like colonial practices which legally declared Indigenous territories a 'vacuum', this erasure effectively reproduces the material and symbolic violence that Indigenous populations have undergone for centuries.

Resource extraction projects such as mining, fracking, and pipelines disrupt Indigenous land, yet they remain a key component in building the nation; the natural resource sector contributes around \$27 billion a year to the Canadian economy (Pflug-Back and Kesīqnaeh, 2016). Traditional Indigenous understandings of humanity's intimate relationship to the dynamic land were replaced by profit accumulation, turning living land into "deadened land of rock and soil" (Palmer, 2006). Glen Coulthard, an Indigenous (Dene) scholar, suggests that this profit-based system is what oppresses Indigenous people most in contemporary settler-colonial states (Pflug-Back and Kesīqnaeh, 2016). All recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination are persistently excluded from governing systems in this new era of globalization (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005).

Capitalism presents itself as an inescapable force, giving the impression that no legitimate alternatives exist (Corntassel, 2012). Capitalism is problematic in that the power and influence it holds over people is no longer pinpoint-able to one key actor, instead, it is diffused across the corporations and political systems of the respected settler-state (Palmer, 2006). This makes it all the more difficult to identify and freeze the target responsible for the injustices borne by marginalized populations (Alinsky, 1971). As Jeff Corntassel, a Cherokee Professor at the University of Victoria argues, when the accumulation of monetary profits becomes "a purpose in and of itself... Indigenous homelands and waterways become very vulnerable to exploitation by shape-shifting colonial powers" (Corntassel, 2012, p. 95). However, he continues more hopefully, quoting Mohawk academic Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (2005) Indigenous "resurgence" (p. 24) is one way to oppose such impositions, by engaging in "on-the-ground actions to defend our homelands" (Corntassel, 2012, p. 94) and holding these systems accountable for ongoing injustices. This is best exemplified by the #NODAPL movement, a series of grassroots protests in mid-2016 that stood in opposition to the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline.

### **#NODAPL: Background and Movement Context**

The Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) is a crude oil transportation project by Energy Transfer. It starts in North Dakota, cuts straight through 50 countries in 4 states, and ends in Illinois (Dakota Access Pipeline Facts, Energy Transfer website; See Appendix C, Fig. 2.1). With an estimated cost of \$3.7 billion dollars (which the website frames as an 'investment'), the pipeline is estimated to transport anywhere between 470,000-570,000 barrels of oil per day. Under the section on community, there is more discussion of local labour, landowner partnerships, and ensuring minimal disruption to agricultural processes. The news section features articles heavily skewed in favour of the pipeline, with headlines such as "Environmental fears over DAPL overblown", "Instead of #NODAPL, How About #YesDAPL?" and so forth. Overall, emphasis is made around "protecting landowner interests and the local environment", the cost-effective route of the pipeline and its safety, and boasts the number of jobs it would create during construction and the millions in economic benefit that the pipeline would supposedly bring to the United States.

What was most troubling was the lack of any mention of Indigenous consultation on the Energy Transfer website, let alone any acknowledgment of the pipeline's route intersecting with the Standing Rock Reservation (Appendix C, Fig. 2.1). In fact, an early proposal of the pipeline showed that it was originally meant to cut across the Missouri river northeast of the small town of Bismarck, but it was rerouted due to the potential threat to the majority white town's water supply (Dalrymple, 2016). Instead, it was changed to pass its supply of oil through the Cannonball River, directly under the Ogallala Aquifer (Appendix C, Fig. 2.1). As one of the largest aquifers in the world, Ogallala provides water to the downstream Standing Rock Reservation, the entirety of which would be drastically affected in the case of a leak or spill of the volatile fracked oil (Dalrymple, 2016 and Davies, 2016). The new route also conflicted directly with spiritually and culturally significant burial grounds of the Sioux nation (SacredStoneCamp.org, Proposed DAPL Route and Davies, 2016).

The intersectionality of race and class in the exposure of Indigenous populations to environmental hazards (Jacobs, 2010), such as the Sioux nation to this potential water contamination, is part of a larger historical pattern of racial discrimination seeping into policy. If we compare the relative

deprivation of the Sioux nation to the Bismarck town, it is no wonder that this clear disregard of Indigenous rights to access clean water moved thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies alike to mobilize and stand in solidarity with Standing Rock (McCarthy and Hunter, 2016; Jacobs, 2010; Wilkes, 2004; Pflug-Back and Kesīqnaeh, 2016).

### **Standing Rock and Indigenous Sovereignty**

“We are fighting the Dakota pipeline, but we’re also fighting the whole system of violence... when we have a natural resource development which is unsustainable, which threatens the very life of human beings and the natural world, we say absolutely no, it’s unacceptable. We deserve better than that.” – Michelle Cook, Standing Rock legal advisor (Davies, 2016).

The Standing Rock camp began in April (Davies, 2016), as a blockade and sit-in to obstruct the construction of the DAPL and in opposition to the existing capitalist economic order (Smith et al., 2001 and Tilly, 1997). This gathering of politically marginalized protestors not only demonstrated the internal solidarity, unity, numerousness, and commitment of the Indigenous population, but also aimed to put constant pressure on the corporations and political powers backing the DAPL by communicating their agenda and drawing public attention to their cause (Smith et al, 2001 and Tilly, 1997).

Nicholas Blomley (1996) examines the causes behind blockades, such as Standing Rock, arguing that this is a popular tactic in cases centring Indigenous land claims and struggles over land ownership. Blockades serve the dual purpose of not only opposing unsustainable resource extraction, but also forcing the state to recognize Indigenous people as political actors, with a say in their self-determination (Blomley, 1996). By asserting their physical presence and blocking construction access to the pipeline, the Standing Rock camp and its protestors powerfully and symbolically rejected the imposition of a capitalist system, and challenged their continued intergenerational territorial dispossession and economic marginalization in the destructive aftermaths of colonialism (Corntassel, 2012). In “[putting] their bodies on the line,” they managed to vocalise their relational and place-based existence, and articulate shared aspirations in “protecting our sovereignty and our land” (Blomley, 1996, p. 24 and 27).

The #NODAPL (No to the Dakota Access Pipeline) movement’s emergence out of this backdrop of environmental racism also highlights the need

for Indigenous land sovereignty. Following the colonial assumption that the land is there for the taking, projects such as the DAPL are often conducted on Indigenous land without first seeking tribal consent (Davies, 2016), or including Indigenous people in decision-making boards and regulatory commissions (Jacobs, 2010) prior to going ahead with construction. In fact, it was proved in court that the corporation behind the DAPL considered the construction permit a simple legal formality – rather than filing for permissions, construction of the pipeline began under the assumption that the project would be greenlit (Goodman, 2016) due to its proposed economic benefits and state interests.

## METHODS

On 15th November 2016, several hundred protests simultaneously took place across the United States and Canada in an incredible display of solidarity with those at Standing Rock (Goodman, 2016). Aptly titled the “#NODAPL Day of Action”, supporters of the Standing Rock protest were encouraged to join in on direct action at the nearest event in their city and demand the rejection of the Dakota Access pipeline. These events encompassed demonstrations that “target stakeholders at every level”, namely the Army Corps of Engineers office, companies partaking in the project, as well as banks financing it (Nov 15 #NODAPL Day of Action, ActionNetwork.org).

The main source of data that I will draw from is my first-hand account of one of these protests happening in Vancouver, BC on November 15th, 2016 (field notes in Appendix A, photos located under Appendix C). I was fortunate enough to attend the “VAN Call to Action: We Stand with #StandingRock” event, held outside the Vancouver Art Gallery. I arrived at 5pm sharp, in order to observe the dynamics of the protest unfold. The early protesters started recruiting volunteers to hold large banners such as “We Stand with Standing Rock” (Appendix C, Fig. 1.4), and face a relatively busy intersection, in a demonstration for the visibility of the goings-on at Standing Rock. Longer white banners titled “Stop Kinder Morgan” and “No Pipelines” (Appendix C, Fig 1.5 and 1.6) were also used to raise awareness of similar economic expansion projects within British Columbia, and to promote counter-resistance by highlighting their links to Standing Rock. Passing traffic extensively honked in support of the slogans on the banners throughout the event. Throughout the course of the protest, I conducted

a few informal interviews with some of the protestors (Appendix B) and spent most of the event as a supporter and participant-observer.

While collecting my data, there were a couple of areas that, upon reflection, could have contributed towards a possible form of bias in the research. Firstly, my positionality as a non-Indigenous participant differed greatly from that of an Indigenous insider in the movement. Secondly, I was also maintaining a critical lens on how these issues were being presented. In traditional media reports of Standing Rock, any #NODAPL protests were often misrepresented or sensationalized. In opposition to such coverage, the movement gained a lot of traction on social media, attracting significant public attention from social justice communities and disseminating on-the-ground information about the issue. This pivotal role of social media is reflected in the hashtag contained within the “#NODAPL” movement label, which displays how identity formation is formed within social movements online. However, in my observations of the event and during one-on-one interviews with activists, all of them seemed to stress the importance of being physically present at the protest to show support, which is why I chose not to focus on online collective identity formation in this paper as it seemed irrelevant to bettering my understanding of the larger motivations and attitudes behind said protests. Finally, my educational background in Sociology and gender, race, sexuality, and social justice (GRSJ) meant that I was more attentive to these intersecting issues as they played out, and therefore attended the protest as a supporter. This had a clear effect on the framing of my results – which might not have been the case if I had had a different contextual knowledge or opposed the #NODAPL movement to begin with.

The movement-led day of action borrowed from leadership in Indigenous groups active in the Standing Rock struggle (Nov 15 #NODAPL Day of Action, ActionNetwork.org). Once a sizeable crowd had gathered, participants were invited to share stories of their personal histories leading to their presence at the protest: “If anyone feels called to prayer, or tell a story of why they’re here, in support of Standing Rock [please feel free to come up to the front]”. Many shared their stories in activism in Vancouver or otherwise, and there were even a few participants who had been down at the Standing Rock reservation. Nicky, a First Nations woman residing in Vancouver, had just returned from camping at Standing Rock for three weeks: “that

experience changed me, and the way I thought about the way we exist... I felt that fire, and I want to [continue to] light that fire" (Appendix B, Speaker 9). Other Aboriginal leaders, veterans, and protesters sang traditional songs passed down by their ancestors, to honour the work being done in the uphill battle for Indigenous rights.

There was strong evidence of social networks and friendships; people at the protest were hugging each other upon recognizing them and meeting. However, when I asked an Aboriginal activist, Vicky, if she had come with anyone or knew anyone else at the event: "Not at the moment, there's a few people that I know will show up, but we're all friends and family here, so I don't feel uncomfortable whatsoever" (Appendix B, Interview 1). Vicky was also an active volunteer with protests opposing other pipeline projects in British Columbia. Charlie, a self-identified First Nations woman from the Squamish nation, echoed this sentiment: "[Standing Rock] is all everyone talks about, which is great, so it's hard not to get involved. I'm here by myself but I have supported other [anti-pipeline] gatherings" (Appendix B, Interview 2). A student from UBC, Hannah, also came by herself because she had "been following what's going on in North Dakota and wanted to show [her] support to the people down there" (Appendix B, Interview 3). Similarly to Vicky, Hannah also expressed participating in other social movements opposing pipelines, as well as other forms of activism at the university campus. As such, participants who were at the protest alone were there because they felt called to action to support Standing Rock, fulfilling the event's goal.

## RESULTS

### **Collective Identity, Participation, and Commitment**

An approximate 350 million Indigenous people around the world are linked by this ethnic identity, one that is "constructed, shaped, and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism" (Alfred and Cornthassel, 2005, p. 597). The formation of a collective identity in a social movement, such as the #NODAPL movement or a wider conception of Indigenous resurgence, plays a crucial role. Establishing its individual participants as part of a group that shares beliefs of a larger 'we' (Klandermans, 1997) by extension also marks out the opposing 'they' responsible for their predicament. This enables identity-oriented movements to realize their goals during protest ac-



tivities by expressing a coherent “logic of action” (Bernstein, 1977) through solidarity, common experiences, and collective interests (Wilkes, 2006).

“By [standing here in solidarity], we get stronger, and it makes it harder for the government not to look at who we are, that we stand together in unity... So it’s good to see all of these people standing here for everybody. Thank you for standing in support of all nations.” – Gordon, Aboriginal veteran

To gain an understanding of why #NODAPL and the larger issue of Indigenous rights and sovereignty is considered worthy of attention, I asked the broad question: Who are the #NODAPL protesters, and/or why do individuals attend and participate in these movements? Through participant observation, I noticed that the demographics of protesters consisted of distinctly Indigenous folks: elders, community leaders, veterans, and self-identified Indigenous speakers. There were also plenty of young conscience constituents: students such as myself, or those who described themselves as a “settler-colonial child” i.e. white Canadians. Some of my interviewee’s responses show that there is a deeply rooted collective identity, even among conscience constituents, in the importance of this cause. Protestors at the event also displayed a belief in the power of collective action to affect change, particularly due to the way that these issues affect everyone:

“I felt drawn to come out here today and just help as much as I can, because this is a huge issue that needs to be resolved and taken acknowledgement of... I believe as long as I make a presence, and voice my opinions, of protecting the water and our land, is so important to me.” – Vicky, Aboriginal activist

“Who drinks water here? Who needs water here?” [Audience response]  
“We all do...this is everybody’s fight. We are water.” – Earnest C., Aboriginal activist who had just returned from Standing Rock. (See Appendix B for more)

As such quotes make obvious, the Standing Rock struggle draws itself in connection to not only other Native issues, but also larger conceptions of environmental justice (Walker, 2016). Supporters of Standing Rock share a firm belief in the agency of collective action and protest to alter conditions of systemic injustice (Klandermans, 1997). They entertain the endless possibilities of bringing about change in this way (Romero, 2016) and look forward to the positive results of their collective action.

As attested by the literature, the true test for a social movement occurs on the ground when protesters are faced with the reality of challenging authority (Hirsch, 1997). This is particularly relevant to the #NODAPL movement, which considered the Sioux nation as a physical obstacle standing in the way of millions of dollars' worth of resource extraction (Pflug-Back and Kesīqnaeh, 2016). However, the sufficient creation of a collective identity protects movements against external threats, as protestors are often willing to continue participation, despite personal costs (Hirsch, 2007).

At Standing Rock, peaceful protesters faced serious physical risks: a high chance of being arrested, water cannons in the freezing cold winter, exposure to pepper spray at the hand of police, rubber bullets, and attack dogs (Davies, 2016 and McCarthy and Hunter, 2016). Ironically, these costs only served to solidify the resolve of protestors (Davies, 2016) as their belief in the cause and political solidarity evolved into the bandwagon effect, and an urge to be a "part of something that was much larger" (Hirsch, 2007). This further motivated their commitment and participation to this cause over time, despite the high risks involved. The public display of worthiness, unity, numerousness, and commitment - key characteristics of collective action - at Standing Rock to oppose the DAPL has inspired confidence in the fight for environmental justice and Indigenous rights alike (Tilly, 1997 and Davies, 2016).

### **Coalitions and Conscience-Constituents**

"They're trying to put the pipeline through my territory. I don't appreciate that."

– Kim, Aboriginal woman from Tsleil-Waututh nation (referring to the Kinder Morgan pipeline, at the #NODAPL Day of Action event)

This protest event and the issues being brought to the global stage at Standing Rock have fuelled Indigenous coalitions from across the continent. Given the complex cultural differences among distinct tribes, this used to be considered an ambitious task (Wilkes, 2006). The gathering of over 200 Indigenous nations and tribes makes Standing Rock a historic moment in time – the last comparable event occurred in 1876 (Walker, 2016; Romero, 2016; and Goodman, 2016).

Moreover, #NODAPL sparked the interest of various other environmental justice efforts, conscience constituents, and even disparate social

movement organizations. As evidenced by posters at the VAN Call to Action Event (Appendix C, Fig 1.5-1.6) and the event's description, many link the Standing Rock situation to ongoing land defense struggles here in British Columbia (VAN Call to Action, ActionNetwork.org). Other posters at the protest I attended also declared "No Consent, No Pipeline", highlighting the lack of Indigenous consultation that occurs before private corporations and the state go ahead with economic pipeline projects (Pflug-Back and Kes-īqnaeh, 2016).

Protesters who were not already opposed to similar pipeline projects in Canada, were certainly motivated by the situation at Standing Rock to stand up to corporations closer to home. The people I managed to interview also expressed this solidarity. Vicky expressed that this was her "first event with Standing Rock, but [she had] worked with Burnaby Mountain and been exposed to Kinder Morgan as well". Similarly, Hannah already planned to attend the rally against Kinder Morgan that upcoming weekend. Another such protestor is Melina Laboucan-Massimo, a Lubicon Cree who works at Greenpeace to stop the Kinder Morgan pipeline: "There are so many pledges of resistance; people are willing to hold the line... Just like Standing Rock, it shows the power of the people is real, it needs to be heard" (McCarthy and Hunter, 2016).

The support of conscience constituents and connections to other social movements were clear at the event, displaying the heavy reliance of social movements on the formation of solidarities amongst activists (Tilly, 1997). For example, a similar case of the Bolivia Water crisis in 2011 led to the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth (Earnest C., #NODAPL Day of Action event). This declaration echoes Indigenous politics of self-determination in the emphasis on the interdependent relationship between Indigenous people and the land, the land as a source of life and nourishment, and the impact that capitalist systems and such projects have caused on the Earth (Magallanes-Blanco, 2015). During the protest, there were also references to Ferguson, an infamous case of police brutality in Missouri (a fatal shooting of 18-year old unarmed Michael Brown) that sparked the social movement Black Lives Matter. As another distinct yet similarly oppressed community (Jalata, 2013), Black Lives Matter fights back against systemic racism that African-Americans in the United States experience. It is thus not surprising that the Black Lives Matter collective and

founders publicly issued a statement supporting the Indigenous resurgence at Standing Rock. An excerpt reads: "To be clear, this is not a fight that is specific only to Native peoples – this is a fight for all of us and we must stand with our family at Standing Rock... We are clear that there is no Black liberation without Indigenous sovereignty" (Black Lives Matter, 2016). The collective also draws links between the environmental racism at Standing Rock to the ongoing water crisis in Flint, Michigan (Romero, 2016). Moreover, in a shared history of "stolen land and stolen labour" in the United States, African-American communities are politically allied with the Sioux nation's Indigenous resurgence, against the larger capitalist regime that treats black and brown bodies as disposable (Walker, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

"People gonna rise like the water/ We're gonna calm this crisis down/ I hear the voice of my great granddaughter/ Saying, 'Keep it in the ground. Keep it in the ground. Keep it in the ground.'" – Dana, Metis status woman (leading a chant at the #NODAPL Day of Action event).

The Standing Rock struggle has become a global symbol in the "fight for indigenous self-determination, and against climate change and the unsustainable economic system" (Davies, 2016, p. 16). Alongside several thousand others who signed the online petition against this pipeline, I received a statement in my email inbox from Dave Archambault (Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux nation tribe) alerting me that as of 4th December 2016, the construction of the pipeline had been halted. After months of pressure by activists on-the-ground, the response of the Obama administration seemed to signal an acceptance of the challenging group (Standing Rock protestors) by its antagonists (the settler-colonial capitalist state) as a valid spokesperson for the legitimate interests of Indigenous rights (Gamson, 2003). Many celebrated this as a victory, commemorating the 'endpoint' of this challenge as an indication to cease protest activity (Gamson, 2003) and dismantle the camps.

However, the fight is bigger than a single pipeline. The reality of the shift from historical colonialism of Indigenous groups, to the modern-day grip of capitalism through forced resource extraction projects on Indigenous land need to be faced head on. Contextualising the root causes be-

hind the Standing Rock protests is key to a productive conversation moving forward. Alfred and Corntassel (2005) argue that if colonialism – and by extension, modern capitalism – operates as a disconnecting force, then Indigenous resurgence must centre the reconnection of the spirit with the environment. They also contend that Indigenous resurgence should not follow an institutional process, rather, will be most effective through “shifts in thinking and action ... that challenge state agendas and authorities over time” (p. 611). Indigenous resurgence is unsustainable without a breakdown of the entrenched systems in place that have beget the continued historical oppression of these groups to begin with.

These Indigenous scholars conclude with a proposed solution for moving forward. They recommend not to “wait for the colonizer to validate our vision of a free future... [but instead] to use our laws and institutions to govern ourselves” (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005, p. 614). Given the recent shifts in political leadership in the United States (McCarthy and Hunter, 2016) and the decisions made by the Trump administration to go ahead on these resource extraction projects, yet again without the consultation of Indigenous groups, it is clear there is much work to be done. There needs to be an explicit recognition of Indigenous political agency and its transformative potential (Palmer, 2006) – only in that way, will Indigenous groups truly attain the sovereignty and self-determination that will render future protests a non-necessity.

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## Appendix: Data

### A. Field notes: #NODAPL Day of Action event

VAN Call to Action: We Stand with #StandingRock

Date/Time/Location: 15 Nov 2016, 5-6:30pm, Vancouver Art Gallery (Howe St)

Large orange banner facing the street: "WE STAND WITH STANDING ROCK"

Strong evidence of social networks/relationships (people recognizing and hugging when they meet), but also many seemed to be there alone

More banners, posters, signs (images):

- o Water is Life
- o Water is Sacred
- o Solidarity with Standing Rock
- o #NODAPL
- o No Pipelines
- o No Kinder Morgan: No Consent No Pipeline
- o Stop Kinder Morgan
- o Mni Wiconi
- o Event description: Stand with the Oceti Sakowin. Kill the black snake. #NODAPL #MniWiconi #WaterIsLife

People in cars (Traffic next to road) honked in support of the slogans on the banners

Demographics: distinctly Indigenous folks (elders, community leaders, veterans, and self-identified Indigenous speakers)

- o Conscience constituents (self-identified as 'settler-colonial child' i.e. white Canadians) and students in the crowd
- o Connections made to other capitalist-driven movements: Animal agriculture
- o Other social movements: Ferguson and Black Lives Matter
- o Bolivia water crisis (Evo Morales)

Participants encouraged to share their personal histories: "if anyone feels called to prayer, or tell a story of why they're here, in support of Standing Rock, or why it's beneficial to stand together for and in support of our water, our land, as well as why it's important for all people of all nations to be here and standing up together."

Was handed a social justice newspaper at the end of the event: Fire This Time

### B. Interview Quotes\*

[How did you find out about this event? What motivated you to come? Did you know other people at the event/ Did you come with anyone? Is this your

first event in this movement? Are you involved in any other movements? (If yes, which ones, and why do you participate?)]

**Interview 1: Vicky, Aboriginal youth activist**

I: How did you find out about this event?

V: "I don't really use the Internet too often, but my roommates have informed me about it, probably about a month ago when they first started... Just people who have been through protests on Burnaby Mountain that I've helped support over the past couple of years, have informed me through emails, and facebook, and just interactions and natural connections, people just wanting to support it, that's how I came to be here. My fellow co-worker told me that this was happening today, so I felt drawn to come out here today and just help as much as I can, because this is a huge issue that needs to be resolved and taken acknowledgement of because it's not in the media, [I: yea, only recently has it been] recently it's getting more attention, but there's more media coverage on the Trump election more so than anything else. And of course that's going to be happening because everyone wants to know about situations like that where people can bind together and have strong connections together rather than having that [illegible. divide?] us."

I: So do you think the media has a lot of influence over us, like, what we find out about this issue and everything that we know about it?

V: I find that the media has a lot of control for sure on what we should be listening into so the lack of information in the multimedia [sic] has definitely been happening through anywhere where there's pipelines, staying and supporting any sort of water crisis or people's land getting taken from them, so it's definitely a word of mouth that's happening through the people, people are becoming more empowered through their voice, and that's what needs to happen. It's gonna connect us even more, in solidarity for sure.

I: Definitely. Did you come here with anyone or do you know anyone else at this event?

V: Not at the moment, there's a few people that I know will show up, but we're all friends and family here, so I don't feel uncomfortable whatsoever.

I: Is this your first event with this movement, or have you been involved with other movements?



V: This is my first event with Standing Rock, but I've worked with Burnaby mountain and have been exposed to Kinder Morgan as well [illegible... just a couple of pipelines] [I: environmental justice and Indigenous resurgence] Exactly. Just having more solidarity with Indigenous people, who are just standing up for our rights. And I believe as long as I make a presence, and voice my opinions, of protecting the water and our land, is so important to me. The love that I show for the land, will definitely show in the way that people perceive it."

"For Mother Earth... [save her? from] a virus which is the pipeline... standing for the air, water, trees, for the people we don't even know"

### **Interview 2: Charlie (First Nations from Squamish)**

I: How did you find out about this event? Are you here with anyone today?

C: Well I'm First Nations from Squamish nation, it's all everyone talks about, which is great, so it's hard not to get involved. ... [Here] by myself, [have supported other gatherings]

I: What message do you think we're trying to get across tonight?

C: I think it's about one-ness... understanding that we're not here just to make money, we are all living on this earth.

### **Interview 3: Hannah, UBC student (conscience constituent)**

Hannah: I have been following what's going on in ND and I wanted to show my support to the people down there. I came by myself and did not know anyone there, except you I guess. This is the first event to this particular issue I've been, to although I am planning on attending the rally on Saturday against Kinder Morgan. I have participated in a range of other events, mostly on-campus mainly related to gender-based violence but also around right to education (e.g. UBC proposing to raise tuition fees). I participate because these are issues I am passionate about and I believe all people should have certain rights, that we have some sort of duty to stand up for people in having those rights.

### **Speaker 1: Gordon, Aboriginal veteran**

The song was to honour all that are here, that when we leave here, we stand in solidarity... by doing that, we get stronger, and it makes it harder for the government not to look at who we are, that we stand together in unity. And being down here tonight for this, as part of standing rock, water is life Kinder Morgan pipeline... we talk about the media attention, we don't get media attention as big as the ads on Kinder Morgan ... they're buying these ads and paying all these people to say all these things.

· But if we look at everything that's being done and said, and the First Nations people and the other people who are going to be getting their land being taken away from them because of this pipeline, from South up to North, and we're not being compensated for it. And what they're doing is taking away the land, the medicines that we've grown, the forest, destroying animals, waterways, bushes, trees are being cut down to make way for the pipeline

- And for what? for money. ... people don't really know the impact that this is going to have on us, not just first nations people but everybody.

- So it's good to see all of these people standing here for everybody. Thank you for standing in support of all nations.

**Speaker 2: Corporal David W., Aboriginal veteran:**

From Grand Prairie, Alberta

"All veterans who arrive at standing rock... I was told, We will be peaceful no matter what they do. If they wanna start the fight, they'll start it. Just stand there. Well, we did"

"Blockaded every single road leading into the territory, and told the oil companies, this is our land, and you do not have permission to come on our land."

"What we're doing isn't for us. This is for our future generations. ... that's who we're fighting for... what we're doing here, is for them. not us."

**Speaker 3: Carl, older Aboriginal man**

Been doing these protests since Idle No More, for my son, for his kids, for my grandkids

Celebrities showing up and giving their support

Peacefully, with love and care for Mother Earth

Protesters [at Standing Rock] being treated disrespectfully and violently, but camps are peaceful ("someone playing a harmonica")

Protesting is about hope... "Even a single voice in the dark is a sign of bravery"

Stand up to the corporations ... "I really hope we can make a difference"

**Speaker 4: Alex, older Aboriginal man**

"We need an alternative (system) à it's being built with this movement"

Since Ferguson ... "it's Important to know that we can stand together united, Indigenous, non-Indigenous, POC, women, working class"

**Speaker 5: Kim, Aboriginal woman (Womens' Warrior song)**

Keep this centred around spirit... [Has to do with] collective conscience  
 We are all the same, we are all connected  
 "They're trying to put the pipeline through my territory. I don't appreciate that."  
 Next seven generations... all my relations  
 "This is a big deal, why we're here" -- A lot more work to do, not just the pipeline

**Speaker 6, Sarah from Alberta/Edmonton:**

Grew up on a farm, got to see beautiful plains and nature... I want my kids to be able to experience the same thing. And that starts with opposing this pipeline and others like it.  
 "They thought no one was going to stand up for them. They were wrong."

**Speaker 7: Dana, Metis status woman**

"Deepest belief that us standing here today does make a difference. It makes a difference... because when enough of us come together, it is powerful... we say enough is enough, we can create change. And it is not gonna come from the top down, it is going to come from a grassroots situation"

#NODAPL, water is life

Now, I'm going to do something quite brave for myself, I'm gonna get you guys to sing a four-line song with me... "People gonna rise like the water / We're gonna calm this crisis down/ I hear the voice of my great granddaughter, saying/ Keep it in the ground"

**Speaker 8: Earnest C.**

Came back from Standing Rock  
 "Who drinks water here? Who needs water here?" "We all do"  
 "This is everybody's fight. We are water."  
 The water that provides for your life  
 "Colonial sickness is the disconnection"  
 Bolivia: Environmental Earth Rights (references another movement), Evo Morales, Declaration of rights of Mother Earth  
 "Protect the Mother Earth (We Will) / Break the System down (we will)"  
 We need to be proactive and moving forward, more participation to protect our water

### Speaker 9: Nicky

Was also at Standing Rock for 3 weeks

"That experience changed me, the way I thought about the way we exist"

Feeling that fire and wanting to light that fire

Continue every day, if we can... to show [people] what's going on, we need to wake up. "If we do fight they will change"

For the parts of creation that can't speak

This fight isn't just at Standing Rock, this fight is everywhere

Need to block those streets sometimes... "There's more of us than there are of them. we are very powerful, standing together, we are unstoppable."

\*Many of the names have been changed or abbreviated for confidentiality purposes as well as to differentiate the various speaker and protesters present.

### C. Photos from event



Fig 1.1-1.3: Slogans/signs used at the VAN Call to Action event on



Fig 1.4: 'We Stand with Standing Rock' banner



Fig 1.5: 'Stop Kinder Morgan' banner

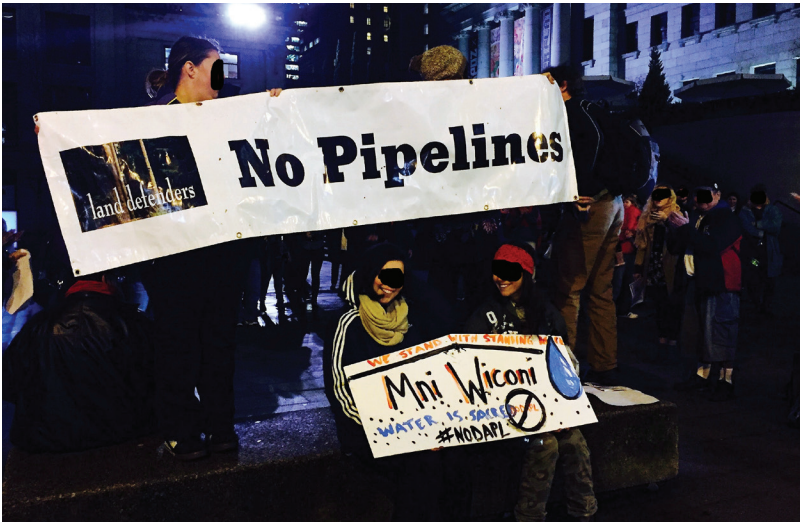


Fig 1.6: 'No Pipelines' banner and 'Mni Wiconi' poster

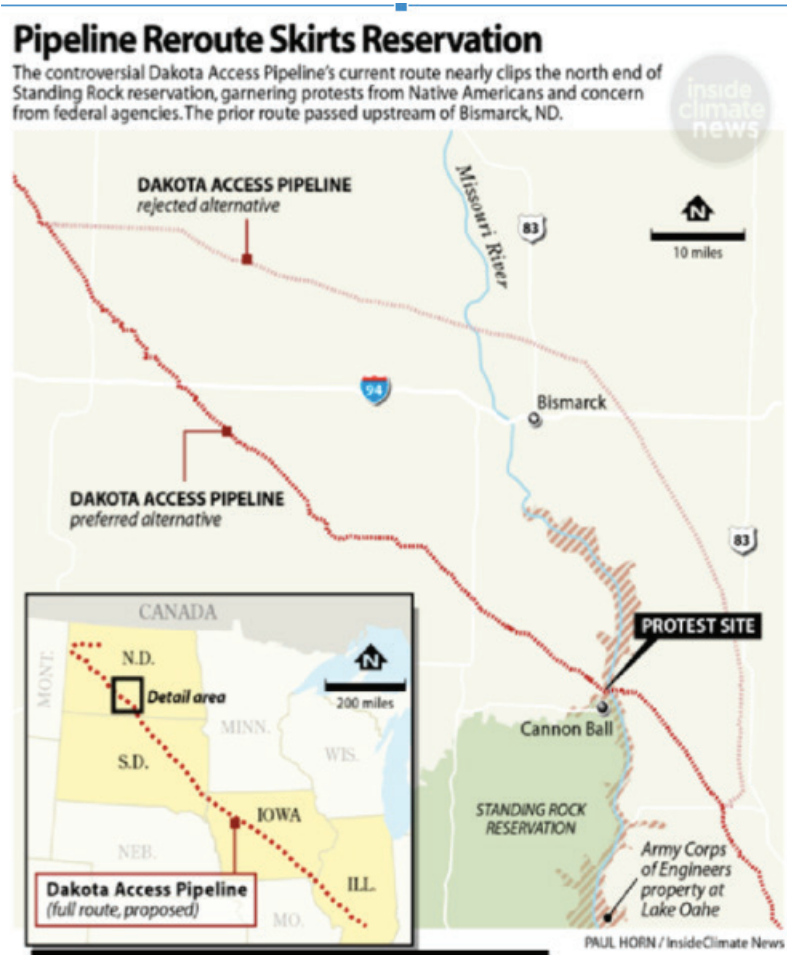


Fig 2.1: Dakota Access Pipeline route (including proposed and re-route)  
McKenna, P. (2016, September 8). Dakota Pipeline Fight Is Sioux Tribe's Cry  
For Justice.

Retrieved from: <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/30082016/dakota-access-pipeline-standing-rock-sioux-army-corps-engineers-approval-environ>



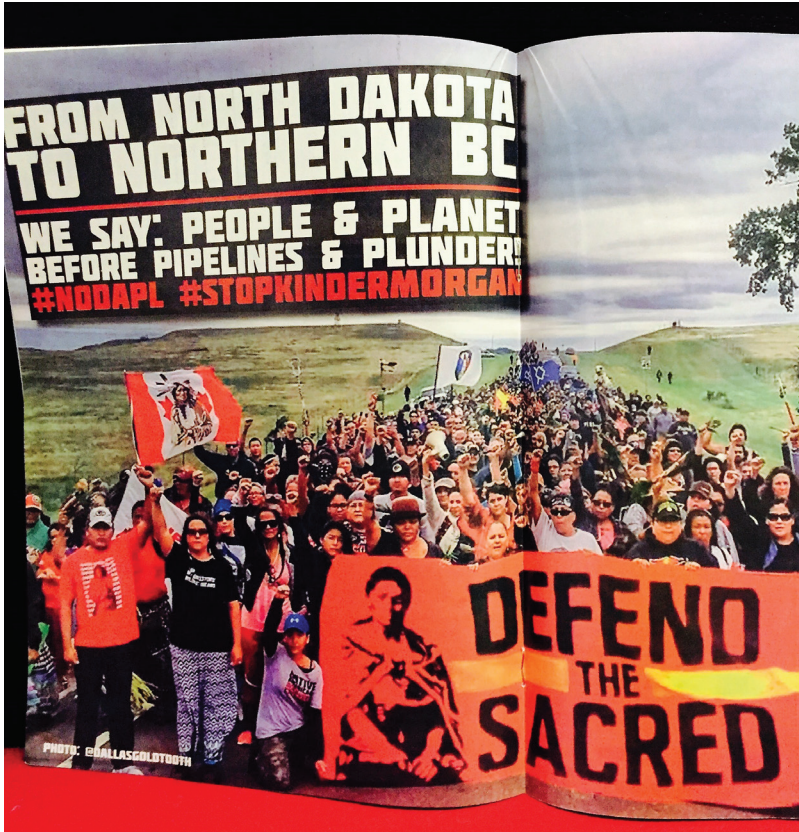


Fig 2.2: Centre-Spread from Fire This Time.

## Access Denied: The “Forbidden” Intimacies of Maids in Singapore

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### ABSTRACT

Live-in migrant homemakers, who are more commonly known as maids in Singapore, are often employed by middle-class working Singaporean mothers to fulfill household needs and childcare duties. Intimacy and impregnation are often feared by and denied from these migrant homemakers because of the stringent laws and surveillance institutionalized by the Singapore government. However, national policies and institutional sanctions are woefully inadequate explanations for the constant denial and control of maids' intimacies. Using a theoretical perspective, this essay seeks to delve deeper into the “forbidden” intimacies of maids by illustrating how immigration policies and laws are often not only power-laden, but deeply embedded within intersections of gender, class and migrant status that serve to organize social actions. With maids being regularly reminded and warned about the legal and economic repercussions associated with their performance of intimacies, fear is constantly reinforced, instilled and internalized upon. Symbolic interactionism helps us unravel the micro realities of how maids in Singapore negotiate their intimacies beyond institutional forces. These performances are arguably (and surprisingly) a contrast to the legal and formal expectations of the state and employers.

### INTRODUCTION

Behind the very domestic walls of the ideal nuclear family in Singapore, lies the ever-pertinent fear of intimacy and impregnation of their live-in home-



makers. Live-in migrant homemakers, who are more commonly known as maids or foreign domestic workers in Singapore, are often employed by middle-class working Singaporean mothers to fulfil household needs and childcare duties. Predominantly hailing from Indonesia and the Philippines, these women chose to migrate to Singapore in the hope of better employment opportunities and salaries, offering their services as domestic maids (Poon, 2003; Yeoh & Huang, 1998).

Many of these domestic maids live under constant surveillance and fear. The fear of performing intimacy in public, the fear of getting caught by their employers for having a boyfriend and getting pregnant are just some of the reasons as to why their intimacies are often forsaken in order to keep their job (Seow, 2015; Tan, 2014). The denial of rights to intimacy and marriage, coupled with constant surveillance by their employers, are typical stories in the everyday lives of these live-in migrant homemakers and in the eyes of Singaporean society (Poon, 2003; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). This brings us to the question as to why their intimacies are systematically denied and kept under control in their transnational experiences and pursuits for paid work. Intimacy becomes suppressed, left behind and arguably “forbidden” because of the imposed fears and sanctions, not just institutionally, but also constantly recurring in their interactions and everyday lives. While the oppression of their intimacies seem to be acceptable precisely because of the live-in nature of their caregiving work, as well as justified in the name of national immigration policies, it is however important and worthy of our attention to delve deeper into these seemingly “naturalized” institutional policies to unravel the systematic inequalities that have come to shape the experiences and material realities of these transnational migrant women in Singapore.

This essay thus seeks to contribute by employing a theoretical perspective in exploring the situation of “forbidden” intimacies amongst domestic maids in Singapore. Drawing upon intersectionality theory as outlined by Patricia Hill Collins (1998), I will first attempt to explain how the intersections of gender, class and the nation at the macro and institutional level, has resulted in both the persistent denial and control over the intimacies of these domestic maids in Singapore. Next, I will further explain the case of the “forbidden” intimacies by using symbolic interactionism to illustrate how perceptions of intimacies and fear associated for some, are often not just shaped by macro institutional forces, but also, in their everyday mi-

cro interactions with employers and friends. It is therefore paramount to delve into the interplay of both the macro perspective and micro realities of these maids, in order to fully capture a holistic explanation and understanding for the puzzle of “forbidden” intimacies. I will also show that their experiences are more than just the intersections of their particular social categories, but more importantly a dialectical, intersectional relationship between their social categories and the state’s broader structural forces.

### **Maids: Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore**

Before delving into the lived realities of the domestic maids, I will first provide an overview on the historical and contemporary context of foreign domestic labour in Singapore. Riding on the waves of globalization, Singapore opened its doors to foreign labour and immigrants in the 1990s to boost economic productivity and tackle labour shortages in particular sectors of the economy (Chia, 2011; Tan, 2010). Foreign migrant workers were largely imported from the “Third World”, less developed neighbouring Southeast Asian countries, to fill specific vacancies in certain industries such as construction work and domestic care (Yeoh, 2006; Chia, 2011; Yeoh & Chang, 2001). There is a need to recognize the “gendered nature of [transnational] labor migration” (Asis et. al, 2004, p. 18), whereby female migrants are often hired in specific sectors, particularly that of private and domestic care industries. As such, the feminization of care-giving work and the gendered ideology of women being the primary caregivers of households have undeniably spurred the maid industry in Singapore (Asis et. al., 2004; Poon, 2013; Teo, 2016).

Coupled with the increasing availability of outsourced domestic care services, rising female participation in the Singapore workforce has led to a rise in demand for care-giving services and maids (Teo, 2016). More importantly, the increase in female workforce participation has not been met with change in the convention of household responsibilities (Poon, 2003; Teo, 2016). Women are still understood as the primary caregivers within households and are responsible for domestic chores and responsibilities (Poon, 2003; Teo, 2016). However, Teo Youyenn (2016) argues that the ability to afford maids in Singapore also entails a particular class dimension. As such, middle-class working Singaporean women are therefore able to leverage on their class privilege by “participating in the transnational transfer of gender constraints and [household work] to less privileged women” (Poon, 2003, p. 6). The feminization and

outsourcing of the caregiving industry has undeniably paved an alternative pathway for middle-class Singaporean women to advance in their careers and partake in the workforce, while balancing their household demands through the employment of maids (Lyons, 2007, Teo, 2016). More importantly, the dimensions of gender and class discrimination seem to coincide in defining the very policies targeted at domestic maids, thereby denoting the importance of adopting an intersectional approach.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **The Macro: Intersectionality Theory**

Performances of intimacy and expressions of love and sexuality by maids are often largely constrained, denied and frowned upon in the context of Singaporean society (Poon, 2003; Ueno, 2013; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). While many maids are actively engaged in social actions of intimacy such as having boyfriends in public (Ueno, 2013), structural constraints, feelings of fear and unspoken social intolerance are often deeply embedded beneath these public expressions of intimacy. This paper seeks to argue that while intimacies are indeed not explicitly criminalized or prohibited, it is precisely because of the constant denial, oppression and control of their intimacies that discourage accessibility to intimate practices. Their intimacies are kept “forbidden” and left behind in the name of national policy and work purposes. Intersectionality theory thus has to be employed to fully encapsulate and understand the hidden workings of national laws and policies that have systematically resulted in the denial and oppression of intimacies.

Intersectionality theory has been widely employed by scholars across family studies and social theory (Collins, 1998; Vespa, 2009; Walby, Armstrong & Strid, 2012). This theory assumes and involves the “systematic analysis of the ways in which multiple social categories must be examined simultaneously rather than in isolation” (SOCI 415-201, Sept 21, 2017). Past scholars have explored and asserted that institutional and structural factors such as national laws and immigration policies are paramount in shaping the oppression and denial of intimacies of these domestic maids (Poon, 2003; Ueno, 2013). However, rather than arguing from a solely structural functional or institutional perspective, I seek to explain and assert that the very intersections of social categories such as gender, class and migrant status, are paramount in mutually shaping not just national policies, but

also in shaping the material and lived experiences of these domestic maids. As such, intersectionality theory is important in providing the explanatory power for a deeper understanding of the macro structural factors and unravelling the very intersections of particular social categories that uniquely affect the intimate lives of domestic maids in Singapore.

### **Access Denied: Intersections of Nation, Class and Gender**

As argued by Kayoko Ueno (2013), institutionalized structural factors such as national laws and immigration policies for domestic workers play an important role in shaping and constraining their performances of intimacy. Being recognized only as “partial citizens” or “transient”, their foreign status as work permit holders systematically denies and prohibits them from marriage, unless and rarely, approved by the Ministry of Manpower (Cheah, 2009; Poon 2003). Furthermore, as legislated by the law and work permits, cohabitation is not allowed, and pregnancy will result in not just the termination of their employment and work visas, but also dismissal and deportation back to their country of origin (Cheah, 2009; Poon 2003). These are some of the explicit and stringent laws that impose control on not just their social actions, but more importantly their bodies. The systematic targeted control of these female migrant bodies illustrates the intersections of policy and immigration status as profoundly gendered. Precisely because these foreign maids are female, there is a greater need to regulate and control their bodies to suppress any form of intimate relationship that would potentially lead to impregnation and inconvenience to their work environment.

However, to fully understand these gendered constraints and laws, the intersection of class comes into play. Many of these domestic workers originate from less developed countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia. These women are often referred to and known as “Third World Women” (Yeoh & Huang, 1998). They are classified as low-skilled, low-income migrants and allowed entry into a country with only a temporary work permit pass, which denies them opportunities and the right to citizenship or permanent residence (Asis, Huang & Yeoh, 2004; Cheah, 2009; Ueno, 2013). More importantly, being a work permit holder basically renders one as the “lowest” in society, the foreign “Other” requiring disciplining and therefore are explicitly exposed to both legal and social control (Poon, 2003). For example, employers and maid agencies are often held financially and legally responsible for their domestic workers. Employers must also bear financial

responsibility and pay a fine if the contract is breached in any way, such as the impregnation of their maid or if they go missing (Poon, 2003; Ueno, 2013). Furthermore, as raised by Wui Ling Cheah (2009), employers also have the power to terminate maids' working passes at any point in time, resulting in their immediate deportation. As such, maids are often subjected to not only strict surveillance and control measures by their employers, but are also in an unstable and vulnerable situation due to their migrant status.

Crucially, to fully understand the dimensions of class, there is a need to recognize the transnational nature of these maids in Singapore. As argued by Angelia Poon (2003), the "burden of housework and care-giving has been lifted from the shoulders of women in the First World and transferred to foreign maids from less affluent countries" (p. 6). These transnational female domestic workers therefore become the primary caregivers and homemakers for Singaporean mothers to fulfil the household needs of the "ideal" middle-class family. More importantly, these foreign maids are arguably displaced from their own families and sacrificing their own caregiving duties for paid work overseas, in hope for a better life for their families and children back home (Lyons, 2007; Poon, 2003; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). This profoundly unequal interdependent relationship between the "First World" and "Third World Women" display the class disparities that persist between the employer and employee at the individual level. More notably, class dimensions do facilitate and even reinforce such transnational inequalities on a global scale, precisely because caregiving work has become commodified, outsourced and afforded by more privileged First World women. Such power disparities illustrate the fundamental differences in class between First World middle-class Singaporean employers versus that of the transnational "poorer" maids who are in need of work. The haunting fear associated with strict surveillance, job insecurity and legal consequences systematically renders their intimate lives as "forbidden" and needing of control.

As pointed out by Cheah (2009), there is indeed no doubt that Singapore's "laws and policies work in tandem to deny [these maids] the basic legal protections enjoyed by other foreign workers not engaged in domestic work while constantly reminding these women of their position as "outsiders" in the Singaporean society" (p. 216). These national policies are not just innocently for institutional purposes, neither is the situation purely a result of structural forces dictated by laws and policies. I wish to highlight

that instead these national policies are profoundly classed and gendered. The targeting and surveillance of maids' bodies, the controlling of their intimacies and the imposition of fear, can be explained by the intersections of their gender, class and migrant status assigned by the nation. Precisely because these migrants are low-skilled, low income working permit holders who are female, impregnation and intimacies are explicitly controlled with strict legislation and financial bonds imposed on both the employer and employee's agencies. Indeed, this situation is, however, only unique to the case of female migrants who are working as domestic maids. Poon (2003) raised that precisely because of their intimate role as primary caregivers", the maid is a potential threat to cleanliness, morality, and family unity" (p. 13) and in need of intrusive control and constant regulation. The female body becomes commodified and fetishized as a site of control so as to maintain the "morality" of households and sustain the power dynamics between the maid and the employer (Poon, 2003). As such, state and employer controls include labour laws and contracts with compulsory medical check-ups every six months, constant surveillance of their actions as well as threats of deportations once pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases are detected (Lyons, 2007; Ueno, 2013).

In comparison to low-skilled male migrant workers in Singapore, control of sexuality is however not explicitly raised even though they are also equally subjected to surveillance (Ye, 2014; Yeoh et. al., 2017). For example, the case of Bangladeshi construction workers in Singapore are particularly scrutinized and monitored within the spaces of their dormitories such as having closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras to closely monitor and render their bodies visible (Yeoh et. al., 2017). Cheah (2009) also illustrated that the migrant policy for educated skilled workers or foreign talents includes permanent residency offers after two years and even tax breaks. Such privileges are unfortunately vastly different from that of the invasive social control and stringent labour laws experienced by the bodies and realities of these unskilled female domestic maids. Beyond the local constraints of intimacy performances, Lenore Lyons (2007) points out that maids are also prohibited from bringing their families or partners over to Singapore, neither are they permitted to return home until they have finished a minimum of two years.

### **Intersectionality: A Multi-dimensional, Dialectical Relationship**

Scholars have argued that the sole focus on the intersections of social categories neglects the broader intersections of the structural and political forces that systematically affects social inequalities as well (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Hence, the case of the maids' "forbidden intimacies" is more than just the fact that there is an interlocking system of social identities (i.e. low income migrant females) that systematically affect maids. Rather, the intersections are unique, different and salient precisely because of the structural and political forces driving these social organization policies. Intersections of both the social categories and broader structural forces therefore feed and converge to explain the discriminatory and "forbidden" experiences of maids in Singapore.

The point here is thus to recognize that it makes total sense from a solely structural and functional perspective for the nation to be manufacturing stringent macro policies for social organization. However, there is a need to look beyond the overarching pragmatic and utilitarian purposes of these policies. Rather than seeing these policies as targeted at only maids, there is a need to step back and recognize the dialectical and interlocking relationships of categories and forces occurring at different scales. This means that the profound intersections of structural policies and social categories (gender, class and migrant status) are dialectical. On the one hand, structural policies depend on particular "discriminatory" social categories along the lines of gender, class and migrant status to mutually construct and formulate them. The other side of the relationship reveals that interlocking social categories can also mutually constitute and influence the type of policies that one is subjected to. Precisely because "maids" are the ones that fit and embody these social categories of identities, they are therefore subjected to the structural policies and sanctions that are uniquely implicated on them. Intersectionality is therefore working at multiple dimensions, scales and even directions. Ranging from the individual to the institutional, all of which will uniquely intersect and therefore shape the lived experiences of fear and denial amongst maids in Singapore.

### **The "Forbidden": Symbolic Interactionism & the Realities of Maids' Intimacies**

Symbolic interactionism argues that individuals derive meanings through their social interactions in particular social settings and that these meanings

are often shaped and modified by their interactions with others. This perspective suggests that “symbols arise from social interaction, [and] at the same time, they shape social interaction and create social realities” (Milliken & Schreiber, 2012, p. 686). This theory thus helps us uncover the inconsistency between internalized meanings and actual social actions, which is precisely depicted in the lived experiences of these domestic maids (Milliken & Schreiber, 2012; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). While macro institutional policies do play a large role in constraining and denying intimacies of migrants, the fear associated and internalized amongst these maids are more often than not shaped by their individual interactions with their employers (Ueno, 2013; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). Furthermore, while some are fearful of publicly engaging in expressions of intimacies, others are still active performers of intimacies despite the strict laws and contracts regarding impregnation and marriage (Ueno, 2013). Hence, intimacy is therefore “forbidden” precisely because expressions of intimacies are still desired and even performed by some domestic maids, despite the associated fear and legal sanctions. As such, these meaning-making processes, such as the internalization of fears as well as the variations and contradictions in intimacy performances amongst domestic maids, are thus equally important in providing a holistic explanation on the lived experiences of their “forbidden” intimacies.

While the message put across by Singapore’s formal laws and national policies is explicitly clear in the denial and intolerance of intimacy, the fear of performing intimacy is further shaped and negotiated in the daily experiences of these domestic maids. Given that the employer is entirely legally and financially responsible for their maids, instillation of fear and surveillance are often taken up by employers to ensure that their maids have no or minimal access to intimacy. The interviews conducted by Ueno (2013) have shown how many domestic maids are fearful and often hide their romantic or intimate relationships with their boyfriends from their employers. For example, the case of “Michelle” in Ueno’s (2013) study said “I want to keep it a secret. I am a bit cautious not to let my employer know it” (p. 50). Furthermore, Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang (1998) also depicted the notion that employers often instill fear and warn their maids of the repercussions of impregnation and having boyfriends. As raised by one of the maid employers named “April” in their study:

They [foreign maids] should get off days, but they shouldn’t hang around town. I mean I don’t mind them going to church [and] having their own



fellowship in church as long as they mix around [with the right people] and learn good things, but if they hang around at discos mixing with guys - the other foreign workers - they will get into trouble. That is when they become a social nuisance. (Yeoh & Huang, 1998, p. 591)

Boyfriends are therefore perceived to be a negative distraction and influence whereby entering a relationship and performing intimacy are facets of undesirable and bad company. The idea of “social nuisance” as raised by “April” is often associated with sexual immorality, which ties intimately with the nature of domestic work (Yeoh & Huang, 1998). I wish to argue that precisely because they are the primary caregivers for the supposedly “moral” spaces of the “home”, any expressions of sexuality and intimacies only serve to be an inconvenience and contradiction. Employers are also fearful of maids bringing their boyfriends into their own homes, and therefore are intolerant of maids having partners (Tan, 2014; Tan, 2014). The instillation of fear therefore goes beyond that of formal control but, more importantly, is constantly shaped in their meaning-making processes and interactions with their employers. Fear is thus often shaped and reinforced with warnings and repeated reminders of the repercussions associated with intimacy performances.

Symbolic interactionism argues for the dynamic negotiations and meaning-making processes of our interactions in shaping our actions (Miliken & Schreiber, 2012). Indeed, it is noted that maids do comply and internalize the fears and repercussions often reinforced by their interactions with employers and therefore choose to be “rational” beings and forsake the engagement of intimacy (Ueno, 2013; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). As seen in the interactions of Lucy (senior maid) and Minda (junior maid) in Yeoh and Huang’s (1998) study, Lucy told her interviewers that:

...Minda (the junior maid in her first year of service) is quite young...my ma’am doesn’t want her to mix with other people and have boyfriend[s]. That’s why I tell Minda, don’t follow all the men there in Lucky Plaza. Say [if confronted by men], “No, I’m not bodoh [stupid] lah.” (p. 592)

The case of Lucy and Minda thus illustrates how Lucy, being the more experienced maid, internalizes the negative connotations around having boyfriends and in return, advises her junior to not do so as well. The authors also raised that it was their employer who instructed Minda to listen to her senior, Lucy (Yeoh & Huang, 1998).

However, there are many others who actively engage in performances of intimacy and romantic relationships despite the social controls imposed by the nation and their employers (Ueno, 2013). The case of "Agnes" as illustrated in Ueno's (2013) study depicted how:

[She] met her Bangladeshi boyfriend on her day off far from her employer's house because one of her friends had been sent back to the Philippines after a neighbour of her employer found out about the women meeting a man and took picture of them. (p. 50)

Despite knowing that deportation is a reality and possibility, she continues to meet her boyfriend rather than choosing to end the relationship. Furthermore, her strategic change in meeting locations in order to navigate with her intimacy practices illustrate her choice, rather than ignorance of the repercussions and consequences. As such, this inconsistency between the social meanings of fear and the actual practice of intimacy amongst maids can be understood by the workings of symbolic interactionism whereby strategies and meanings are constantly shaped and negotiated in order to get around their "forbidden" intimacies (Milliken & Schreiber, 2012).

Other than the interactions with their employers, these maids constantly engage in meaning making processes with themselves, friends, peers and members of the public, both inside and outside the domestic realm. Discussions of boyfriends amongst friends and meeting members of the opposite sex are often equally important in shaping and modifying the intimacy perceptions and social actions of these maids. Some maids do openly introduce their boyfriends to their close friends while others choose to keep it a secret and even dress up only in public toilets, in fear of having their employers find out (Ueno, 2013). As such, these strategies and variations in not only the meanings associated with intimacy, but also the contradictory actions and practices of intimacy by these maids, are constantly shaped, modified and re-negotiated in their individual daily experiences and interactions by employers, friends and even members of the public. As such, the symbolic interactionist perspective offers us an explanation of the micro and varied individual experiences of these domestic maids in negotiating their "forbidden" intimacies. Symbolic interactionism argues that the mind is inherently social and that through interactions, "the individual internalizes the definitions, symbols, meanings, and perspectives of others and is able to process information internally within a variety of contexts" (Milliken & Schreiber, 2012, p. 688). This perspective thus reveals the micro realities

and experiences of maids whereby meanings and practices of intimacy are often re-negotiated, despite the profound fear and instilled knowledge of the associated repercussions of their actions.

While intimacies are indeed often feared upon and suppressed by domestic maids because of the associated negative meanings and repercussions, intimate performances are however not explicitly prohibited but arguably “forbidden” precisely because of fear, even though there is no explicit legal sanction on intimate desires or practices. As such, expressions of love and sexuality remain “forbidden” because intimacies are still desired and actively engaged in, yet performed as though it is illegal and forbidden precisely because of institutional controls, and the associated repercussions that come along with marriage and pregnancy. Symbolic interactionism thus allows for the capturing of the dynamic variations and sometimes contradictory nature of people’s social actions and meanings, which is particularly important in explaining the lived and material experiences of these “forbidden” intimacies.

## CONCLUSION

National policies and institutional sanctions are utterly inadequate justifications for the constant denial and control of maids’ intimacies in Singapore. Immigration policies and laws are not only power-laden, but more importantly, constructed and shaped by the intersections of gender, class and migrant status. In this case, policies become legitimized to systematically deny and “forbid” the intimacies of low paid, low status female migrant workers. Fear is constantly reinforced, instilled and internalized upon, with maids being regularly reminded and warned about the legal and economic repercussions associated with their performance of intimacies. However, despite the legal constraints and surveillance of employers, symbolic interactionism also reveals how maids still engage in intimate relationships and re-negotiate their social meanings and practices of intimacies as they encounter new interactions beyond their domestic work spaces. As such, the puzzle of denied intimacies remains “forbidden” precisely because maids desire and yearn for intimacy. Yet intimate expressions are often feared upon, suppressed and performed as though they were explicitly banned and prohibited so as to conform to the restrictive environments set up by the law, strict employers and social stigma (Ueno, 2103; Yeoh & Huang, 1998).

The limitation of this essay lies in the inability to incorporate other theories to uncover deeper grounds in terms of the lived realities of domestic maids in Singapore. These realities and issues range from mobility to domestic abuse. Domestic maid abuse within home spaces remains prevalent precisely because of the differences in power as well as her liminal status within the household (Huang & Yeoh, 2007). As such, emotional labour comes into play, whereby there is arguably “far greater expectations on the domestic worker to regulate her emotions, manage her attitudes and control her behaviour” (Huang & Yeoh, 2007, p. 201). Also, the sole focus on the policies and relationships of heterosexual intimacies of these maids is a key limitation, given that homosexual and other forms of sexual identities are also prevalent across the maid community (Ueno, 2013).

Nonetheless, the main point of this essay is to theorize and explain for the persistent denial of maids’ intimacies through the lens of intersectionality and symbolic interactionism. The theorizing of “forbidden” intimacies away from a sole institutionalist and functional perspective is undeniably paramount in depicting the hidden workings of structural inequalities and discrimination. Only by weaving in the very intersections of social categories (gender, class and migrant status) and the structural policies and forces (nation) can we fully understand the complex, interlocking relationships that uniquely shape their intimate lives. More importantly, the lived realities and experiences of these maids are often adversely affected by these discriminatory policies and oppressive controls over their bodies, social life, even sexuality. Denying access to intimacy raises the broader question of social injustice and basic human rights in today’s modern world. Access to intimacy for these maids working in Singapore is still systematically and socially denied, and there is indeed still unfinished business in piecing together the puzzle of “forbidden” intimacies.

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# The Impossibility of Flâneurie: A Case of Walking Through Vancouver

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## ABSTRACT

The act of walking through the city is often characterized by the figure of the flâneur. Walter Benjamin identifies a specific mode of walking and exploring urban spaces as places of reflective relationships with individuals and spaces (Shortell & Brown, 2014; 2016). This paper aims to identify the ways individuals are expected to engage with space by walking through the city. Specifically, this paper discusses the methods in which the distribution of zoning by-laws impacts the perceptions of walking through the city. The findings in the curated data have been examined through a regression model, which determines that the idea of the flâneur is impossible as a result of the funneling of how individuals are expected to experience public space.

## INTRODUCTION

Walking through the city can be imagined as a mundane task - a liminal space between one space and the next. Oftentimes, we neglect to consider the actions of walking from one side of the city to the other as it does not constitute the start or the goal of our journey. In recent months, walking in the liminal space and observing the journey has become the focus of my own obsession. Engulfed with the thoughts of wanting to measure the relationship that we have with the liminal space, I began to uncover the potential intellectual value in researching these spaces.

The act of walking through the city is often characterized through

the figure of the flâneur; which, is a title designated to writers, poets and intellectuals that critically observe people's behaviours while strolling through urban space. Walter Benjamin identifies flânerie as a specific mode of walking and exploring urban spaces as reflective relationships with individuals and spaces. (Shortell & Brown, 2014; 2016) The flâneur is a seemingly pure being; an individual that wanders through urban landscape in attempts to understand the sensory-perceptive experience of walking through the city. The flâneur is a creative that is not only a passive spectator in absorbing the reality of everyday life but also active in interpreting and even in recreating it with their own creative work. They are imagined as pure as they are able to naively walk through the city while getting lost in the city in simultaneity of being able to exercise their wisdom, skill and self control in order to analyze the city of the underlying mundane. Walking is the first and fundamental step in order to get bodies from one space to another; we are able to draw on the theoretical interests of the flâneur to merge the sensitive approach to the city with an empirical one.

In order to really feel like you are able to understand and walk through the city, you need to experience what it is like to walk through the city extensively as part of everyday urban practice. DeCerteau (1984) describes this process as beginning at the ground level, with footsteps. There is a case to be made for the tactile creation of space in their intertwined paths that begin to make up the city. Walking through the city addresses what general surveys of the city often miss and that is the act of walking through the city itself or the act of walking, wandering or "window shopping". (De Certeau p.97) However, although the act of walking may be characterized as being romantic as free, it is also a heavily regulated and controlled process.

This paper aims to identify the ways individuals are expected to engage with a space by walking through the city. Specifically, this paper discusses the methods in which the distribution of zoning by-laws impacts the perceptions of walking through the city. In order to address these issues, I will be referring to data curated in the previous project. First, I will provide an overview of the conduction of the data curation project. Following the discussion of the data, I will provide an analysis of how being a flâneur is impossible. Finally, I will address the limitations of the project and how that limits our interpretations of the data.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Flânerie allows for the individual to reflect on their daily interactions as they are walking through the street. The performance of the flâneur in the urban context is to walk and experience the built environment. The flâneur observes the city as a spectacle of its spaces and places and is looking for things to occupy one's gaze (Shortell & Brown, 2014, p.22). Flânerie is now impossible in urban spaces in particular because of how we are regulated in our everyday walking. We have plotted a positive relationship between building words and the engagement with space. Benjamin (1999) points towards the rationality of capitalism and the process of commodification of an individual's experience of walking through the city. Walking through the city, as demonstrated through the data curation and manipulation, is significantly impacted by words and commercials. We are expected to act in a certain way and engage with signage in a certain way.

Lefebvre (1991) provides an example of two forms of space as seen through the conception of physical space and social space. Lefebvre considers the ways in which the structures influence how individuals navigate through the space. Lefebvre argues that the space produced is inherent in the means of production, which lead to a new creation of space where power relations and control exist. How are individuals expected to navigate through a space? How are individuals expected to engage with a space? De Certeau (1984) discusses the everyday walk as something that we must "seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment" (p.37). He says that the urban dweller appropriates space, just as we take ownership over language when we speak, it becomes ours to use in the moment.

De Saussure defines semiology as "a science that studies the life of signs within society", such as language. ([1916] 1966, p.16) The value of a sign must be contextualized within a space in order for meaning to be extracted. He acknowledges that, under the constraints of the context, the meanings of the signs are also constrained. Signs can be used as a way for observing non-verbal communication. Humans move through space and create interactions, however, they may not necessarily communicate with each other. The social semiotic enables an art gallery to not just be the collection of several buildings but rather a construction of meanings that are caused by



how we use it. Neighbourhoods are formed in the same way. However, it is interesting to see who is the actor and who is being acted upon.

Foucault (1977) describes a number of models for control, containment and surveillance for achieving the perfectly governed city (p.198). He states that all authorities exercise control over the individual by dividing citizens within different categories and placing them under constant surveillance. The direction of local governance towards how an individual engages with public space induces a citizen to induce a citizen to a “state of conscious and permanent visibility that assumes the automatic function of power [...] one is total seen without ever being seen. It is an important mechanism for it automizes and disindividualizes power” (p. 210-12) The flâneur could not possibly freely experience public space because they are confined to the experiences that they are intended to have.

## METHODS

### Contextualizing The Data

Appendix A contains a map of the length of the walk in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. These maps provide a brief overview of where I started my walk (Alma St. / Broadway) and where I ended my walk (Arbutus / Broadway). The length of these two neighbourhoods is short enough that I was still able to collect rich data within the short time frame it took to walk through them. The larger intersections that divide the two sections are determined by the placement of the express bus stop. I focused my walk along 32 street blocks that operate within various zoning restrictions. This specific dataset is contained within 3 major roads along the Broadway Corridor (Alma, Macdonald, Arbutus). Zoning by-laws are determinants towards the use of space and therefore the potential engagement with space.

Appendix B provides a list of each zone and possible space usages. I will explore the relationship of zoning to engagement and signs in the final report. Appendix B contains the observable collected data as well as notes that had been taken during the initial walk.

In order to provide rich data provided the time constraints of the project, I focused to contrast two neighbourhoods in Vancouver that operate within various zoning restrictions. Zoning by-laws help to determine

the usage of space and therefore the potential engagement with space[1]. During this project, I noticed that within commercial districts, there was an increase in the number of signs and I observed that I would likely be more engaged with space than in residential zoning. Based on these observations, I created distinctive categories in order to describe this feeling of engagement with space, which will be further discussed later in the paper.

It was important that the collection of words versus street feeling be kept separate from each other. I did not return to my starting point and restart the walk. After having collected the “general feelings” data, I used Streetview on Google Maps as a virtual walk through the neighbourhood. All of the images from Streetview were compiled in April 2016. There are some differences with regards to the time of day and time of the year. However, as I recall my initial walk through the space, there were not significant differences in the collectable words and street signs for the dataset.

## **General Feelings**

The concept of “general feelings” derives from an interest towards measuring the spatial engagement that the researcher experiences with their surrounding environment. As the “general feelings” of a space is abstract as it can often be understood as a subjective concept. In order to render the “general feelings” of a space comparable with the numerical measures for zoning and word density, I created a multidimensional scale as a tool to begin developing empirical measures for determining the potential engagement with space. As I was recording the “general feelings” of a space, I had three main factors under consideration:

- Heterogeneity of Space
- Invitation into Space
- Presence of People

As the “general feelings” of a space is abstract, it can often be understood as a subjective concept. In order to render the “general feelings” of a space comparable with the numerical measures for zoning and word density, I created a multidimensional scale as a tool to begin developing empirical measures for determining the potential engagement with space. I ranked each intersection on a scale out of 10. With 0 being no engagement with the space and 10 being fully engaged with the space. Heterogeneity of space was measured in whether or not a city block had a variety in the spaces.

For example, a block that contains explicitly office buildings or residential does not appear to be as engaging as a block that has various restaurants mixed with retail shops and upstairs residential spaces. Invitation into space implies whether or not I felt comfortable with walking into the establishment to look around. Generally speaking, these were retail stores or restaurants that do not require a patron to sit down. Places that did not seem to encourage patrons from entering were spaces that were explicitly barred from the public, sit down restaurants or places that offer a specific service. The presence of people aspect looks at how many people I believe to have seen on the block during the walk. If there were more people in a certain area, my attention was drawn to wherever the people had been gathering.

## RESULTS

Using the gathered data, we are able to begin to compare the observations of space to determine if there are any potential relationships with our engagement with space. The plotted histogram (Appendix B) suggests that in commercially zoned areas, there is an increased count of words that are present in the space. C3 zoning shows greatest word density while rm4 zoning indicates the least word density. Something worth noting is that c-2 zoning indicates mixed-land use between commercial and residential. This is in contrast with residential and commercial zoning, which have specific indications of building allowances.

The following null hypotheses have been identified to aid the discussion towards a conclusion:

**H<sub>0</sub>**= there is no relationship between engagement with a space and word density and zoning by-laws.

1. Alternatively, there is a relationship between engagement with space and word density and zoning by-laws.

The following two hypotheses aim to break down the overall null hypothesis into two components:

1. **H<sub>01</sub>**= There is no relationship between the engagement with space and word density.
2. **H<sub>02</sub>**= There is no relationship between the engagement with space and zoning by-laws.

Zoning was distributed among 3 categories: commercial, mixed-use and residential. Commercial zoning was designated as zoning that was specifically catered to providing goods and services through commercial activities. Often these areas would specifically indicate the inclusion of creating “pedestrian-oriented district shopping areas” (APPENDIX C). Mixed-use was determined based on whether zoning indicated a hybrid of commercial and residential zoning on the same space. Mixed-use zoning included C-2 and C-3A. Residential zoning includes an area that is specifically allotted for dwelling, whether that is single family or multiple dwelling districts. Residential zoning includes RM4 and RM-4N. Vancouver’s zoning provides specific restrictions on what developers and planners are eligible to do with the space rather than what they are ineligible to do. When pedestrian interaction is written into the by-law regulations, we may assume that commercial zoning specifically encourages engagement with space – and this may be facilitated through increased word density.

With relation to commercial zoning; residential zoning and mixed-use zoning both negatively affect the relationship associated with zoning. We are able to describe two findings from the regression analysis. When commercial zoning is used as a reference group, residential zoning is (-2.02 points). Mixed-use zoning is (-1.08 points) indicating that, compared to commercial zoning, being in mixed-use zoning will negatively impact an individual’s “general feelings” of a space. When these zones are ranked against each other, commercial zoning creates the most engagement with space. Following commercial zoning, mixed-land use provides a middle-level of engagement with space.

Each of the independent variables provides varying levels of significance in relation to the “general feelings” of space. The  $R^2$  is a measure of the “goodness of fit” of the equation. In the full equation, the  $R^2$  is 0.64, indicating that the independent variables account for approximately 65% of the variation of the “general feelings” of a space. We may also consider the adjusted  $R^2$ , a more conservative estimate of the correlation, and determine that the independent variables account for 60% of how we understand an individual’s engagement with space.

With relation to H01, when “general feelings” (feeling) are compared to recorded words on a building (buildingwords), we can observe that there is a significant correlation at a 95% confidence. Therefore, we may reject the

null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Indicating that there is no relationship between the engagement with space and word density.

With relation to H02, when zoning and “general feelings” are compared, commercial and residential zoning are significant at 95% confidence. However, mixed-use zoning is not significant at 95% confidence. However, this is somewhat negligible because the R<sup>2</sup> value between zoning and feelings, when compared between all zoning and “general feelings” is significant. Therefore, we may reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

With observation to the F-statistic, we can conclude that all independent variables provide a significant correlation at a 95% confidence towards the dependent variable (feeling). From this conclusion, we can determine that the null hypothesis for H0 is false and should be rejected. Therefore, we may accept the alternative hypothesis, indicating that there is a significant relationship between engagement with a space and word density and zoning by-laws.

## DISCUSSION

Simmel ([1907] 1997) illustrates that cities are sites of interaction – spaces where we can observe the dynamic qualities of social processes and where the temporal and spatial flows that make cities a distinctive type of social environment. The flâneur amalgamates characteristics of living within the modern city: being modern; being alone but among others in the crowd, experiencing the everyday; being free to roam, to survey to think and create. (Tormey, 2013, p.93). They are a ‘passionate spectator’, someone who gazes upon modern landscape and considers all that the city has and its possibilities. Therefore, how is the social space produced? How do we determine who is producing and who / what is being produced? Furthermore, how do we use the experience of walking through the city to observe the relationships between individual and structure? These spaces naturally exist as dialectic. The individual naturally cannot experience space without the structure and the structure has no value without the perceptions of the individual.

After consideration of how the data has been curated, we can dive further into how the data can be used. With the conclusions drawn in testing the hypotheses, we may consider how walking through the city can be used as social commentary in dictation of power. Walking through the city

is an action that can be characterized through 'the everyday'. Furthermore, observations in the engagement with space and how they relate to city planning (through by-laws and zoning) encourage individuals to uncover the hidden relationships with city and urban life. The data curation provides evidence of our relationship with other people, objects, buildings and space and can be included as part of a complex mechanism for the construction of meaning -- semiotically and through agency.

It was likely that if other people had been engaged in a space that it would increase my likelihood of being engaged with the space. If one number is used to measure the "general feelings" of a neighbourhood, the results could be seen to have low validity. In order to create better measures for validity, I operationalized the variables that would ultimately become the number of the "general feelings" of the neighbourhood through the 3 variables and I assumed that they would be positively correlated with each other. Finally, I gather the average of the data points from the three defined variables in order to determine the "general feelings" of a space.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Within the methodology, there are several limitations present. First, it is critical to identify that all of the data has been self-collected. The data has been exposed to a variety of researcher biases that may influence the outcome of the data collection. As a result, reliability and validity had been compromised. I have attempted to more objectively study the variables in the data curation. I have taken steps to ensure validity and reliability where possible under the circumstances of the project, as briefly described in 'What's in the data'. For reliability, I have attempted to collect data in a consistent manner that would allow for the project to be replicable in other areas, or simply other researchers studying the same neighbourhood.

Another limitation to address would be the reductionist scope of the study. As a result of only two major city blocks being studied, it would be interesting to further analyze how these trends persist across the rest of the city. Additionally, there is room for the data to be cross-referenced with cities that share similarities to Vancouver, or for the data to be compared with a city that shares identifiable differences. It is important to note that Vancouver is a city based in North America with a relatively short history for its planning and development. Furthermore, much of the theoretic skep-

ticism associated with the impossibility of flâneurie is associated with the fact that the process of this paper has been conducted with a goal in mind. There is a motive towards developing it to its completion.

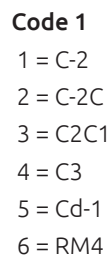
I propose two directions for further research. First, we may consider the interactions that individuals encounter as they walk through public space. From this standpoint, we may consider that the individual shapes public space through their interactions. Some questions we may consider include: How do people use and move through a public space? How do people interact with the built environment? How do these interactions shape the space? These questions assume the agency of the individual and how the individual creates the meaning of the environment base on sensory-perceptive elements that are observed through walking in the city.

## CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrates a necessity for further research in walking through the city. Whether that may be a more rigorous study of the rest of Vancouver's engagement with public space or comparing different cities globally. Although we may want to walk the city as the flâneur had done, the data shows that we are expected to navigate through space in a certain way. The flâneur navigates public space as an anti-capitalist model; however, individuals are funneled to engage with public with a certain manner. Our engagement with space is constrained to the way that the city is planned and how the city is built.

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## Appendix C – Observable Zoning During Walk

### Commercial Districts

#### C-2

Allows a wide range of goods and services, maintains commercial activities and personal services, and allows dwelling uses designed to be compatible with commercial uses.

#### C-2C

Allows a wide range of goods and services, maintains commercial activities and personal services, and creates a pedestrian-oriented district shopping area.

#### C-2C1

The intent of the District Schedule is to allow a wide range of goods and services, maintain commercial activities and personal services, and create a district shopping area.

#### C-3A

Allows a wide range of goods and services, maintains commercial activities and some light manufacturing, preserves the character of the District, and allows dwelling uses that are compatible with commercial uses.

### Multiple Dwelling Districts

#### RM-4, RM-4N

The intent is to permit medium density residential development, including a variety of multiple dwelling types, to encourage the retention of existing buildings and good design, and to achieve a number of community and social objectives through permitted increases in floor area. The RM-4N District requires evidence of noise mitigation for residential development.

## Appendix D - Intersection Data

Case ID	Code	Intersection	Hetero Space	Invite Space	People Place	Feeling	Notes	Building Words
1	c-2	N-Alma/Dunbar	7	4	4	5	Some small shops on this side, a florist, restaurants, a shop for musical instruments and an Irish pub - I was not interested in walking on this side of the road	41
2	c-2	S-Alma/Dunbar	7	5	4	5.333333333	Lots of people waiting on the bus on this block / many people gathered around a busy café - seems to be a small pocket of commercial (cafes, bakeries, florist, thrift store)	35
3	rm4	N-Dunbar/Collingwood	5	2	3	3.333333333	Some small shops on this side, a florist, restaurants, a shop for musical instruments and an Irish pub - I was not interested in walking on this side of the road	1
4	rm4	S-Dunbar/Collingwood	4	2	3	3	This area is quiet, filled with greenery but not very many people walking around - Both sides felt similar so I stayed on the south side	1
5	c2c1	N-Collingwood/Waterloo	4	3	3	3.333333333	This side of the street has a unique restaurant (The Eatery) that should be more engaging. But the rest of the shops that surround it are quite boring / bland	7
6	c2c1	S-Collingwood/Waterloo	5	5	5	5	The north side has unique restaurant options but the south side has a generally more engaging side	23
7	c2c1	N-Waterloo/Blenheim	6	6	7	6.333333333	Various stores, restaurants, hair salons -- I had wanted to move to this side of the road	75
8	c2c1	S-Waterloo/Blenheim	6	4	4	4.666666667	Facing the street is a senior home and a bank - these places do not seem like they are designed with inviting people in -- they are a constant service	8

9	c2c1	N- Blenheim/ Trutch	10	6	6	7.33333 3333	Many shops and restaurants on both sides of the road - almost overwhelmed with information on both sides	47
10	c2c1	S- Blenheim/ Trutch	10	6	6	7.33333 3333	//	67
11	c2c	N- Trutch/Ba laclava	8	5	6	6.33333 3333	Various restaurants / bakeries from varying nationalities in this area. - Not too many words but lead to intrigue towards the establishment	45
12	c2c	S- Trutch/Ba laclava	8	7	7	7.33333 3333	//	42
13	cd-1 (637)	N- Balaclava /Camarvo n	8	5	5	6	Although many of the signs are present, several of these establishments are closed for business - there are remnants of retail stores that cater to a specific market	
14	c2c	S- Balaclava /Camarvo n	8	6	5	6.33333 3333	Not as many closed establishments on the south side	35
15	c2c	N- Camarvo n/Macken zie	10	8	8	8.66666 6667	Noting that there is an introduction of Chinese characters on Chinese restaurants - mixture of restaurants and retail that would be inviting to walk around	65
16	cd- 1(55 8)	S- Camarvo n/Macken zie	10	8	8	8.66666 6667		76
17	c2c	N- Mackenzi e/Macdon ald	9	8	10	9	Intersection of larger shopping area - closest to the bus stop so there is a dispersion of pedestrians / Farsi / Chinese are visible on some shops	48
18	c2c	S- Mackenzi e/Macdon ald	9	8	10	9	//	35

## Macdonald / Arbutus Data

Case ID	Code	Intersection	Hetero Space	Invite Space	People Place	Feeling	Notes	Building Words
1	c2c	N-Macdonald/Stephens	7	6	8	7	Small retail stores / a thrift store and a consignment store / a dentists office. Good diversity in this area	56
2	c2c	S-Macdonald/Stephens	1	6	4	3.666666667	Large chain-grocery store that uses the entire street block - makes the street single homogenous store rather than having diversity	5
3	c2c1	N-Stephens/Trafalgar	7	4	7	6	Mix of restaurants / offices - not inviting to enter these spaces to look around	45
4	cd-1(158)	S-Stephens/Trafalgar	7	8	6	7	Small grocery store (focused on natural foods) / mix with restaurants in the area 1/2 retail stores	51
5	c2c1	N-Trafalgar/Larch	8	6	5	6.333333333	Some small retail stores mixed with residential on top - perhaps blending before entering residential area of Broadway	70
6	c2c1	S-Trafalgar/Larch	6	3	4	4.333333333	Some retail stores but half of the block is a large chain restaurant with a large parking lot that makes for a long walk until reaching the end of the block	13
7	rm4	N-Larch/Balsam	5	2	2	3	Residential Area - Some interesting signs for each building but generally as I am walking through these spaces I find myself to be more interested in listen to something else rather than participate in the space. Noticed a lot more greenery in these spaces / seeming more organic than the individual trees in the commercial areas	7

8	rm4	S- Larch/Bal sam	5	2	2	3		0
9	rm4	N- Balsam/V ine	5	2	2	3		0
10	rm4	S- Balsam/V ine	5	2	2	3	Building words covered by shrubbery	0
11	c3	N- Vine/Yew	7	2	5	4.66666 6667	Mostly offices / small residential spaces **	85
12	c3	S- Vine/Yew	6	7	7	6.66666 6667	2 big chain stores take up most of this block but it is mixed with residential and some smaller commercial spaces, making it interesting	15
13	c3	N- Yew/Arb utus	7	4	4	5	Large healthcare building / a couple restaurants	43
14	c3	S- Yew/Arb utus	6	4	4	4.66666 6667	Office building mixed with residential / gas station on the corner	3
							** These two spaces are both interesting / not interesting in their own rights	

**Appendix E: Regression Table**

. regress feeling buildingwords residential mixeduse

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	31
				F(3, 27)	=	16.32
Model	71.8608072	3	23.9536024	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual	39.6302392	27	1.46778664	R-squared	=	0.6445
				Adj R-squared	=	0.6050
Total	111.491046	30	3.71636821	Root MSE	=	1.2115

feeling	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
buildingwords	.0347813	.0103831	3.35	0.002	.0134769	.0560857
residential	-2.017116	.7111108	-2.84	0.009	-3.476195	-.5580373
mixeduse	-1.085185	.5705231	-1.90	0.068	-2.255801	.0854321
_cons	5.0205	.524065	9.58	0.000	3.945207	6.095792

**Variables:**

Feeling= General Feeling (Engagement with space)

Buildingwords = number of words recorded on a given city block

Residential = zoning exclusive to residential

Mixeduse = zoning that allows for both commercial and residential to be available.

# **Fitting Into my Mom Jeans: An Exploration of Mothers, Identity and Fashion**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores how the identity of being a mother shapes your fashion identity. In this study, the use of qualitative research techniques including interviews, ethnographic notes and coding of data are employed. Specifically, this paper will root its findings in the use of symbolic interactionism to display how the clothing choices of mothers are constructed based on the meanings they have created for clothing and fashion in their lives. It was found that the mothers related to fashion in three main ways: expectations, appropriateness and functionality. These themes give rise to the identity of mothers and how they interact with fashion, and for what purpose. This paper is an exploratory account which seeks to understand how fashion and motherhood are linked, and calls for further research in the field to continue critically examining this area of inquiry.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In every aspect of our social world, family is all around us. This includes our colleagues, our classmates, our friends and even our families themselves. Family is an important aspect of socialization, in which much of what we know is informed by our families and our subsequent contexts. Given the fact that family is one of society's largest social institutions and major agents of socialization, it is important that we acknowledge how familial social roles can influence other aspects of an individual's life. For the purpose of this paper, I will analyze the links between motherhood and fashion.

I am particularly interested in answering the question of how occupying the social role of a mother influences a particular woman's fashion. In doing so, I plan to analyze the links between fashion and motherhood considering group membership and identity. I will argue that the fashion of a woman who identifies as a mother is shaped by the role of being a mother because it will influence how she dresses and why. I will analyze this by discussing three common themes throughout my research, which includes expectations of mothers, appropriateness and functionality. In order to do this, I discuss what research currently exists and assess the gaps. I then describe my research processes and analyze the findings garnered from my research in order to give voice to mothers and their view of fashion, as well as to inform others about mothers as a social group.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to adequately discuss the identity of an individual or a social group, it is important to root the conversation in symbolic interactionism. This theory "posits that social behavior can only be understood in relation to the symbols and meanings any behavior has for actors within a context" (White, 2013, p.23). Identity theory, originating from symbolic interactionism, includes "examining how social structures affect the structure of self and how structure of the self influences social behavior, whereas the second concentrates on the internal dynamics of self-processes as these affect social behavior" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 285). The coupling of both the social structures and self-aspects, are useful when considering how an individual constructs their identity because the prospect of identity encompasses both the individual and the social world, and one cannot occur without the other. While certain symbols or roles may seem arbitrary, they "receive their meaning by consensus" (White, 2013, p.23), where individuals can negotiate their roles in terms of how they will be manifested in a given situation or in their social world.

The topic of motherhood and associated identity as a mother, is a complex area of inquiry, rooted in nursing and psychology (Hauser, 2015). Rubin, (1967) a notable scholar in the field of motherhood studies, discusses three dimensions relevant to becoming or being a mother, including the self-system, process and model. Most importantly, the process of identifying as a mother involves mimicry, role-play, fantasy, introjection-projec-



tion-rejection and grief work. Within this cycle, women begin by expressing themselves through their expectations about mothers and ends with mothers letting go of a former identity in some roles that do not fit with their new roles.

Mercer (2004) advanced the knowledge put forth by Rubin regarding maternal role attainment and replaced it with what she calls 'becoming a mother'. The purpose of this change is to account for motherhood as a transient state rather than a role with an endpoint, which relates to Rubin's suggestion of progression as non-linear. Rubin's work was limited in the fact that it considered motherhood during pregnancy and the first month postpartum as a role to be achieved, whereas Mercer focused on a full year after birth (Hauser, 2015). While it makes sense to declare motherhood as an identity upon becoming pregnant and subsequently giving birth, this does not account for the continued expansion of the self as a mother over time (Mercer, 2004). Mercer calls for a lifespan approach to motherhood as mothers can continue to grow and develop over time when it comes to constructing their identities.

The identity of each mother is constructed differently and is dependent on "a person's collective experiences, thoughts, ideas, memories and plans for the future" as well as the multiple roles and identities a mother may occupy (Heisler & Ellis, 2008, p. 447; Stryker & Burke, 2000). It is important to recognize that many women do identify as mothers, but their "membership in other networks or groups may create identities that either reinforce or impede various forms of participations" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p.291). Therefore, while mothers may belong to one social group, they are also a part of many others. In order to successfully study mothers, we have to acknowledge the social locations and varying intersections women may bring to their role as a mother.

Heisler and Ellis (2008) also account for societal expectations about expressions of motherhood as an integral part of identity, since mothers' identities cannot exist without others. In connection, it is important to note that filling the role of a mother will subject a woman to being labeled with the social role of mother. This occurs through the process of role making, and may result in differential treatment or expectations imposed by those around her (White, 2013; Heisler & Ellis, 2008). Heisler and Ellis' study high-

lights that motherhood requires certain characteristics and is both unidimensional and dialectic, which provides a great foundation as to how mothers construct their identities and feel the need to act in the ways that they do.

In relation to fashion, Guy and Banim (2000) analyze how women view themselves in terms of the woman they want to be, the woman they fear they could be and the woman they are most of the time. These three categories account for how women may feel towards their clothing both positively and negatively, as well as practically. For individuals who identify as mothers, these three themes can be extended in how women perform their roles as mothers through their fashion choices. Guy and Banim also discuss that women's identity is to be observed through the experience of using, reflecting on and generally living with their clothes. Laney (2015) asserts that when women first become mothers they tend to experience a sense of self-loss, but as Guy and Banim discuss, women can use clothes as a way to encounter and manage their lived experiences. In this case, it is possible that women can utilize fashion as a method of rediscovery. For many women, they use their clothing as a way to "create, reveal and conceal aspects of their identity", in which their fashion cannot be separated from who they are (Guy & Banim, 2000, p.323).

Research put forth by Clarke and Miller (2002) discuss that women's choices in terms of clothing, tends to stem from their socio-historical context. They found that women often partook in consultation from their social networks as they were anxious and overwhelmed about what to choose. These feelings of anxiety are supplemented with examples involving mothers where they question the appropriateness of their clothing and whether or not they fit in. Mothers may want to be practical in their fashion choices in the fact that they "emerge out of the routine workings of the family... where [they] are constantly bearing others in mind", but they also want to feel stylish and a sense of belonging thus speaking to the need for inclusion of mothers in the world of fashion and identity (Clarke & Miller, 2002, p.202).

Upon analyzing the existing literature, I found that there were either studies on motherhood and identity or women and fashion, but never the combination of both. In this regard, I believe there are similarities between the studies and that with careful analysis, trends can be observed. Therefore, I hypothesize that a woman's view towards her identity as a mother

will influence her fashion in how she chooses to dress and for what purpose. This experience may not be universal, as each woman is affected differently by her context and accompanying intersections, but certain aspects of motherhood will create a shared identity amongst them both covertly and overtly.

## METHODS

In order to adequately answer my research question, I opted for the use of interviews. Through careful consideration, I thought that interviews would be the best way for me to give a rich understanding of how the three mothers sampled for this research view their identities as mothers and actors in fashion. Therefore, interviews would allow me to gain a solid understanding of a mother's experience and would supply me with a broad-based reflection of ideas and opinions to consider.

When selecting which mothers I would interview, I narrowed it down to three women by employing a convenience sample technique. Specifically, I knew all of the mothers personally, which I believe was helpful because all of the women seemed comfortable to discuss and reflect with me. I chose these three women because they were readily available in the geographic location in which this research was conducted, all identified as mothers, and they shared some similar key traits. With that being said, all the women I selected were white, heterosexual, married, had at least one child, currently employed, resided in Kelowna, B.C and self-identified as middle-class - which are typically privileged traits. It is also important to note the relatively similar characteristics of these women and how this will affect the subsequent analysis. As this research project was not intended to be grand sweeping and was conducted under a limited time frame, I did not think it would be suitable to confront too many intersections as I chose to focus most specifically on the social location of motherhood. Also, my sample size was small for this same reason, as it would have been out of scope for this particular project to have had a sample size larger than three.

Once I had completed my sampling process, I began to construct my interview guide. I opted for a semi-structured interview, where I had a guide going into the interview, but I deviated from it where necessary. In total, I came in with a list of approximately twenty questions and some probes,

but I found once I got into the interview the conversation flowed well and I began to ask questions that seemed more relevant in that moment. This was particularly useful for me because I noticed that when the women started speaking, there were interesting areas for me to probe and continue developing their responses. I oriented the discussion by asking some demographic questions such as age, employment and family composition. We then discussed their interactions with motherhood and subsequently their interactions with motherhood and fashion. I thought it was necessary to first detail a woman's interaction with motherhood because her feelings and thoughts about being a mother could have the ability to shape her interactions with fashion in the latter part of the interview.

After interviewing all three of the women and assigning pseudonyms, I transcribed each interview in order to uncover the information in greater depth. This process was extremely helpful in determining which ideas were recurring trends and how I could code the data. I decided to group ideas under three main headings: expectations of mothers, appropriateness, and functionality during the coding process. Within these three themes, I pulled out important quotes and ideas that would later help me when analyzing the findings. During my interviews, I took some ethnographic jottings. These notes were useful for remembering key ideas that emerged during the interview, as well as detailing the setting, behaviors and the clothes the women wore. This aspect of my methodology was mostly a tool for myself as the researcher to remember key concepts, behaviors and ideas that emerged from the conversation. Considering the interviews were about fashion and motherhood, I decided it would be important to take note of these factors because their choice in clothing and their actions throughout the process are also important when deciphering how they interact with fashion.

### **Participants**

In this section, I want to give context to the three participants I interviewed for this study. I made the methodological choice to include this information, as it provides another angle in which the research can be interpreted. The first woman I spoke with, Lisa, is a 47-year-old mother of two daughters who are 20 and 16-years-old. Lisa works as a kindergarten teacher and currently lives with her youngest daughter and husband, as her eldest daughter is away at university. We conducted the interview at her house, and during the

interview she wore blue jeans with a plum V-neck cotton shirt, her make-up was done and she wore her hair down. My second participant was Kimberly, a 37-year-old mother with one son who is 10 years old. Kimberly manages two construction companies and currently lives with both her son and her husband. Her interview took place in her car on her hour-long commute to work. She wore black leggings with tall grey leather boots paired with a long pink top and a grey cardigan, her makeup was done and she wore her hair down. My final interview was with Frankie who is a 38-year-old mother with one 22-month old daughter. Frankie works as a middle-school French teacher, but is currently away on stress leave. She lives with her daughter and her husband. We conducted Frankie's interview at my house along with her daughter, while my younger sister occupied her with coloring sheets during the interview. Frankie wore a navy-blue hoodie embroidered with the logo of the middle school she works at, paired with stretchy heather grey capris, hair up in a bun and no makeup.

## RESULTS

Throughout the process of collecting my research and reflecting upon the data presented, I found that there were three emergent themes including expectations of mothers, appropriateness and functionality which shaped how the mothers spoke about fashion. I will discuss each of these in its entirety in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how these three components ultimately shaped the mothers' views towards fashion and our conversations as a whole.

### Expectations of Mothers

This theme was a strong topic of discussion in each of the three interviews. I had hypothesized before conducting my research that this idea would be present. Much to my surprise, I found that women had mixed views of what these expectations were. For example, when I asked Frankie if she felt there were expectations of how a mom should look she said, "I don't think so. I know that exists but I personally do not feel it...Well I mean, you lose weight right away, you wear clothes that still make them look attractive to other people, you know like it's mind-blowing to me that people think you...gotta lose the baby weight". Kimberly on the other hand did feel there was an expectation that she "would never want to

be that mom dressed embarrassingly for my son...the expectation I think would be to be put together. Like you have to be dressed for the day kind of thing". When Lisa spoke about expectations she discussed the "gingham dress, that was in the 60s but I think now in the 2000s and 90s here I think, I don't think you can look at a person and say that's a mom...regardless of someone being a mom or not, I think the physical expectations of women these days is really hard to maintain".

These three examples of how the mothers were affected by expectations speak to the complex rules society has set out for mothers in terms of "experiences, interactions with and messages from others", which shapes a mother's actions (Heisler & Ellis, 2008, p.449). Not only did the mothers discuss the moral expectations they experienced in regards to being a good and proper mom, but also how they should be dressing in terms of fashion and appearance. For example, Kimberly discussed her experience of sending her son off to grade school and how people would begin to watch what you are wearing. The social pressures the women faced are also captured by Lisa who said, "pictures and everything that's portrayed in the media is often unattainable by the average women". Even though the women may not have felt the direct effect of these expectations, they all pointed to the fact that they are present and have the potential to constrain women.

Not only did these women have to confront expectations about being mothers, but they also discussed their role as working women which speaks to the multiple roles they hold in society and how they are required to negotiate their roles (White, 2013). Specifically, for Kimberly who works in a male dominated field, she was on her way to work during her interview and dressed in a business casual manner. During our interview, she expressed that she felt as though she needed "to be dressed a bit more professional than them to be taken seriously. So, generally I have two lives when it comes to fashion, mom life and work life". This quote perfectly sums up the societal expectations people have of women. They are required to hold multiple roles and balance between the two effortlessly, all the while maintaining the image of perfect motherhood. As discussed by Guy and Banim (2000), "the structural positioning of women in patriarchal, capitalist societies generates distorted self-perceptions" and creates an arena in which women must negotiate their role in different settings (p.314). This concept makes women feel as though their clothing choices must be "within the context of

making a good impression”, yet still suit their various needs, which is not an easy task when given such rigid expectations (Guy & Banim, 2000, p.317).

### **Appropriateness**

The question of what is appropriate for mothers is a difficult question to confront, yet it is something all of the women in this study worried about. Specifically, in terms of dressing for their body size, age and current trends. A common theme that arose was the topic of body size. Specifically, for Frankie who had given birth just under two years ago spoke about how she “feel[s] bad that I’m not my pre-baby self, but I just had to roll with it because there was nothing I could do about it. My goal was to nurse my child and you know put her first”. She also discussed that among her group of friends who are mothers, they all shared a similar sentiment, in which they would wear leggings and flowy tops to use “clothes to try to conceal parts of their body that they were dissatisfied with” (Guy & Banim, 2000, p. 320). This was also present during Frankie’s interview as she was dressed the most casual of all the mothers interviewed, as she wore a hoodie with stretchy leggings. While for Kimberly whose son is 10, she also expressed that “you are constantly thinking oh I need to lose five pounds or I wish I could wear that, but I have to lose five pounds to wear that”. As well, Lisa felt that “there’s a lot of pressure for women to be thin these days...and it’s very hard”. This demonstrates that they all questioned the idea of dressing appropriately for their body type and felt anxiety towards their fashion choices, fitting in and what others may think (Clarke & Miller, 2002). Especially as mothers, who have bodies constantly going through physical changes, concealing certain aspects were a way to manage their image (Guy and Banim, 2000).

As for age, this was evident in my discussion with Lisa who said “I can’t wear everything that 18-21-year olds are wearing on the runway because I do not have a runway figure and I am not sad about that, it would look ridiculous for someone of my age to wear some of those outfits”. Here the connection is being made between body size and age, Lisa felt that because she is 47 years-old, she has to alter what she wears in order to fit not only her age category, but what is current. Despite the fact that she was older than the other moms, they all felt that it is important to dress currently. Kimberly discussed that it was somewhat important for her to dress currently and that she enjoys looking nice and feels as though being on the dressy side of casual is appropriate for her most days of the week. Frankie,

tends to not give much thought to fashion, yet she also discussed wanting to look nice, but in a low maintenance way.

These ideals of dressing appropriately for body size, age or current trends stem from the expectations the women had in general because it is difficult to separate what is appropriate from what is expected. In this regard, the women drew parallels between the level of appropriateness and expectations in their interviews because “they often sought to achieve a balance between images they found acceptable and practical demands” (Guy & Banim, 2000, p.321). The differential factor between the two is, regardless of what was expected of them to wear, came down to what is appropriate. None of the women were willing to jeopardize standing out from the crowd and held the desire to fit in amongst the others, even if it may not have fully resulted in practice. All of the women found they consulted their social networks when it comes to certain fashion choices, in varying degrees of magnitude, but it was often when they felt unsure or anxious about their choice. Even though the women discussed with me their routines in the morning and how they can get dressed quickly and efficiently, they may be “highly knowledgeable about matters of [their individual] taste and clothing, [but there are still] everyday encounters of aesthetic choice [that are] ostensibly fraught” (Clarke & Miller, 2002, p.193).

## **Functionality**

As I had anticipated in my hypothesis, I believe that mothers and fashion would have the greatest relationship when it came to serving a particular purpose. The data confirmed my hypothesis, in which all of the women were in agreement that your clothing should be functional and practical, and in the words of Lisa, “you do need to dress for what you’re doing”. In this emergent theme, the women emphasized their role play and role negotiation between home, work and mom life (Stryker & Burke, 2000). One of the simplest questions I asked in my interviews was, “if you could describe your relationship between fashion and being a mom in one word, which would you choose?”, and it produced answers reaffirming my hypothesis. Lisa used the word “comfortable”, Kimberly selected “functionality” and Frankie picked “practical”. These three words were extremely important in guiding our conversations as well as my overall analysis.

I discovered that all three of the mothers relied on their clothing to



be convenient, easy, comfortable and suitable for the many demands they need to fill on a given day. Frankie discussed that her fashion is “more about function and being practical [rather] than about...turning people’s heads”. In her social context, she needs to be able to have clothes that suit “what activity we are doing at the time” because her life includes getting down on the floor and playing with her daughter as well as keeping up with the requirements of her work and personal life. Kimberly was in agreement with Frankie, that she “needs everything to be easy...if I wasn’t a mom, I would have more time to wear fancier, name brand, dry cleaning stuff. I just adjust it to what I have time for because I am so busy with work and being a mom”. There was great emphasis for both Frankie and Kimberly that their clothes had to be clean, and if it fit that requirement, they were good to go. Similarly, Lisa’s job as a kindergarten teacher forced her “to dress in things that obviously can be washed frequently, have good durability and...flexibility”, such as her choice of outfit for the interview which was a simple t-shirt and blue jeans. Although her kids were older than Frankie and Kimberly’s, she still interacts with young kids on a daily basis much like a mother would need to.

The mothers also discussed that they felt it was important to put the needs of their child’s ahead of their own, so at times this meant compromising time in the morning to get dressed, put makeup on or even shower. This is connected to Guy and Banim’s (2000) concept of the “woman I am”. Under this framework, the mothers were dressing as “the woman I am in my ordinary way of being with my clothes”, instead of the woman they want to be (Guy & Banim, 2000, p.321). This demonstrates that women often feel the need to dress within their context and what is needed in a given moment, rather than focusing purely on the aesthetic of an outfit. For example, Frankie outlined that “it seems a little bit ridiculous to be wearing heels and skinny jeans...when you are going to be holding a kid who is...making a mess out of everything”. Despite the fact that Frankie may want to wear skinny jeans and heels, she knows her role as a mother is to dress for the unknown and be prepared for her daughter to puke on her in any given moment. The other mothers also reiterated a similar sentiment, having felt that it is important for you to wear an outfit that reflects your setting and ultimately, allows you to perform the task at hand.

Each of the women when discussing their interaction with mother-

hood, talked about their responsibilities as a mother and their duty to raise a socially responsible individual. They all felt it was important to put the needs of their children ahead of themselves, even if it meant making sacrifices. In this sense, the women knew that prioritizing fashion was not always an option, which is why it is heavily rooted in practical terms for them. Although, Lisa recognized that as important as it is being a mother, it “does not mean you should, as much as you say you put your kids first, I still think you do need to feel good about yourself too. So, I think it’s important to look half decent”. Here Lisa recognizes that being a mother is a part of the woman she is, but also, she finds it important to emulate the woman I want to be when possible (Guy & Banim, 2000).

Furthermore, the notion of practicality may also be due to the women’s belonging in other social groups in which they have to negotiate what is suitable for their contexts (White, 2013). As working women, they all agreed that it is important that their clothes reflect their on-the-go mentality, where they can have one outfit suit the needs of their busy days. They all outlined that when they are within their homes, they do not care as much about what they wear and choose to be more comfortable, but when it comes to work there is a lot more thought that goes into choosing an outfit. When I asked Kimberly why she chose to wear what she did to work that day, she said “I haven’t worn it in a couple of days and I knew it would be a busy day”, which demonstrates that she needed something that was grab and go, suitable for the office and practical enough that she could carry out her many tasks.

## Limitations

Overall, my methodology was quite simple and I was able to obtain the relevant data I required. Although, due to a limited time frame and lack of resources, I could only interview three women. As aforementioned, my sample was not very diverse, and I would recommend in the future incorporating a greater population of women with different attributes in order to make more precise connections. I recognize that this is a fairly small sample and this will ultimately affect the type of conclusion I am able to draw. As well, my personal connections to the mothers may have impacted my results because they may have assumed I knew certain aspects about them already so they did not feel the need to reiterate, or they could have been nervous to share information because there was the possibility I would look

at them differently. Lastly, it is possible that given more time and with the use of electronic equipment, my coding of the data could have been more detailed and thus, I could have elaborated greater on the themes.

## CONCLUSION

Through my research, I have discovered that mothers as a social group do share identifying factors when it comes to fashion, which includes expectations, appropriateness and functionality. Lisa, Kimberly and Frankie are just three examples of the many mothers out there who interact with fashion on a daily basis. Whether or not the women considered themselves lovers of fashion, they all realized that they are actors in the fashion industry as they wear clothes on a regular basis. Upon analyzing the data under a symbolic interactionist lens, I noticed that the social group of mothers construct meaning to their clothing and dress to serve certain expectations and purposes. Subsequently, this confirms my hypothesis that a woman's view towards her identity as a mother will influence her fashion in how she chooses to dress and for what purpose. This experience was not completely universal, as each of the women I studied had unique interactions with fashion based on the roles she occupied in society and her accompanying intersections. Overall, there were a few areas of overlap between the women, and the experience of discussing fashion with these women was incredibly insightful.

The intersection of motherhood identity and fashion is a topic area that has not been explored extensively in the literature. Considering the fact that each of us are a part of families, it is of worthy note to me that researchers had not considered this topic before. While researchers explore topics of identity and fashion, I believe it is important to acknowledge the various intersections people may bring to the table, and specifically the intersection of being a mother. Although, the women discussed in my findings and analysis were similar, their perspectives of fashion give rise to further research that could be conducted, in order to explore the connections between fashion and motherhood among women of different backgrounds and social locations. When thinking about who buys clothes and for what purposes, mothers are an excellent group to study, as they occupy many social roles in society and tend to operate with a goal or purpose in mind. As well, it would be most insightful to sample a diverse group of women in order to draw conclusions across a wider and more representative population of people.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### ANUPA (IMAN) GHOSH

Anupa (Iman) Ghosh is a recent graduate of UBC, with an Honours in Sociology and a minor in GRSJ. Her interests include intersectional feminism and media representation. Born and raised in Singapore, Iman currently works as a content strategist & research writer for a digital media company based in Vancouver. She was also a Co-Editor in Chief for *Sojourners* Volume 9, and she is excited and grateful for the opportunity to return as an author in Volume 10. Iman would like to thank the *Sojourners* team for greatly improving the quality of her paper for publication and for being a pleasure to work with!

### BROOKLYN ROCCO

Brooklyn Rocco is an anti-racist de-colonial intersectional feminist, who adores all things sociological. She has just finished her undergraduate degree at UBC with a major in Sociology and a minor in Family Studies on the unceded, ancestral and traditional lands of the Musqueam people. Brooklyn's research interests include social inequality, community engagement and intersectional identities approached from a community-based and intersectional feminist lens. Outside of the classroom, Brooklyn enjoys reading, exploring communities through coffee, and learning more about marginalized communities. As well, Brooklyn attributes her inspiration to her family for keeping her grounded, friends for their continuous support and colleagues who have encouraged challenge. Brooklyn is grateful for the opportunity to have published with *Sojourners*, as there has been great joy in the process of continuing to learn, grow and strive for change in our social world through the power of words.

### ELIDA IZANI

Elida Izani is a Sociology graduate from UBC who is currently working as a researcher for a boutique think tank, IMAN Research, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Some of her academic interests include looking at social inequalities through an intersectional lens, research methodologies, and cultural theory. She would like to thank Debra Pentecost for giving her the opportunity to write and conduct research on this topic. She is also indebted to Curtis Seufert who showed her what she could do with this paper. Lastly, she wants to extend her gratitude to other professors and friends who have shaped her writing and thinking throughout her undergraduate career, particularly Ana Vivaldi, Lindsey Richardson, and Thomas Kemple.

### **KACEY NG**

Kacey is a fourth year honours sociology student at UBC with minors in Asian-Canadian Asian Migration Studies and Urban Studies. Her interests include urban sociology, built environments and migration. Kacey has presented her research on the importance of spatial signage in ethnic enclaves at conferences such as the Canadian Sociological Association's annual meeting. Kacey would like to thank Dr. Nathanael Lauster for his inspiration to pursuing Urban Sociology and his continued guidance and support in writing this paper. Kacey is also a member of the *Sojourners* editorial team.

### **STEPHANIE SEPTEMBRE**

Stephanie Septembre is in her fifth and final year at Walla Walla University in Washington state, completing her double major in Sociology and French. Her research interests include international education and child protection, and she hopes to pursue a career in research and consultancy to influence international policy in these areas. She has a special affinity for indigenous Latin America and hopes to see major reforms among its education systems, reforms which will provide greater opportunities to indigenous children without forcing them to sacrifice their cultural identities and native languages. Stephanie is very grateful to *Sojourners* for the opportunity to be published, but she is especially glad that the voices and opinions of her participants have received international recognition.

### **TAYLOR MACKENZIE**

Taylor MacKenzie is a master's candidate in the Department of Sociology at McMaster University. Her research interests include inequality, gender, sexuality and law. Taylor's research has examined the ways in which universities manage sexual assault issues on their campuses, looking specifically at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She has also researched inequality in relation to rates of reporting sexual assault at Canadian post-secondary institutions; narratives of personal responsibility in relation to sexual assault; and symbolic violence and micro-aggressions as they relate to sexual assault. Currently, she is working on a project to examine how students at an Ontario-based university make sense of three different narratives of responsibility in sexual assault cases. The research will explore the narratives of rape culture at a level of benefits and norms; victim-blaming at an individual level and purview of university policies at an institutional level.



## TIFFANY LOH

Tiffany Loh is a recent graduate of the University of British Columbia, with an Honours in Geography and a second major in Sociology. Having lived in both Singapore and Vancouver, she is an avid lover of understanding cities, cultures and society. Her passion lies in issues relating around gender and sexuality as well as that of immigration and education. She hopes to further pursue her interests in the near-future and aspires to be an educator. Tiffany is also super passionate about competitive dragonboating and had created one of her fondest memories in university with her fellow teammates. She would also like to sincerely thank the *Sojourners* editorial team for the amazing opportunity and support in her journey to publication.

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

### ANDY HOLMES

Andy is honoured to be Co-Editor-in-Chief for *Sojourners* after working as an Associate Editor between 2016-2017. He is thankful for working with an incredible editorial team this year, and is moved by the selection of poignant papers published in this year's journal. Andy is a 4th-year UBC Honours Sociology student with a minor in Critical Studies in Sexuality and a 2017 UBC Wesbrook and Premier Undergraduate scholar. His passion in sociology stems from his desire to critically study contemporary LGBTQ2+ issues and culture in order to ascertain predictions for queer politics in the near future. Andy's work around this area can be found published in UBC's *Journal of Political Studies*, *Ignite*, the *Ubysey* and *The Talon*. His research on uniformed police in Pride parades has allowed him to present at the NCRC Conference at Harvard University, the upcoming 4th Critical Ethnic Studies Conference, and the 2018 American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. While not doing research, Andy also has the pleasure of being a teaching assistant for introductory sociology courses where he values the opportunity to encourage students to see the world through a critical sociological perspective.

## EMMA RUSSO

Emma is a third year international student from Italy, happily majoring in Sociology. Her research interests span from trying to figure out how to subvert global capitalism through studying intentional communities, to understanding her identity and trying to unlearn a lot of internalized western nonsense about truth, to breaking her head on abstract “isms”, to eventually realize institutional education is what often makes no sense. Despite living in the paradoxes of our society and academia, she strives to embody her values through activism, nourishment of human relationships and hands-on knowledge, appreciation and respect for nature, and a constant quest to learn from others. She’s hoping to incorporate many of these passions in writing her Honours thesis as a critical discourse analysis of a debate centered on identity politics. She’s absolutely thrilled to be joining *Sojourners* as Co-Editor in Chief after her editing experience at *The Talon*. This year she will also join the Sociology Department as a Teaching Assistant, and she looks forward to starting!

## ALEX CHOW

Alex is a second year Sociology major from Singapore who is thankful for the opportunity to come to Canada for his university studies. His interest in Sociology was sparked before coming to UBC by his teacher in junior college who challenged him to think about the very lens that people use to see the world around them. His experience in UBC and Canada has only reaffirmed his interest in Sociology because of the way it helps us see the world differently, and the potential the discipline has to make the world we live in a little better for everyone in it. Passionate about research, Alex has presented at the Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Research Conference and Coordinated Arts Program Conference, as well as worked as a research assistant in his first year. His research focus includes a budding interest in class and identity (in particular, national and ethnic), but he looks forward to working with papers of all research foci in *Sojourners*, and developing his research interest further. Apart from *Sojourners*, Alex is involved in the Sociology department as the Vice-President (Academic) of the Sociology Students’ Association, where he works to connect students with research opportunities and valuable resources in the department. In his free time, you can find Alex running, hiking, or checking out the beautiful sights that Vancouver has to offer.

### **CURTIS SEUFERT**

Curtis is a 4th year Sociology major who plans to pursue Graduate studies in journalism. Upon entering UBC with the intent of majoring in Political Science and Economics, he, like many others, was immediately enthralled by the very critical approaches that were being taken to understand society in his first 100-level Sociology class, and quickly came to realize that this was what he wanted to pursue. Currently an associate writer for *The Source/La Source*, a Greater Vancouver arts, culture, and society newspaper, his studies in sociology have helped to develop his empathetic and culturally considerate approach to journalism, as well as his enthusiasm for giving voice to artists, activists, and other folks who aren't often heard in the many pertinent societal discussions happening in the Lower Mainland. In turn, his experiences in journalism have helped him to ground his more theoretical sociological knowledge in real life. Passionate for music himself, he is a strong believer in the power of art and art journalism as a gateway to new ideas that people might otherwise avoid or simply not encounter.

### **ESMÉE COLBOURNE**

Esmée is a 4th year Sociology with an interest in Urban Studies and New Media. A compulsive Instagrammer and music nerd, her writing has been published in magazines such as *Discorder* and the *Ubyyssey*. Her goal during her time on the editorial board of *Sojourners* is to support her peers engage in critical dialogue, while broadening her editorial and academic skills. She is currently researching Guerrilla Art and Urbanization.

### **KACEY NG**

Kacey is a fourth year Sociology honour's student. Alongside her major, she is pursuing a minor in Asian Canadian Migration Studies. Within Sociology, she is particularly interested in Urban Sociology with a focus on neighbourhood shifts. Kacey is driven towards academia with experience presenting at conferences (including the multidisciplinary undergraduate conference, and the Canadian sociological association's annual conference) and with experience as a teaching assistant in the department. She is excited to develop a deeper understanding of the work that editors do and their roll in curating a journal for publication.

**JESSICA ZHAI**

Jessica is a third-year student majoring in Sociology with a minor in Law and Society. She was born in China, and spent her entire life moving back and forth between Vancouver and Guangzhou. Due to her lived experiences within both Western and Asian societies, her research interests span from race and ethnicity, immigration, and more specifically, identity formation within diasporic communities. Her passion for sociology stemmed from her volunteer trips to communities in need in rural China, and trying to unpack the root causes for social inequalities. She hopes to pursue a future in legal studies, and believes that her sociological background will provide a valuable perspective on ways to make a difference in this unjust, harrowing world. She strongly believes in the importance of viewing the social world through a feminist intersectional lens, looking at how the axis of gender, race, and class are interwoven to create a discrete yet powerful system of social hierarchy. Aside from sociology, her second passion would be reading and watching horror classics. Some of her favorite works are *Silent Hill*, Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*, and Stephen King's *Carrie* and *The Shining* (both the novels and the film adaptations). She enjoyed working with the amazing team of editors and writers on *Sojourners* this year.

**SELINA LO**

Selina Lo, a 3rd year Sociology major at the University of British Columbia, is the voicebehind one of Vancouver's leading food blogs: [www.vancitynoms.com](http://www.vancitynoms.com). Having been a part of the Yelp Elite Squad for the past 4 years, she hopes to achieve Elite GOLD by 2018. Within Sociology and GRSJ, her fields of interest include the dialogue surrounding racial microaggressions against immigrants and POC, stigma in regards to disability, gentrification within the Greater Vancouver area, and the intersectionality of disability, race, and gender. She is especially fervent about the de-stigmatization of speech disorders, ADHD, food allergies and eating disorders having experienced said diseases first hand. On a lighter note, Selina is known to scour thrift stores for vintage tennis rackets, Singer sewing machines, and art books, having amassed quite the collection. She is hopelessly infatuated with the following: classical antiquity, architecture, Whole Foods, streetwear, and Korean food. Selina aspires to someday work as a writer or editor of a literature, art, or lifestyle publication.

## SIQI XIAO

Siqi Xiao is a 4th-year Honors Sociology student. She is currently doing research on gender inequality, late marriage and “leftover women” phenomenon in China. She is not only interested in discovering and theorizing the shifting pattern of people’s views on marriage, intimate relationships, and family, but also passionate in striving for gender equality and equity in south-west China, especially through social organizations and public blogs that are accessible and inclusive for the LGBTQ community and individuals with different SES. She believes that research and theory start from human beings and should return to human beings’ life experiences and everyday “problems”. With a genuine care for human rights and individuals’ well-being, she is dedicated to bringing discussions about inequality and mental health from a sociological aspect to everyday conversations, while supporting her peers and communities. Besides, she aims at promoting comprehensive and holistic sex education in China. Other interests include philosophy, lyrical contemporary dancing, poems, and photography (obsessed with trees and lights!). Siqi is very excited to join *Sojourner* and work with these great human beings. Meanwhile, she hopes to advance her editing skills and gain knowledge of academic publication. Suki has been her favored nickname since she came to Canada 3 years ago. However, recently, she is exploring numerology, and theories/studies about names and identities.

## TORUN HALVORSEN

Torun is a 4th-year international Sociology student from Norway, focusing on Sociology of Health and Wellness with special interests in Health Behavior and Biostatistics. In 2016, she won Faculty of Arts International Student Scholarship for her engagement with the student community throughout her degree at UBC, after taking on various roles in UBC Clubs and Associations, as well as the role Head of Vancouver Department for Association for Norwegian Students Abroad. Torun is also a portrait and landscape photographer and enjoys examining social issues and power relations through the camera lens. She aims to combine the communicative power of photography with sociological insights to create conversation around the ways by which social structures shape our lives. Other interests include language, literature, and translation. She finds the ways by which language shapes our realities fascinating, and is currently writing several independent projects including a documentary on mass consumption and a novel about the experience of a child in a grown-up world. This year, Torun is very excited to work as an Associate Editor for *Sojourners* and happy to be part of a strong and passionate team.



