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convergence

a journal of undergraduate & community research

volume iii

september 2012



published by QPIRG concordia and QPIRG mcgill, in
montreal, quebec. september 2012.

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convergence is a core project of both QPIRG concordia & QPIRG mcgill.
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this is the third edition of a growing montreal-based undergraduate and community research journal. it's one of the rare existing spaces to promote and share a "community based social justice research model". this term breaks down the traditional concept of "research" as being necessarily academic and intimidating, and gives space for it to mean "knowledge sharing", recognizing that this can happen in a varied and empowering way. "research" in this context extends beyond the classroom and is encompassed by life experience and the acquisition of information, skills, and an understanding of how the world around us functions. defined as such, research is something anyone can engage in and produce.

this space that we call **convergence** rejects the notion that academics and intellectuals are the only producers of legitimate knowledge; it recognizes that university is an often inaccessible institution which maintains systems of privilege and oppression around race, class, and neocolonialism. **convergence** therefore aims to empower and reinforce social movements that actively oppose and challenge these systems of oppression.

contributions to this journal come from undergrads, artists, feminists, queers, migrant justice organizers, anti-police brutality activists, folks with direct lived experience with the issues they fight against and for, grassroots organizers who are working within a solidarity model...a fierce and diverse crew of inspiring individuals working to enforce research as a tool of transformation.

here we see community activism and university work reinforcing and strengthening each other. **convergence** shares the research and expressions resulting from the community-university research exchange (CURE) and the annual study in action and art in action undergraduate and community research conferences. this triad of projects affiliated with the quebec public interest research groups (QPIRGs), at concordia and mcgill are exciting initiatives working to provide space for community, intellectual and artistic work committed to fighting for justice.

keep fighting!
<3 kim

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music education as a tool in preserving dominant canadian culture.

jillian sudayan

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Canada's multiculturalism policy promotes the acceptance and celebration of diverse cultures and promises great opportunities for all Canadians, sounding positive in theory. The Canadian Multicultural Act states that it "encourage[s] the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada" (1988, 5.1.e). However, Canada's model of multiculturalism has been challenged on several sides. Most notably, Quebec has openly disagreed with federal multiculturalism policy and follows its own model of interculturalism (Fleras & Elliot, 2002). Aboriginal peoples also reject the idea of a reductionist multicultural policy, preferring a multi-nation framework that recognizes their collective right to special status and entitlements (Fleras & Elliot, 2002). Multiculturalism is a highly contested concept, both in terms of its theoretical approach and its practice. In practicing music education as well, we must question this policy. The current music education curriculum remains structured around Eurocentric minority perspectives that do not reflect Canada's racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. As a form of historical documentation, musical education has the potential to promote cultural practices that students of different backgrounds can identify with. While the current curriculum is guided by Canadian multicultural policy, this paper critiques this curriculum and demonstrates how it can promote internalized forms of oppression in elementary and high school aged youth. In framing music education as a tool for dominant perspectives, educators as well as community members can then reflect on the impact they will have on students' identity of self as well as their connection to society.

This paper was presented at Study in Action 2012, Montreal. A longer version is available at www.convergencejournal.ca

Within the past century, Canadian society has seen an increase in immigration for social and economic development. Although Canadian demographics are changing and forcing the country's citizens to consider new ways of living together, Fleras & Elliot state that "for most of the modern era, Western societies [have embraced] the universal and the uniform as a basis for living together." Similarly, a participant in Walker's discussion group (cited in Morton) "wondered if multiculturalism was simply a 'reaction to immigration' rather than a strategy to better appreciate and respect ethnic diversity". Multiculturalism policy can be seen as the result of decisions made by a ruling class that has a limited understanding of the immigrants that have chosen Canada as their country of residence. Fleras & Elliot, note that "multiculturalism has been criticized as a paternalistic solution to the 'problem' of minorities", and have argued that multiculturalism is a concept that is contradictory "politically and economically" in that "it has the potential to actually compromise minority rights and shore up vested interests, even when it is intended to do the opposite".

The realities of racial discrimination, classism, and sexism are evident within the music education curriculum as well. With regards to cultural diversity in music education, Schippers explains that "taking a serious interest in musical genres in music education accelerated considerably in the 1980s, when government and educational policies started recognizing the importance and realities of cultural diversity more widely." However, by drawing from the expanding repertoire and musical genres that have been made available to music educators, there is a "construction of musical difference" and "process of categorization" (Koza, 2009). Koza argues that the construction of musical difference is "an effect of power and is accomplished by the materialization of categories or styles of music...(playing) a role in the systematic inclusion or exclusion of people." According to Koza, "people's bodies have been sorted and ordered through a process of differencing that materializes them as raced, a method of categorization that can be applied to music". Music is often labeled according to its country and/or culture of origin. Categorizing people as well as music, however, "systematically advantages some groups of people while disadvantaging others" (Koza, 2009), thus demonstrating the ways in which music education also lends itself to the perpetuation of racial inequities.

Now, let us analyze the effects of teaching music education within a multicultural framework. Schippers explains that the "methods of teaching, as well as approaches to concepts such as tradition, context, authenticity, and the position of the music in society are strongly influenced by the institutional environment." In the music curriculum, students are expected to "understand how to hear, replicate and create the

similarities and differences that distinguish one musical style from another, to identify the style, genre or even the probable composer of unfamiliar works” (Koza, 2009). It is normal for teachers to instruct the way that they themselves have been trained; however we must question teachers’ choices in repertoire with regards to what is viewed as the correct or incorrect method of understanding music. In Canadian society “a single musical culture, Western European art music, is perpetuated through most collegiate programs in music” (Campbell, 1996). Elliott outlines two weaknesses in the music education curriculum as follows:

- (1) it is often biased from the outset by its reliance on the ‘aesthetic’ perspective inherent in the notion of ‘teaching from musical concepts’; and (2) the music chosen for study in this curriculum tend to be limited to styles available in the contemporary musical life of the host culture (16).

Given these assertions, critical questions arise with regards to the multicultural curriculum in Canadian schools. For instance, what values are being taught to students about musical practice in the classroom and their participation in society? One could argue that students are required to learn music by “following the leader,” which in the context of North American music education, “sanctions a hierarchical and, paradoxically, a rather undemocratic view of society” (Elliot, 1989). The music education curriculum can thus be viewed as assimilationist. Elliot identifies this type of curriculum by its “exclusive concern with the major musical styles of the Western European ‘classical’ tradition, the ‘elevation of taste’ and the breakdown of minority students’ affiliations with popular and/or subculture music where the ‘classics’ are considered superior to the musical products of minorities and subgroups.” Musical repertoire apart from the Western European “classical” tradition can be seen as emphasizing “musical diversity rather than human diversity” (Morton, 2000). What then, can be said about music from Indigenous cultures and other cultures from around the world, which are not included in the category of traditional Western European art music? Where do other genres such as Rap and Hip Hop find themselves in the music curriculum? How can we understand music categorized as “other” and students’ relationship to it?

Morton describes the confusion concerning ethnicity and diversity that “originates from shifts in population demographics which continue to shape the Canadian population, while the music teaching profession remains relatively middleclass, white and female.” In order to gain a variety of perspectives and experiences, schools must take seriously the way that people identify themselves and identify with others (McGowan, 1998). It is important to understand how we identify ourselves, and the ways in which social values and biases are reflected back to us. Taylor (cited in Morton) describes the politics

of recognition as follows:

Our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or a contemptible picture of themselves. Non recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being (252).

As stated by McCarthy, Hudak, Allegretto, Miklaucic and Saukko, “if it can be argued that young people construct their identities through social formation of boundaries, then it is important to uncover how social, cultural, and political boundaries are created and lived through popular music.” Elizabeth Ellsworth (cited in McCarthy et al., 1999) argues that “the task of liberatory education is not to eliminate difference, but rather to create a dialogue across differences such that alliances may be formed in the struggle against oppressive social institutions and structures.” Moreover, Hudak explains that “racial formation is socially constructed (and continually contested) within the parameters of existing relations of power within the school (and societal) context.” Students live within contextual social structures with which they identify, measuring their value against a certain standard. Hall (cited in Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 1999) states that “identities are recognized as multiple, complex, porous, and shifting sets of positioning, attachments, and identifications through which individuals and collectives understand who they are and how they are expected to act across a range of diverse social and cultural landscapes.” Viewing an individual’s identity in the larger social context of the classroom, as well as in comparison with larger social formations, is “always tentative and partially unstable because they are continually constructed within particular configurations of discursive and material practices that are themselves constantly constituting and reconstituting themselves” (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 1999). This definition of student identity, which highlights the fluid but contested forms of discourse and pedagogy, is consistent with Canada’s social context which is marked by changes in demographics, economic, social and political formations. If we are to identify Canada’s diverse population according to its multicultural heritage, then why is there a line drawn between “us” and “them”? Furthermore, are students of color building a sense of identity in the framework of multiculturalism that is actually harmful for them and their understanding of the society they live in?

Music educators, as representatives of the existing musical structure, deal with choices that must take into account several of these contradictions. They must make choices that are considerate of their students’ well-being and learning with knowledge taken

from their own training. On the one hand, they are asked to use styles of music making that are not from the traditional Eurocentric music program for addressing the multicultural classroom and curriculum. On the other hand, music educators are not always aware of the implications that these styles and teaching methods may have on their students. Left to address the classroom and curriculum with its several contradictions, Schippers declares that “it is not the music teachers of the world who are to blame; the main weaknesses lie in teacher training”. Campbell’s description of American music educators’ multicultural education training can be applied to Canadian music educators as well:

A single musical culture which is Western European art music, is perpetuated through most collegiate programs in music. Yet upon graduation and placement in their first teaching positions, music educators are confronted with school wide missions to teach subjects globally and from a multicultural perspective. The canon of musical works they learned in their undergraduate studies do not often transfer, even in part, to the expectations of school personnel for music repertoire and programs. Principals, parents’ groups, and the public at large who press for more culturally diverse curriculum have teachers of music scrambling for music they never learned and songs they never knew. Workshops, clinics and seminars become important means for learning something of musical cultures with attention to repertoire that is easily accessible and readily learned. Thus, while Western European art music is common musical language of those trained in American conservatory–styled colleges and universities, it is increasingly viewed by teachers as only one of the many musical cultures (admittedly with its own rich diversity of historical and contemporary styles) to be experienced and learned by students in elementary and public schools (2).

Music education, as a structure that simultaneously upholds dominant structures and places demands on its educators to teach with a global and multicultural perspective, does not prepare educators well enough to deal with their multiethnic classrooms. Schippers states that “in any teaching situation, they are required to take position consciously with regard to the cultural setting they are in, sensitive to the choices open to them with regard to tradition, context, and authenticity, and choose their approach to teaching accordingly.”

There must be sensitivity towards the students, in addressing the different identities at play within a society that includes people of different cultural backgrounds. For music educators, what may seem to be innocent in their methods of teaching and choices of repertoire must be analyzed further to understand the potentially harmful implications that these choices may have on their students in the near and far future.

Koza's critical analysis on the state of music education provides some possible ways of addressing the tension in the existing music education curriculum which sustains the dominant Western European perspective. She sends an invitation to all music educators:

Continue to listen for Whiteness (and their white privilege), not to affirm it, but to recognize its intitutional presence, understand its technologies, and thereby work toward defunding it. Not only is it important that music educators talk substantively about race in discussions of school music, but also that we explore multiple ways of thinking and talking about music, learning, teaching and quality (93).

Living in a country that claims to be a multicultural society, we are asked to have a global and multicultural perspective on the world. This also affects how we teach in the educational system. However, is it even possible to consider multiculturalism as a policy that is fitting for the whole of Canadian society? Music education must address the growing diversity in its classroom, and to be wary of the ways in which it covertly and overtly excludes minority perspectives.

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examining the increasing rates of homelessness amongst inuit women within montreal.

carly seltzer

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This paper was presented at Study in Action 2012, Montreal. A longer version is available at www.convergencejournal.ca

Author's note: This paper addresses the issue of the varying degrees of homelessness amongst Inuit women who have migrated from Nunavut to Montreal. It focuses on addressing the structural factors that contribute to experiences of homelessness, as well as the lack of adequate, appropriate and accessible social resources within Montreal available to Inuit women. This research is contextualized in the decades long Nunavut housing crisis, and examined in relation to the incidence and prevalence of homelessness amongst Inuit women within Montreal today. This issue is also examined through the ways in which it is related to and perpetuated by the prevalence of racism, discrimination, stigmatization, criminalization and the deserving/undeserving dichotomy. While volunteering at Chez Doris, a daytime shelter for women located in Montreal, this issue was brought to my attention by the workers and members of the organization.

As a non-indigenous researcher, I aim to be an ally to Indigenous communities in both the academic and community context. I identify as coming from a model of solidarity work, and acknowledge my positionality in the academy as privileged. Although this research in no way reflects directly the lived experiences of Inuit women, the framework and analysis that has been developed is influenced by conversations that took place between myself and individuals from Chez Doris.

The rates of homelessness amongst Inuit women in Nunavut and Montreal are rapidly increasing, and the relationship between Inuit women's homelessness in the rural north and the urban south of Canada are inextricably linked. Women and youth continue to comprise the majority of homeless Inuit peoples today both in Nunavut and in southern urban centers. Homelessness among Inuit women in the rural north and urban south is rooted in structural factors such as a severe shortage of affordable, safe, and sustainable public housing due to inadequate federal, provincial, and territorial housing policies; a lack of adequate, culturally appropriate social and community services such as shelter organizations; and flawed social assistance programs based on exclusionary, discriminatory policies. It is through accessible, affordable, and sustainable subsidized public housing on and off reservations in both Nunavut and Montreal, in conjunction with adequate social and community services and social assistance programs, which have the potential to provide long-term solutions to this systemic problem.

With regards to housing policy, the Canadian federal government states that a “fundamental entitlement of all Canadians is the provision of adequate shelter” (Qullitit Nunavut Status of Women Council). Yet First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Aboriginal populations of Canada are not given this entitlement, and Nunavut is a prime example of what happens when the federal government is ignorant of its own previously stated obligations.

In Canada today, women are the fastest growing homeless and at-risk population and there are more women represented in the Native homeless population than in the non-Native homeless population. For example, in the Greater Vancouver Regional District 35% of the Native homeless population is female versus 27% amongst the non-Native homeless population (Native Women's Association of Canada.). The federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments must take responsibility and respond adequately to this reality. Through partnerships between governments and existing social and community services and social assistance programs, both the immediacy of homelessness and the underlying root causes must be addressed.

The population of Inuit people in Canada has drastically increased since the 1980s, and there has also been an increase in Inuit migration from the rural north to southern cities. Today over half of the Inuit population in Nunavut live in overcrowded conditions and 38.7% are considered to be in core need because they do not live in and cannot access proper housing (Qullitit Nunavut Status of Women Council). The annual fiscal budget of Nunavut is less than half the amount required to bring overcrowding

down to levels comparable to the rest of Canada, and it would take at least three thousand public housing units to obtain such levels (The Government of Nunavut). The lack of affordable subsidized rental units in the public sector and on reserves in Nunavut is a major factor which contributes to the prevalence and incidence of homelessness throughout the territory.

The housing crisis is a major factor in many women's choice to migrate south from Nunavut. The wait lists to receive public housing in Nunavut can be as long as ten years, with tenants paying up to 25% of their income on rent alone (Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council). The severely long wait list also means that women in abusive relationships can potentially be stuck in their situation unless they choose to be homeless. Despite the existence of some shelter organizations throughout Nunavut, there is no transitional housing and many women end up cycling from abusive situations into public housing and then into shelters; but when their allotted time in the shelter expires they often go back to the same abusive situation or inadequate public housing unit. Nunavut needs to implement priority-housing policies which would ensure that women who are in violent and abusive relationships could be prioritized, since they comprise the majority of those in immediate need of housing in the north. The housing crisis in the north can only be adequately addressed through the immediate intervention of federally funded social assistance and community programs with money specifically allocated to shelter organizations, second-stage or transitional housing and affordable subsidized public housing, developed in partnership with Inuit organizations and coalitions.

Other major reasons for migration include the severe shortage of jobs in Nunavut and domestic and sexual violence, which has been linked to over-crowded living conditions. Reasons for migration tend to stem from the idea that there are better resources in urbanized cities such as affordable housing, employment, education, and medical assistance. However, the lived realities of Inuit women who migrate from Nunavut to Montreal are often characterized by varied experiences of homelessness due to discrimination and a severe shortage of these resources in urban centers. Women who are at the highest risk of homelessness are those fleeing abusive relationships, and many Inuit women who migrate from the north have already been deeply affected by homelessness. Upon migrating to Montreal, many women cannot escape poverty and homelessness because they are not eligible for social assistance due to various regulations and requirements, and because of the stigma against alcohol or drug use and perceived mental illness. High unemployment, low levels of education, language and cultural barriers, issues of mobility, racism and discrimination, domestic, sexual, and substance abuse are all structural factors,

which perpetuate cycles of homelessness amongst Inuit women in urban centers.

Income Support is a social assistance program which aims to temporarily support women, but its framework is embedded with flaws and limitations. For Inuit women the concept of assistance based on a headcount of biological children doesn't mesh with the Inuit cultural norm of sharing resources, which means that women could have more people dependent on them than just their biological children. If women only have access to substandard and unsafe housing, they remain at risk of other consequences such as having their children taken away by social services. Furthermore, according to the Income Support policy, women must be assessed as having made "productive choices" within two months of receiving Income Support (Qullit Inuvavut Status of Women Council). Thus, Inuit women migrating from the north who have experienced severe homelessness rooted in systemic factors and who seek support in urban centers are not seen by Income Support policy to be 'deserving' unless they can prove they have made 'productive choices'. The ambiguity of what counts as a 'productive choice' creates an opportunity for service providers to make decisions about who receives social assistance based on discriminatory, judgmental, and uninformed opinions. Policies like this are embedded in and emerge out of dominant discourses that perpetuate cultural normativity and an assimilationist mentality tied to a colonialist legacy. The idea of a woman having to exemplify and prove that her choices are 'productive' is horrifically subjective, problematic, and offers an automatic window of opportunity for the government to stop giving social assistance to an individual at any given moment. The inclusion of Inuit women's organizations as active partners in the creation of public policy within social assistance programs is essential in ensuring that their voices are heard within the framework of the policy.

A common response to the lack of affordable, safe, and sustainable subsidized housing is to provide temporary shelter and support in the form of social and community services. Native women and youth already under-utilize the existing shelters and programs in both urban and rural environments, and there is a severe lack of Native shelters for women that address the specific needs of Native women in a culturally appropriate way and within a framework sensitive to the historical context of colonialism. Native women with mental health and/or substance use issues often find emergency shelter spaces difficult or impossible to find in rural and urban settings and are left with nowhere to go. There is also often a lack of services and programs that are accommodating and appropriate to Native women with children.

Discrimination in social services is a major contributing factor in the perpetuation of Native women's homelessness. Through research conducted through census reports

and case studies it is apparent that a “majority of homeless Inuit tend to avoid using several of the shelters and charitable organizations because they are discriminated against by non-Inuit workers and homeless persons” (Kishigami 2). This reflects an experience common among Native women from all over Canada. In Montreal, where a large population of women accessing shelters are Native and specifically Inuit, it is necessary to note that shelters’ views on issues such as family violence and homelessness in Native communities are often filtered through what is referred to as a “justice” lens. This implies that the shelters don’t necessarily work to incorporate a Native emphasis on healing in their mandates or in the services provided, even though the majority of the women accessing the shelter in Montreal are Native (and predominantly Inuit). In urban centers Native women frequently encounter resources such as shelters and social assistance programs that fail to acknowledge the importance of specialized services that are informed by Inuit culture, values, and ideology.

The Native Friendship Center in Montreal is a shelter specifically for Inuit, First Nations and Métis women, whose mandate is informed by Native beliefs, traditions, culture, and history. Social workers at the shelter help homeless Native people prepare the documents necessary to access Quebec welfare, which consists on average of about \$550 per month. This amount of money is nearly impossible to live on without compromising basic needs such as food and clothing, and this is why available subsidized housing provides a more sustainable solution to supporting those who are on social assistance.

In the north, people living in shelters cannot receive social assistance. Most shelters only accept women on a long-term basis based on accounts of physical abuse and violence in their households. Shelters that do exist lack adequate training for their staff and confidentiality in their services, have a limited capacity of bodies that are allowed in the shelter, and have a flawed student-housing program. An even greater barrier to the shelter system in northern Canada is the ways in which shelters are funded. Often they are funded by INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada), which receives lower rates of support than shelters funded through other sources. This puts greater limitations on the creation and implementation of specialized services geared towards meeting the needs of Inuit women and their children. It is extremely difficult to track homelessness in the north because many people don’t access services, largely because they feel that these services are judgmental (Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council).

Culturally appropriate services are necessary in order to be able to address and

meet the needs of Inuit women in rural and urban centers. This relates directly to the importance of addressing the need for adequate support systems that emphasize Inuit values of family ties and sharing. In order to address the structural aspects of homelessness in a way that offers sustainable solutions, a social and community service would ideally provide resources that directly address poverty and the lack of affordable, sustainable and safe housing; sexual and racial violence; and education and employment opportunities. The federal and territorial governments should support these kinds of resources and allocate adequate funding to both urban and rural areas where homelessness is prevalent.

We must continue to generate more comprehensive research which addresses Inuit, First Nations, and Métis women's homelessness and the structural factors that contribute to and perpetuate it in order to further develop a clearer understanding of the determinants of women's homelessness in both northern Canada and southern urban centers. This research is critical to developing effective theories of change and to demonstrating the severity of the problem to the federal government, in hopes that they will act on it accordingly and adequately. Improvements must be made to existing social assistance programs, and care models should be implemented in social services for Native women that are informed by Native cultural traditions, history and ways of life and which provide opportunities for education programs and affordable daycare for their children. In order to consistently and effectively address homelessness, it is necessary to provide better funding to service agencies to allow them to keep appropriate records and to access and share statistical information. It is also crucial that the federal government continues to examine and actively address the issue of homelessness in northern Canada, specifically amongst Inuit people, and especially women and youth.

If the federal government recognizes homelessness as primarily structural, then it can also create more appropriate and effective policies to address issues such as affordable housing and adequate funding to community and social services. The relationship of homelessness and specifically of Inuit women's homelessness to public awareness is also something that needs to be addressed through public education. This is an immediate call for action and a demand for legislative changes to end discrimination against homeless Inuit women and to work towards improving the structural factors that cause homelessness. These issues include: the national shortage of affordable, safe, and sustainable public housing due to inadequate federal, provincial and territorial housing policies, the lack of adequate and appropriate social and community services such as shelter organizations, and the inadequate and exclusionary social assistance programs which are based on unaccommodating policies, in the hopes of eventually putting an end to homelessness.

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consultation as cooption: the case of shaughnessy village.

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The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy - a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone. The applause is reduced to polite handclaps, however, when this principle is advocated by the have-not blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Eskimos, and whites. And when the have-nots define participation as redistribution of power, the American consensus on the fundamental principle explodes into many shades of outright racial, ethnic, ideological, and political opposition.

Sherry R. Arnstein 1969, 216

This paper was presented at Study in Action 2012, Montreal. A longer version is available at www.convergencejournal.ca

In the spring of 2011, public consultations were held regarding a revitalization plan for the west end of Montreal's downtown known as Shaughnessy Village or, as it has been rebranded, the Quartier des Grands Jardins. A special planning program (or SPP) was jointly created by the City of Montreal and the table de concertation du centre-ville ouest, a coalition meant to represent community organisations, residents, private actors and local authorities (Table 2010). Over seventy groups and individuals voiced their opinions throughout the process of consultations, and many more attended informational and question sessions. Over nine months have passed since the sessions were held and the only acknowledgement thus far has been a summarized doc-

umentation of the opinions presented; no mention of intentions to adhere to these demands or concerns has been formally made. Through reflections on my experience with the Quartier des Grands Jardins consultation process, I seek to show that, within the context of neoliberal governance, public consultation is simply a process of self-legitimization that coopts democratic ideals in order to legitimize decisions already made, renders less important other means of protest, and ultimately holds no one accountable to the public which is meant to be represented.

the neoliberal city: a (very) brief overview

In past decades, the role of cities, as well as the way in which they are governed, has undergone a massive shift. This can be viewed as the move from a managerial, distributive role to an entrepreneurial one seen in tangent with the fall of Fordism (Harvey, 1989), but is also as representative of shifting geographies of scale. In the context of globalization, the role of nations has become increasingly negligible; power has shifted not just in the ways of supranational bodies and corporations, but additionally towards cities and city regions (Agnew et al, 2001). Lacking the fiscal or political capacity to assume this new responsibility, cities have further placed the onus on “professionalized quasi-public agencies empowered and responsible for promoting economic development, privatizing urban services, and catalyzing competition among public agencies” (Leitner et al, 2007, 4). These dynamics are posited as moves towards cost reduction, increasing flexibility, accountability, as well as greater efficiency of public administration (Elzina, 2010), and a hegemonic discourse contingent on a technocratic vision of city managing; governance as opposed to government. It can be seen as a move from centrist, hierarchical planning in favour of a more decentralized approach, not as a means to promote democratic processes, but in order to avoid bureaucracy (Swyngedouw et al, 2002). Consequently, in order for citizens to engage in decision-making, they must “understand how to perform actively as a citizen in order to claim a right to the city, [...] be entrepreneurial and to develop the capacity to be an active agent in claiming their urban space” (Ghose, 2005, 64). The devolution of state authority has resulted in decreased accountability towards the public, placing the burden on those who must actively seek out their ‘right to the city’.

quartier des grands jardins: the consultation process

The Quartier des Grands Jardins project was proposed as an attempt to revitalise an area which is seen to be showing signs of urban decay. With plans to promote built heritage, improve quality of life and stimulate economic activity (Arrondissement de Ville Marie), one of the key goals seems to be linking the urban socioeconomic fabric of the city of Montreal which, currently, experiences a slight glitch in the ostensibly labelled no-man’s land that is Shaughnessy Village. The plan, created by the borough

and the previously mentioned table de concertation, is a classic example of inner-city gentrification. While the project's rhetoric is brimming with grand claims of stability, sustainability and so-called "quality of life", a critical reading confirms that the ultimate goals are maintaining a competitive edge and the attraction of capital through becoming more appealing to "the outsider, the investor, developer, businesswoman or -man, or the money packed tourist" (Swyngedouw et al, 2002, 545-6). Given the composition of the table de concertation, this comes as no surprise.

In its mandate, the table stands for citizen democracy and representation of owners, renters, investors, students, merchants and community organisations alike (Table 2010). The board, however, tells a different tale. Of the six that sit on the board of directors, five have direct economic stakes in the area, speaking for; educational institutions, developers, and the city of Montreal. The larger board of twenty-four consists mainly of development firm CEOs, real estate owners, corporations, city committee members and large institutions; only one resident and four representatives from community organisations sit on the table de concertation (Table 2010). These so-called community representatives have been tasked with creating a plan which embodies everyone's interests, but it is evident that the main goals seek to increase economic vitality; social welfare is supposedly going to arise via trickle down benefits.

Throughout the process of consultation, public opinions proved to be decidedly diverse. Many spoke of issues of green space, personal security and general deterioration, others presented more critical views on the lack of affordable and social housing, increased police presence and the questionable roles of certain institutions. While demands for trees on traffic islands and concerns about safety (for some) in public parks were met by the commissioners with serious questions and concerns, demands that would radically change the plans were acknowledged by silence. There was a general disinterest in engaging with issues that significantly questioned the SPP (special planning program), leading us to believe that the consultation process, though effective for less political or symbolic decisions – such as green space and bike paths – is an ineffective route to questioning larger issues of urban governance.

public consultation or citizen placation?

The widespread adoption of the language of participation across a spectrum of institutions, from radical NGOs to local government bodies to the World Bank, raises questions about what exactly this much-used buzzword has come to mean. An infinitely malleable concept, 'participation' can be used to evoke – and to signify – almost anything that involves people.

Cornwall, 2008, 269

The process of consultation is in and of itself a necessary step towards the democratization of decision making; previous top-down methods of policy writing and implementation certainly left little room for citizen input. Nonetheless, this new trend towards participation has become a “hegemonic discursive resource” (Moini, 2011, 151) for the stabilization of neoliberal policies that have been shown to have little impact on actual policy, effectively becoming a tool by which projects achieve public approval under the guise of democratic process (Moini, 2011).

In the late ‘60s, Sherry Arnstein famously described what she called the “Ladder of Citizen Participation”. It included eight “rungs” of participation within three categories: non-participation, degrees of tokenism and degrees of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). Ranging from manipulation and therapy to citizen control, the ladder provided a skeleton in order to “cut through the hyperbole” (217) and understand the different degrees of citizen power given through various mechanisms. Public consultation falls in the middle, under the category of tokenism. While it provides a necessary platform for voices to be heard, “there is no follow through, no ‘muscle’, hence no assurance of changing the status quo” (217). In the case of Montreal, this is a harsh reality. Although the official policy regarding public participation notes that follow-up measures are necessary, the only official process is the re-evaluation of the consultation process itself, not of the issues brought under public scrutiny (Ville de Montreal, 2002). It therefore comes as no surprise that, over a year since the consultation, there has been no public recourse regarding the concerns brought forward.

Moreover, the inclusion of citizens in such “community” roundtables as the table de concertation is meaningless without mechanisms in place to ensure that groups are accountable to citizen voices. While Montreal has claimed it would attempt to provide information to the greatest number of people, especially “those who are often marginalized or difficult to reach” (Ville de Montreal, 2002, 2) not only is there little evidence that the city is making this effort, but this overlooks the fact that much of the population would not feel comfortable, doesn’t have the time or simply wouldn’t be allowed to contribute to formalized means of public engagement. Working parents with little free time, those who feel their opinion is not sufficiently refined or important and those who are unwelcome in private spaces, such as many affected homeless people in the case of the Quartier des Grands Jardins, are just some who are excluded by the nature of the process. Due to the fact that Montreal deems public consultation the “appropriate practice [for the] exercise of participatory democracy” (Ville de Montreal, 2002, 2), these people are left with no other ‘proper’ means of voicing their opinions. By making other forms of resistance “less acceptable than seeking a seat at the consultation table” (Corn-

wall, 2008, 282), the city delegitimizes all other methods of democratic intervention.

The use of terms such as “participatory” and “democratic” have become significant tools in the branding of projects as products of a collaborative process. Such cooptation allows developers and city officials to “claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit” (Arnstein, 1969, 216). When coupled with the fact that cities are increasingly managed by small partnerships and governing bodies, the rhetoric frequently exalts this new scale of decision making: local people enacting self-determination. This can be used to “lend a moral authority” while decisions remain “open to being selectively read and used by those with the power to decide” (Cornwall, 2008, 270). Expanding on this, it has been stressed that the decisions that are influenced by citizens “tend to remain trapped at the micro-local level and to avoid questioning power structures [...] envisig[ing] the citizen as a mere user of public services” (Sintomer and de Maillard, 2007, 523). The crisis of such democratic processes is in this inherent watering down of political stances so as to meet the palates of the majority while fringe concerns and opinions are seen to be less important or relevant. By necessarily excluding so many from a process that is seen to be the only platform for resistance, marginalized voices are even less likely to be heard. As a result, the floor is cleared of those less controversial proposals as dissenting opinions are pushed elsewhere. Creating the image of a more unanimous voice makes it even easier for decision makers to demonstrate citizen support while exclusion of more radical opinions allows policy to be depoliticised, upholding the technocratic paradigm of neoliberal efficiency.

conclusion: what next?

The process by which cities adopt and promote the ideals of participation represent a cooption of democratic principles used to endorse projects which have already been planned. In essence, “what citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have ‘participated in participation.’ What powerholders achieve, is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving ‘those people’” (Arnstein, 1969, 219). With the shiny seal of public approval, the neoliberal city can claim citizen participation without the bureaucratic inefficiencies of true democratic process.

So what happens next? Are we to demand that the city reform its policies to assure action on all demands? Are we to amass numbers too large to ignore? First, we must acknowledge the simple fact that everyone’s interests will not be voiced or heeded, no matter the structure for expressing them. Cities are increasingly diverse spaces which inevitably represent many differing opinions. Any process that seeks to highlight the desires of the majority will unavoidably result in marginalization. So is the best option to create the majority?

Perhaps for those who wish to combat larger systems of neoliberal urban governance, the process of consultation is not the most effective path. While it is not without value, participation also gives clout to the systems we are attempting to change by acknowledging that, in order to change things, we must first ask permission or find ourselves a seat at the table. Direct democracy may be best sought by acknowledging that “the core of the right to the city is more generally the right to inhabit the space, a right opposed to the right of property and profitability” (Purcell, 2008, 179). These rights will inherently clash with the growth machine of the neoliberal city, hence the space for action may not be within its own mechanisms for participation. The public consultation process remains a step in the right direction. However, within the context of neoliberal urbanism, the chances for meaningful change are marginal. By creating a means for already made plans to achieve a stamp of approval, cities can create a guise of democratic process without any true form of accountability to what is being demanded, rendering citizen participation a tool of self-legitimization for the neoliberal city.

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university of the streets.

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This paper was presented at Study in Action 2012, Montreal. A longer version is available at www.convergencejournal.ca

The prevalence of technology and transnational migration enable people to connect and thrive on social media networks. Although our society embraces high-tech marvels, nowadays we lament that, through them, we have lost the art of conversation. Thus, many face social isolation and feel disaffected in their surroundings through a lack of engaged dialogue, a diminished sense of belonging, and as a result, feel disinclination towards community building. Indeed, the factors that mitigate the prevailing urban experience interest me profusely and have guided my burgeoning research interests. Several years ago, my disaffection with living in the urban landscape led me to seek communities that promote civic dialogue and that are agents of change through public conversations.

Accordingly, I am interested in exploring the role of public conversations in the fast paced, harried, and constantly connected society that we inhabit. Researchers argue that belonging and participating in social networks does not enhance support systems nor strengthen friendships, but instead leads people to experience further alienation and social isolation. (Goleman 9) Thus, my objective was to conduct fieldwork at one of the last public spaces that engaged citizens of various backgrounds – age levels, socioeconomic status, cultures, and diverging interests – to connect and weave meaningful dialogue.

Since early 2009, I have been intermittently involved with the University of the Streets Café, a Concordia University initiative housed at the Institute in Community Development that claims to “take

learning out of the university and into community spaces and cafes”. The Institute in Community Development was founded in 1993. The Café’s program coordinator, Elizabeth Hunt¹, shares the *raison d’être* of the Institute:

The Institute invites citizens within the university’s walls and develops programming that stretches beyond the fabled ivory tower, creating a learning space—a bridge between the university and the larger community that contains it—where activists, community workers, funders, decision-makers, volunteers and other everyday folks learn alongside students, professors, and administrators. All this learning takes place under the assumption that each participant has something to contribute, each person is a citizen (in the sense of community member, not in terms of nationality) and that each citizen plays a crucial role in responding to the social and economic challenges of our communities.

The University of the Streets Café has been a focal connection for socially inclined “citizens to pursue lifelong learning and engagement through public conversations”². As a regular participant, I have been witness to what Elizabeth calls “conversations for a learning society” that foster liminality, mutual reflections and exchanges among participants and that have led to civic engagement. In pursuing my fieldwork on the Café, my primary objective was to explore the role of public conversations as transformative agents of change. More particularly, I sought to obtain insight on the emergence of collaborative learning, how citizens engage collectively, and the manner in which participants negotiate the resolutely complex life and times they inhabit.

Based on my research, academia has not embraced the role that public conversations play in community settings nor has it held the gaze of scientific inquiry. Therefore, it is my hope to join sundry researchers and community educators in a discussion on the informal learning that occurs in conversation circles. Consequently, the field research that I have undertaken will endeavour to contribute to an eclectic, budding group of voices that are steadily rising in converging fields of inquiry.

conversation cafés

The University of the Streets Café, broadly based on SFU’s Philosopher’s Café model, promotes conversations that have a fluid purpose through a defined structure. It caters to informal learning and developing a “more informed and connected community”³ through an active citizenry that does not seek public policy initiatives. In fact, participants range from university students to professors and an assorted array of community members who represent various socioeconomic status, cultural, academic, and working class backgrounds with the sole desire to exchange ideas and knowledge.

There are several initiatives in North America that espouse the café culture (Davetian) and popular education model (Carr), but whose focus and approach may differ from the University of the Streets Café considerably. The World Café is a prominent example that is cited by café culture enthusiasts, but whose mission and structure is worlds apart from our ethnographic focus. Thus, at the World Café, “intimate conversations at small café-style tables or in small conversation clusters link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and make new connections around questions that really matter to their life, work, or community” (Tan & Brown). In Seattle, Conversation Cafés are reminiscent of our model. Their mission is to stimulate community, endorse democracy and learning through public conversations. (Conversation Cafés website Hunt)

conversations for a learning society

Founded in May 2003, the University of the Streets Café has organized more than 350 public conversations on a variety of topics of ardent, public interest and societal concern in a multitude of community spaces – cafés, community centres, museums, parks, art galleries, and yoga studios. During a typical conversation, the number of participants equals 30 to 45 on average, but this season’s second conversation, an immensely popular conversation entitled “Beyond Business as Usual: Has Occupy changed us?” gathered 75 concerned students, community organizers, and anarchists – young and old.

The structure of the University of the Streets Café is straightforward. Public conversations are scheduled at 7pm on most weeknights and last two hours. During my conversations with the coordinators, their intention became clear: conversations are purported to be free, held in public and community spaces that are easily accessible by public transportation and open to the public. Although the conversation model is fluid, each conversation is nonetheless structured, and thematic conversations are organized ahead of time. There is a moderator whose role is to ensure the conversation runs smoothly, that there are no lulls during the evening, and that each participant has the opportunity to converse and take their space – should they wish to do so. Furthermore, the role of the guest(s) is to provide their expertise, knowledge, perspective, or take on the discussion topic. After ruminating for 15 minutes, the floor is open to the participants and as Hunt writes in her notes, then the guest becomes another participant. Hunt reiterates the objective of the public conversation. She writes:

“Once a guest has presented and the conversation has been initiated by the moderator, the scope, content and various orbits and (trajectories of the discussion

are) largely directed by the interests and intelligence of the group. In fact, the bulk of the two hours (usually 90 minutes) is devoted to the larger conversation that is influenced by all present.” (Hunt 3)

As one of the last vestiges of community, the role of public conversations is to fulfill a communal void and social alienation that our increasingly micromanaged and corporatist lives continue to experience. Indeed, people seek out the public conversation model for ceaseless reasons, but through my fieldwork, I was able to observe several possibilities for the resurgence of such community-based models of communication.

In an age of technological prowess and access, our society has demonstrated a diminished capacity to connect authentically and profoundly with one another. Despite the prevalence of social media networks, the art of friendship has become muddled. In a recent conversation, “Best friends forever: what does authentic friendship look like?”, many participants illustrated the deficiencies of modern relationships. Indeed, one modern 20 something said it best: “friends are those with whom you hangout when you’re not involved”⁴.

conclusion and reflections

This study offers a cursory insight into the role of social learning and the public conversation model as alternative pedagogies. My research demonstrates that community-based initiatives provide a salient learning model in innovative and social justice oriented settings while reigniting the art of the conversation.

endnotes

1. Elizabeth Hunt, program coordinator, is doing an MA about public conversations and informal learning University of the Streets Café website: <http://instdev.concordia.ca/our-programs/university-of-the-streets-cafe/about-the-program/>

2. University of the Streets Café website: <http://instdev.concordia.ca/our-programs/university-of-the-streets-cafe/about-the-program/>

3. Craig Paterson, Deliberative IDEAS: Conversations with a Purpose. http://delibcaideas.org/?page_id=3

4. Field Notes, Feb. 27: <http://fieldnotes.sarinemakdessian.com/2012/02/best-friends-forever-what-does-authentic-friendship-look-like/>

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disability and the militarization of urban spaces: configuring radical accessibility and communities of support in contexts of war.

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This paper was presented at Study in Action 2012, Montreal. A longer version is available at www.convergencejournal.ca

introduction

Cities are spaces of battle. For years, the militarization of urban landscapes has made city streets, workplaces, schools, and homes into spaces of war. In these landscapes, urban residents are often called upon as combatants, and, unfortunately, sometimes number among the list of casualties. Indeed, processes of militarization have caused long lasting physical and psychological impacts on urban populations—especially on marginalized communities. In this essay I want to explore processes of militarization and talk about trauma as disability. I propose that urban struggles for demilitarization and resistance against violent structures and technologies of war require a critical disability analysis that acknowledges the realities of trauma, and makes space for taking care of both individuals and communities. This analysis will permit a clear confrontation of (dis)ableism within struggles of resistance against hegemonic systems of power, and allow for radical forms of accessibility within these struggles and political movements.

part 1: disability and processes of urban militarization

I use the term “militarization” to at once refer to and root this essay in a sociological and geographical study of war. Militarization takes place as a discursive process—one that involves the reproduction of norms and technologies that perpetuate cycles of violence and harm within urban communities (1). As mentioned in the introduction, a significant aspect of militarization is the way in which urban residents are looked at and acted upon within a militarized landscape. Urban residents are seen as potential enemies to the state. They can be called upon as combatants at any time. Consequently, they are also likely to suffer the violences of injury and trauma, and be counted among the casualties of urban battlespaces.

The notion of “battlespace” supposes “a boundless and unending process of militarization where everything becomes a site of permanent war” (2). Using this framework, I will explore how militarization processes violently disable urban communities. In this paper, I use the term “disabling” to refer to the processes through which environments disable bodies. Here I am referring to how these bodies experience environments in a way that does not enable them to live the fulfilling, liberatory lives they seek to experience. Disability at once interprets and disciplines bodily variations, determines a relationship between individual bodies and their environments, and prescribes a set of norms and practices that produce both the able-bodied and the disabled as two distinct, hierarchized categories (3). It is an extremely broad category that encompasses a multitude of lived experiences and identities that cannot and should not be reduced or simplified. In this paper, I do not claim to extrapolate knowledge across all experiences of disability, but rather seek to specifically study the relationship between militarization and disabling processes in an urban context.

1.1 structural militarization, gentrification and processes of exclusion

The structural transformation of city space is perhaps the most tangible way in which militarization is established. When historians and geographers attempt to locate the beginnings of urban militarization, they often refer to the colonial reshaping of the cities of Algiers and Constantine in Algeria during the late 19th century (4). In order to facilitate the control and colonization of these cities, the commanding general at the time, Robert Bugeaud, ordered the systematic annihilation of entire neighbourhoods so as to replace the windy, narrow streetscapes with European-style architectures, wide avenues, and grid-like street systems. The latter were designed to enable colonial troops and policing forces to easily access the city core in order to crush insurgencies (4). Not unlike present-day gentrification strategies of spatial reclamation, transformation, and exclusion, these tactics of militaristic destruction and reconstruction formed a

large part of the colonial war effort. They facilitated the control of indigenous, urban populations.

The militarization of urban environments is an inherently disabling process. Highly militaristic spatial monitoring and infrastructure inhibit bodies from gaining free and liberatory access (5) to urban space. To develop this point further let us consider, as mentioned above, the similarity between urban military colonization strategies of the 19th century and modern-day militaristic gentrification processes. The simultaneous structural and economic cleansing that takes place through gentrification systematically pushes away marginalized communities from the city-center—making the city inherently less accessible to non-normative, unwanted, or undesirable bodies. Through gentrification, individuals, families, and even entire communities are forced out of their neighbourhoods. Through gentrification, they are barred from the very spaces of social and cultural production, of sociality, wherein their own identities were formed. This represents an erasure of people—on both a physical and a psychosocial level—from public, urban space. Erasure through non-access is an extremely disabling process.

1.2 technological militarization and the normalization of violence

A second form of militarization occurs through technological input. At their root, military technologies monitor and identify bodies, as a means of controlling potential security threats (6) and maintaining state power (1). Today, urban technologies of militarization include satellites, surveillance cameras, militarized police or “riot” squads, police cavalries, aviation surveillance, chemical weapons such as tear gas and pepper spray, biometrics and facial recognition technologies—all of which direct the colonizing gaze inwards, towards urban residents (7). In order to focus on the insidiousness of militarization in urban life, I will turn to examining less obvious technologies of war making. Among many other technological advances, cellphones and the Internet were initially developed as military tools (8). It is through the study of these superficially apolitical technologies that I want to explore the advent of a “new” technological militarization within urban spaces, and how (dis)ableism is perpetuated. “New military urbanism,” as described by geographer Stephen Graham, is the usurpation of normalized systems of consumption and mobility – such as streets, cars, trains, airplanes, schools, hospitals, borders, shopping malls, cell phones, or Internet systems – for the purposes of militarized control (1). For instance, state-sanctioned policing efforts can use technologies of communication such as cellphones or email accounts—integrated technologies upon which urban populations have become dependent for the smooth functioning of political and social economies as well as for immediate communication and social connection—to tap into data and information about bodies, movements,

actions, and ideas (1).

The process through which these technologies become normalized is similar to the way in which inaccessibility becomes justified. Normalized technologies are those that become embedded in urban space through constant discursive processes of justification. Drawing on the work of critical disability scholar Tanya Titchkosky, I would argue that military technologies rely on a “dis-education of the sensorium” (9) of urban populations. The sensorium of urban populations has been trained to “sense and make sensible the legitimate participants [in urban society] with their legitimated “normal” accommodation expenses”—at the expense of non-normative or subversive bodies that confront the question of access on a very regular basis (9). To illustrate the above point, I offer the example of security cameras in public spaces. At present, building designs are created with camera networks in mind. Employees may even request that cameras be installed in their work spaces for their own safety. Despite these justifying narratives (9), cameras still present a deep threat to many communities in an urban setting. Be they people without immigration status, already-criminalized youth in schools, homeless people, or politicized individuals who employ subversive tactics of resistance against oppressive systems of power—the safety of these communities is threatened by the proliferation of security cameras and the constant gaze of the police state. Here, the notions of “safety” deployed by those who are deemed to have “legitimate accommodation expenses” rely on the criminalization of non-normative and potentially threatening and/or disruptive bodies. These bodies are thus “included” in security justification narratives as “excludable types” (9). That is, these communities are both erased from narratives of public security and included within these discourses as threats to security. Theirs is an “absent presence” (9)—and indication of the relationship between the “dis-education of the sensorium” (9), and the expulsion and erasure of non-normative bodies.

part 2: radical accessibility and communities of support in contexts of war

In urban battlespaces, bodies are constantly watched, vilified, controlled and repressed. Further, as communities have to negotiate through disability, infiltration, internalized violence and self-policing, the work of resistance becomes an increasingly difficult task. In this section I intend to address some of the ways demilitarization struggles can be informed by a critical disability work, and vice versa.

2.1 radical accessibility within battlespaces

A.J. Withers has proposed the notion of radical access: “real and meaningful inclusion of all people, including disabled people” (5). But what does it mean to think about

radical access in a context of war? How can we make battlespaces more accessible? Critical disability analysis asks who is missing from struggles of demilitarization. Who is not present in organizing circles, meetings, and social spaces? Who is not able to conform to crisis-based work ethics that lead towards burnout, stress and anxiety? Who is not included in discussions of warfare strategies and resistance? Bodies that cannot access spaces of resistance are those that remain marginalized and (re)victimized. Inaccessibility, in this case, is unacceptable.

For all bodies to be included there is a need to acknowledge disability at all times in anti-violence movements. Instead of perpetuating narratives of justification for the absence of disabled bodies (i.e. “We regret to say that the venue of this queer dance party is inaccessible to wheelchair users”), communities can sharpen their analyses and shape priorities accordingly. Paired with these discussions is a need for radical networks of support, especially given the traumatic nature of anti-violence struggles. Failure to recognize the immediacy of mental health needs in crisis situations, such as mass arrests, deportations or expropriations, views these situations from an ableist lens. This, unfortunately, is seen time and time again. To address this issue, there is a need to incorporate discussions of radical support—both for individuals and for communities as a whole—into imaginations of radical accessibility and demilitarization. The creation of networks of support and anti-ableist, radically accessible spaces should be an integral part of anti-violence and demilitarization struggles.

conclusion

Though cities are violent battlespaces, there is the potential to create spaces in which and from which demilitarization can take place. For cycles and technologies of violence to be confronted, however, there is a need to understand the ways in which they are normalized and perpetuated. In this essay I explored the structural and technological ways in which militarization disables individuals and communities. I presented the urban process of gentrification as an example of how marginalized and politicized populations get attacked and uprooted from spaces of kinship, support, resistance, and survival. Living through and dealing with the violence of exclusion can be an extremely traumatizing and disabling experience—one that requires further conversations about radical accessibility. Demilitarization is about more than changing infrastructures, taking down cameras and keeping police outside of neighbourhoods; it is also about how we think of bodies, how we support each other, how we frame demands and do our work. In asking “who is missing?” disability analysis interrupts normative processes of violent exclusion—even within communities of resistance.

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montreal: a people's present.

abc poster series

al blair

These posters were presented during the Art in Action exhibition as part of Study in Action 2012, Montreal. To view the series online, go to <http://www.abcposters.wordpress.com>

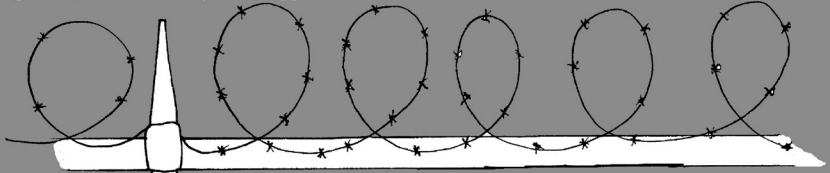
Inspired by Justseeds' fantastic People's History posters, this poster series pays tribute to Montreal's present.

Feeling ill-equipped as a relative newcomer to Montreal from small-town Quebec, without sufficient time to research adequately, I found it difficult to represent moments of Montreal's past or history in ink. However, depicting aspects of its present, many of which I have become personally interested and invested in seems more of a tangible task.

These posters are anchored in the present moment- often referring to events that occurred within the past three years. They are contemporary illustrations of struggles that are rooted in Montreal's past, and will soon become part of Montreal's people's history.

Youth Incarceration

Canada incarcerates more convicted youth than almost any similarly industrialized country. 'Tough-on-crime' legislation will only continue to expand the crimes for which youth can be incarcerated and the amount of time they can spend in custody - resulting in more kids aged 12 to 17 ending up in lock down. However, studies show time and time again that incarceration reduces young people's likelihood of getting a job once they get out, and increases their likelihood of recidivism. The answer is not to build more prisons, but to focus on education, (re) integration, accountability, and support.



Montreal houses many youth detention centres - especially in the West Island and on the North Shore. Many of these facilities are lock-down units where youth are under 24/7 supervision. They are prisons.



For more observations on youth incarceration in Montreal and beyond, refer to Montreal-based writer and social justice organizer Robyn Maynard's article "Incarcerating Youth as Justice?" <http://robynmaynard.wordpress.com/about/137-2/>

Gentrification Past

Between the 1950s and the 1970s, as modernistic urban planning strategies, the Quiet Revolution, and international events such as Global Expositions were sweeping across Quebec, Montreal city planners and politicians were set on transforming Ville-Marie into a clean, modern, efficient, and slum-free city.

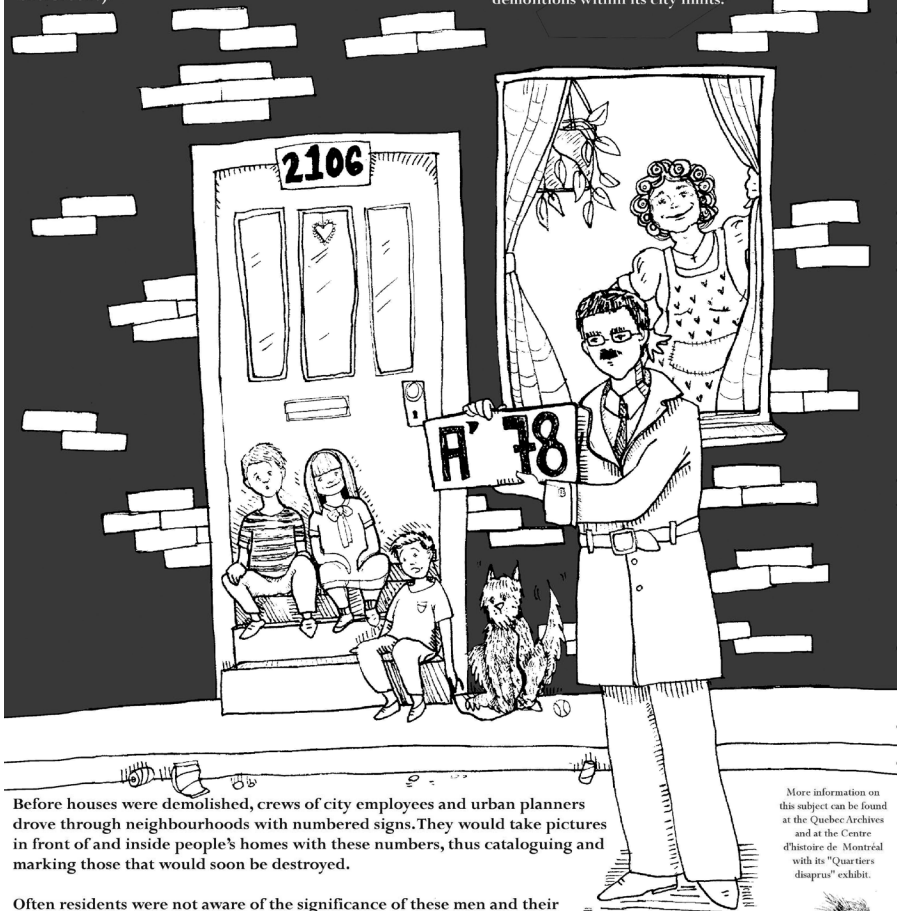
Mayor Jean Drapeau's ideal was to expulse [poor] residents from the city core, and replace entire working-class neighbourhoods with the modernized architecture of public institutions and private-sectors commerce buildings—all in the name of Progress.

Residents were evicted and homes were demolished in three down-town neighbourhoods: Goose Village (formerly just east of Pointe St-Charles by the port), Faubourg à M'lasse (where now stands the CBC building and its parking lot), and the Red Light (once stretched between St-Denis and Bleury, south of Sherbrooke).

Goose Village, Faubourg à M'lasse, and the Red Light were some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Montreal. They were often referred to as slums. Their removal allowed for the construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway, the widening of Boulevard René-Lesvesque, the building of the CBC tower, and the establishment of the Expo '67 complex. Evictions, demolitions, and increased police presence were justified in the name of urban progress.

Between 1954 and 1974, over 28,000 homes were destroyed. During this time, the factories and businesses within these three neighbourhoods were also being evicted. People lost their jobs, their homes, and their communities.

During this period, Westmount saw no evictions or demolitions within its city limits.



Before houses were demolished, crews of city employees and urban planners drove through neighbourhoods with numbered signs. They would take pictures in front of and inside people's homes with these numbers, thus cataloguing and marking those that would soon be destroyed.

Often residents were not aware of the significance of these men and their numbers—they smiled, thinking it was just a picture. The numbers foreshadowed a violent, selective, class-biased erasure.

More information on this subject can be found at the Quebec Archives and at the Centre d'histoire de Montréal with its "Quartiers disparus" exhibit.



Gentrification Present

Today in 2012, gentrification and urban renewal continues. Condominiums and chic businesses are popping up in neighbourhoods where real-estate values and land-values are low.

Neighbourhoods with strong historical backgrounds in class and race struggles, and tight-knit communities of families and businesses that have been around for generations are being transformed, displaced, and erased.

Parc-Extension, Little Burgundy, Griffintown, St-Henri, Pointe-St-Charles, and Shaughnessy Village are all examples of such neighbourhoods.

As cafés, restaurants, art galleries, and condos are built and property values increase, the price of living in these neighbourhoods sky-rocket to a point where many residents can no longer afford to live in the spaces they have called their homes for generations.

This class-based erasure may not be as dramatic as the demolition of Goose Village, Faubourg à M'lasse, and the Red-Light. However, they are just as violent, traumatic, and unacceptable.

At the heart of Shaughnessy Village, on Ste-Catherine West, the Seville Theatre was a single-screen, 1148 seat theatre, and one of only 15 atmospheric theatres ever built in Canada.

Though many historians and community members advocated for its protection as a heritage site, the Seville fell into disrepair and was demolished in 2010 to make way for a 450-unit condo and commercial project.



The demolition of the Seville, just like the proposed demolition of homes near the Turcot Interchange, echoes the histories of destruction of Goose Village, Faubourg à M'lasse, and the Red Light.

ABCPOSTERS

Sign Language in Montreal

Two rarely-mentioned languages practiced in Montreal are American Sign Language and Quebec Sign Language (Langue des signes québécoise). ASL and LSQ are distinct languages, like English and French. They have their own grammar and vocabulary.

There are all sorts of reasons why someone might want to learn sign language. Someone might learn ASL/LSQ because they are deaf or because they have deaf loved ones, friends or family members. Others might learn to sign out of personal interest, or to become an interpreter.

Advocates for Quebec's deaf Anglophone community say there is a huge gap in visual interpreting services in the province – and more professionals need to be trained.

Not all people who have hearing impairments can read lips or mouth words, and having to write down everything to communicate can be quite tiring and bothersome (or in some cases, impossible) – this is why interpreters are useful. They can interpret for people when they visit the doctor's, when they attend class, or go to a job interview.

Many folks who are learning sign language come together to practice outside of school or home contexts. These free-forming, community-based meetings can take place in cafes or food courts.



ASL classes are offered in Montreal at the Mackay Center in NDG and at John Abbott College - among other places.



Police Killings in Montreal

In January 6th 2012, Farshad Mohammadi was shot and killed by police officers of the SPVM in Bonaventure metro station.

Weeks later, another man shot and killed by montreal police.

The list of victims of police brutality in Montreal is endless. Since 1987, it is believed that over 80 people have died at the hands of the Montreal police, including while in police custody.

In most cases, justice is no where to be found.

Incidents involving the serious injury or death of a civilian at the hands of police are generally investigated by another police force.

This method of investigation is biased towards police solidarity. Criminal charges have been laid against officers only three times since 1999, with at least two of the trials resulting in acquittals.

In late 2011, the Quebec Public Security Minister introduced Bill 46, which would allow for civilian oversight of investigations. However, Bill 46 does not ensure that the reports of investigations be necessarily made public. This is a serious flaw.



In memory of

- Serge Laforest
- Edmund Lamontagne
- Jean-Hughes Fournier
- Yvan Lafreniere
- René Laporte
- Bernard Armand
- Fernand Roux Jacques Lavoie
- Adrien Girard
- Vinkaitwar Bikhari
- Paul Grossette
- Serge Turgeon
- Kenneth Carter
- Mark White Anthony Griffin
- Bernard Laforest
- José Carlos Garcia
- Denis Paquette
- Yvon Lafrance
- Normand Major
- Paul McKinnon
- Leslie Presley
- Jorge Chavarria-Reyes
- Michel Saint-Georges
- Fabien Quienly
- Michel Paradis
- Yvan Dugas
- Fritzgerald Forbes
- Marcellus François
- Armand Fernandez
- Osmond Seymour Fletcher
- Trevor Kelly
- Yvon Asselin
- Richard Barnabé
- Poole Romanelli
- Martin Suazo
- Philippe Ferraro
- Nelson Perreault
- Daniel Bélair
- Michel Mathurin
- Richard Whaley
- Yvan Fond-Rouge
- Michel Charette
- Jean-Emmanuel Beaudet
- Jean-Pierre Lizotte
- Carl Ouellet
- Luc Aubert
- Sébastien McNicoll
- Michel Kibbe
- Michel Morin
- Michel Berniquez
- Rohan Wilson
- Omar Albert Thompson
- Troy Fesam Hakim
- Donald Greer
- Gloria Zimmerman
- Melissa Murat
- Stéphane Coulombe
- Benoit Richer
- Mohamed Anas Bennis
- Daniel Vanier
- Vianney Charest
- Quilem Registre
- Fredy Villanueva
- Jean-Claude Lemay
- Marcel Locas
- Patrick Saulnier
- Mario Hamel
- Patrick Limoges
- Farshad Mohammadi

For a thoughtful analysis of police brutality in Montreal, consult Samir Shaheen-Hussain, Robyn Maynard, and Anne-Marie Gallant's article at Montreal.MediaCoop.ca: "The Police Killing of Farshad Mohammadi: Exposing the Root Causes" (January 21, 2011).



The Criminalization of Sex Work in Montreal

Prostitution is not, and never has been, illegal in Canada but the majority of activities that surround it are. Here are some of the laws in the Canadian Criminal Code that criminalize sex work:

ARTICLE 210: The act of operating or being found in a "bawdy house" (a place maintained, occupied by, or visited by one or more persons with the objective of prostitution or of committing indecent acts). This forbids sex workers from working in their home or in a safe apartment rented for the purposes of sex work.

ARTICLE 211: The act of taking, or of transporting, someone to a "bawdy house." This section limits access to any accompanied service. A taxi driver or a friend, for example, could be charged.

ARTICLE 212: The act of influencing a person to practice prostitution or of living completely, or partially, from the revenues of prostitution. This forbids any friend or partner from benefiting from money coming from prostitution (i.e. to pay rent or support kids).

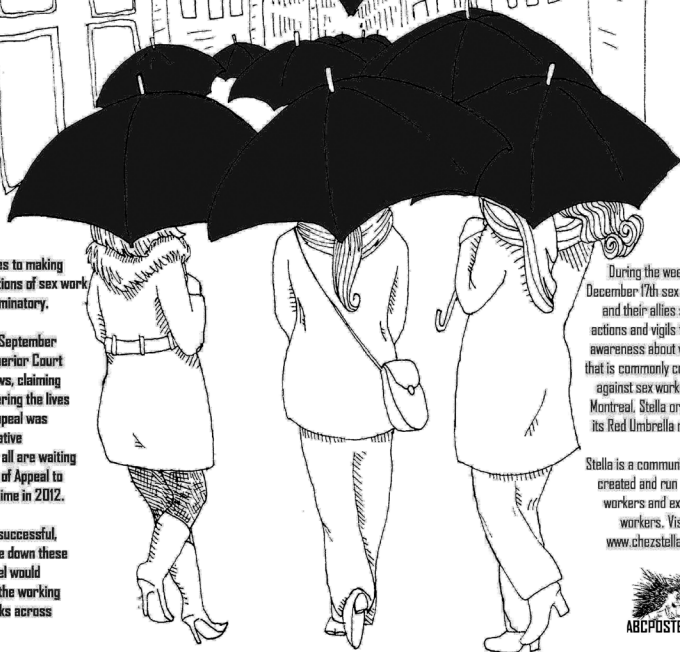
ARTICLE 213: The act of communicating with another person, in a public place, with the objective of practicing prostitution (e.g. This makes it difficult to check out a client before entering their car.)

These laws contribute to making the spaces and conditions of sex work dangerous and discriminatory.

On a positive note: in September 2010, the Ontario Superior Court struck down these laws, claiming that they are endangering the lives of sex workers. An appeal was made by the Conservative government, and now all are waiting for the Ontario Court of Appeal to make its ruling sometime in 2012.

There is hope that, if successful, the campaign to strike down these laws on a national level would significantly improve the working conditions of sex workers across Canada.

Until then, violence against sex workers is a reality that plays out on a daily basis. Each day sex workers are criminalized, incarcerated and denied the right to protection from violence. The violence of this repression is lived disproportionately by women working and living on the street, especially racialized women, transsexual women and other trans people.



During the week of December 17th sex workers and their allies stage actions and vigils to raise awareness about violence that is commonly committed against sex workers. In Montreal, Stella organizes its Red Umbrella march.

Stella is a community group created and run by sex workers and ex-sex workers. Visit www.chezstella.org



Growing Food in Montreal

Owning or having access to any size of land in a city such as Montreal is a huge privilege. Every inch of the city falls under zoning regulation, and almost every parcel of land is developed and privately owned. Once stolen from indigenous hands, Montreal's land base is still relatively inaccessible to those who wish to cultivate resources directly from its soil.

However, despite barriers and legal restrictions, people all over the city have transformed back yards, sidewalks, streets, underpasses, roofs, balconies, school yards, and parking lots into living, bountiful gardens.

Be they municipally, collectively, or individually run, these gardens feed thousands of hungry bellies every growing season. If you have the time, resources, and ability to sew, weed, and water, then growing your own food in the city is much cheaper than buying it at the grocery store. Gardening is also a social process where skill-exchanges are common and friendly chit-chat is the norm.

In the past few years, the City of Montreal has closed down many of its community gardens due to fears of soil contamination.

These measures have been met with opposition from scientists and community members who know that closing down gardens is not the only solution.

Raised beds, for instance, would avoid plants' contact with contaminated soil, and awareness campaigns about the washing of leafy vegetables would make a world of difference.

Fear of soil contamination will not stop Montreal's urban gardeners - nor will the city's bylaws.

Every year, communities continue their struggle for access to land. Recently, there has even been an increase in pressure placed on municipal officials to reconsider bylaws regarding the banning of chickens and honey bees within city limits. The world of urban gardening in Montreal is still filled with exciting potential!





good hair.

sheryl-ann simpson

((Sheryl-Ann is a student of city and regional planning who mostly researches questions of urban inequality and community organizing and activism. She also makes and organizes weird little performances and interventions that celebrate the everyday. This zine is one of those rare moments where the two get to come together.)))

This zine was presented during the Art in Action exhibition as part of Study in Action 2012, Montreal. To view more of the series go to <http://flic.kr/ps/QTUB8>

Sooooo this zine sort of came out of a blog post I wrote for a job I don't have anymore, and that never actually got posted at least in part because my old boss was... well let's say 'incompetent,' but at any rate the post was complaining about Chris Rock's movie Good Hair, and I include it below, but basically the point is the zine has almost nothing to do with hair, hope you're not too disappointed.

Disclaimer, I'm going to to that thing I hate where you complain about a movie before you've seen it, but here goes: I'm just not very excited about Chris Rock's Good Hair.

To be honest I'm a bit bored of movies made by men about women, but more importantly what's up with the media continuing to obsess over Black women's bodies while they completely ignore our lives.

Sometimes it's pretty benign and we just miss out on an interesting conversation. One example that Tokumba Bodunde and Courtney Young pointed out during their session at WAM! 2009 was the controversy surrounding Michelle Obama's official portrait. So much time was spent talking about her arms that no one seemed to have time to ask about the choice to have Thomas Jefferson staring down at her in the background.

There are also more intrusive conversations about Black women's bodies that end up impacting lives in more consequential ways, for example providing the justifications behind welfare laws that aim to control everything from what women eat to who they do, do not sleep with and marry, and their choices to have or not have children.

The story behind Good Hair is that Chris Rock's daughter came home one day wanting to know why she didn't have 'good hair', and I understand it's satire, but I'm just not sure how a movie where her dad warns a young woman in India that 'if she ever sees a Black woman she should run' or risk having her hair stolen is really going to improve his daughter's choices as she grows up.

And frankly I'm not sure if it does more good than harm to introduce another opportunity for people to sit around and talk about women, women of colour and Black women's bodies. I can't help but think it would be better if white men* and others, would spend their time learning to understand the history of Black women as workers, thinkers, caregivers, artists ... rather than sorting out the difference between cornrows and weaves.

So here's a chance. Enjoy!!

*this whole tirade was pretty much just a reaction to a pre-review by Channing Kennedy at RaceWire that you can read at [http://colorlines.com/archives/2009/08/chris_rocks_good_hair_could_se.html] and then maybe join me in a big what now?!



angela davis

Angela exists in an in-between world of being a public figure (read famous), an amazingly well-respected academic and revolutionary turned continued and committed activist. Former Black Panther caught up in the arrests and FBI searches of 1970, Angela grew up in the same Birmingham community as Condoleezza Rice, but obviously went in a very different direction. A prof. at Santa Cruz and strong supporter of the prison abolition organization Critical Resistance, she's basically just amazing, and you should know about her!!

“It is both humiliating and humbling to discover that a single generation after the events that constituted me as a public personality, I am remembered as a hairdo.”

trey anthony

OK this one was hard, because this isn't really a drawing of Trey, but of the character Joy who Trey created for her award winning play and then TV series: 'Da Kink in My Hair'. I've never seen the play, but the TV show is a deeply funny show ostensibly about a Jamaican hair dressing shop in Toronto, but it's really about everything you don't talk about in the West Indian community: mental health, abuse, queer folks, inter-raced families and relationships, and everything you do: food, gossip and of course which island in the best island. Trey credits coming out to her family as a huge part of writing the play and lives her everyday life with thin tight dreads. Joy is boy-mad and wears a different bright, elaborate wig everyday!

Also, every Black actress/actor, singer, dancer, spoken word artist etc in all of Canada seems to make an appearance on the show.





ma rainey

Ma Rainey was born in Columbus Georgia in 1886, the perfect moment to bring the world the blues before it was even the blues. In 1904 Gertrude Pridett married Will “Pa” Rainey and soon after she started a career of vaudeville and recording that saw her travel extensively around the south and the northeast. She drew in huge crowds (both Black and white even in the south) as a performer, and as a recording artist she worked with then young artists such as Bessie Smith, and T Bone Walker.

One of her hits “Sissy Blues”, is a blues about having her man stolen by a sissy who she just can’t compete with. Sissy’s not an insult here, just a description of her no doubt fabulous male competition. And a friend pointed out that it’s a pretty good example of just how everyday queer culture was in African American life back in the day.

In the 1930s her career began to slow down as talking pictures killed off vaudeville. She moved back to Georgia in 1935 and passed away in 1939, and sad-but-true, in spite of her many successes her death certificate registered her occupation as house-keeper. But we all know she was the mother of the blues - who felt that the blues “were expressive of the heart of the south, and the sad hearted people who toiled from sun-up to sundown.”

sylvia hamilton

Growing up in Toronto or Montreal, it might be easy to believe that Black Canada started in the 1970s with West Indian, and African immigrants. Growing up in the prairies it's a bit harder to believe that, but in Nova Scotia it's absolutely impossible to labour under this misconception.

The history of Black Nova Scotia is a rich one, with freed Canadian slaves, as well as Loyalists, escaping slaves and refugees from the US, and Sylvia Hamilton's films tell the story of where their decedents are today. Her films give you the opportunity to eavesdrop on some of the best conversations, from her early shorts about Black mums and daughters, to her later films about all-Black schools in Nova Scotia. She's the kind of filmmaker who manages to get out of the way, and let people speak about their own experiences and histories in their own words.

Take a look for yourself at the the National Film Board site (which is just generally so amazing!) www.nfb.ca/explore-all-directors/sylvia-hamilton

Also look her up on wikipedia, which you couldn't do a few months ago en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sylvia_Hamilton



opium dreams.

emily yee clare

visual artist

ryan kai cheng thom

writer, performer

This visual art projection and spoken word performance was performed during the Art in Action exhibition as part of Study in Action 2012, Montreal.

Excerpted from a book in-progress, “Opium Dreams” is an interdisciplinary, multimedia exploration of Chinese diaspora, poverty, gender/racial fluidity, and queer desire. Emily Yun Ching Clare combines stencils of contemporary Chinese North Americans with hand-drawn motifs drawn from classic Chinese folklore, highlighting the contrast between the difficult realities of migration and the mythic power of the imagined homeland. Clare’s portraits infuse the monolithic, mainstream narrative of Chinese diaspora with shades of individuality, re-imagining the migrant geographies of past and present, spirit and body. Ryan Kai Cheng Thom’s spoken word performances blend drag, comedy, and slam poetry, lending a unique narrative voice to the idiosyncrasies of growing up as a queer person of colour. His work seeks to embody the dynamics of celebration, survival, and intimate violence in the queer community.

the kingfisher queen

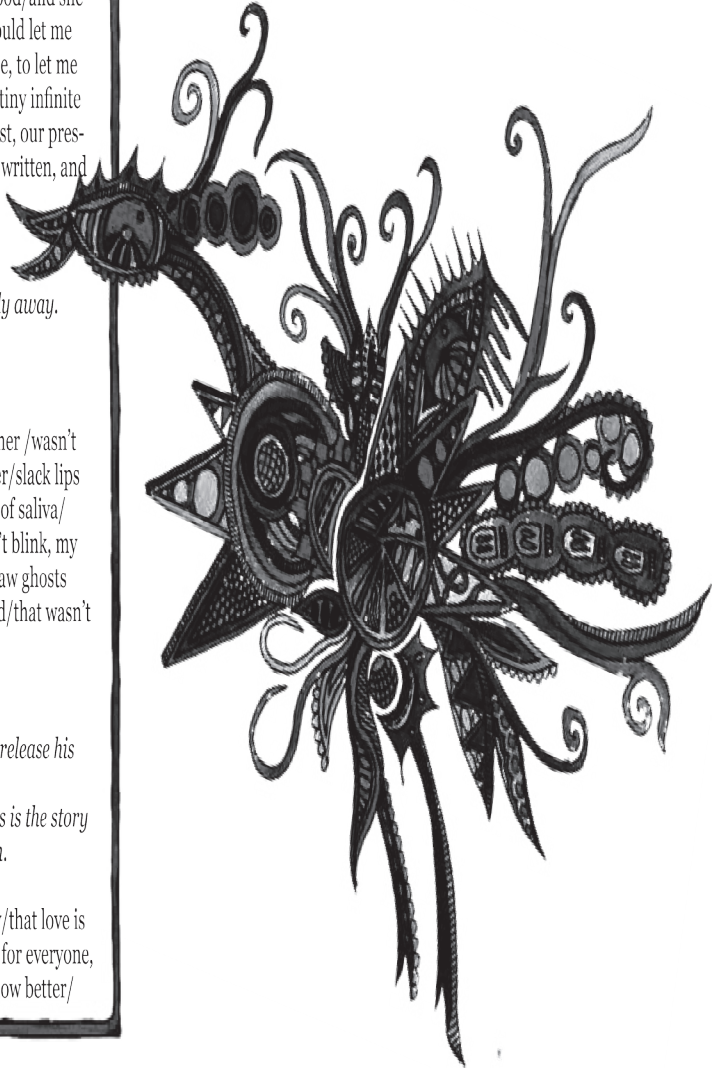
my mother kept her stories in/a black
lacquer box that she had taken with
her/ all the way from China/across
the sea. If I was very good,/and she
was feeling well/she would let me
open it/she would pause, to let me
behold in wonder/that tiny infinite
darkness, where our past, our pres-
ent/our possibility was written, and
then/she would begin

*Stories are like birds;
it is in their nature to fly away.
We release them so
they will return.*

but most days, my mother /wasn't
feeling well; I remember /slack lips
streaming thin threads of saliva/
blank eyes that wouldn't blink, my
mother /heard voices, saw ghosts
from Old China, a world /that wasn't
there anymore

*Rare indeed,
the man who learns to release his
love
before it's too late! This is the story
of the Kingfisher Queen.*

lo fan people like to say/that love is
infinite/there's enough for everyone,
all the time/Chinese know better/



love is like a well/you cannot see the
bottom/but the water level drops in
the time of draught/my mother/drew
on the well of my love/ like she was
dying of thirst

*Poor the peasant man who dreams of
diamonds, indeed!
He wanders about looking at the sky,
distracted by stars
while other men spend their time
gazing at the ground:
harvesting rice, pulling fish from the
pond. But sometimes,
the man who wanders at night
may be granted the magic of the
moon.*

when you're a poor Chinese girl, you
can be little/but never young/espe-
cially when your mother's schizo-
phrenic/trapped in the World of Yin/
imagine/me at ten years old, running
down the streets of small-town BC/
Mama is three blocks ahead/scream-
ing nonsense/moments like this/the
world is a black lacquer box/nothing
written on its walls/but emptiness

*Dai Tin walks alone at night, his
head full of dreams.
He comes upon a clearing, where the
pond glistens, still*

*and dark. Look! A thousand feath-
ers fall like rain.
Lo, the Kingfisher Queen and all her
train
have come to bathe.*

she spent some days screaming/run-
ning from monsters only she could
see/other days, she could barely rise
from bed/baba and my oldest brother
had to work/my little brother went
to school /i took care of my mother/
changed the sheets she soiled/
dragged her to a chair/where she sat,
staring at the window/like the sky
held a secret/that could change our
lives

*What miracles may be seen by moon-
light, indeed!
The Kingfisher Queen and her atten-
dants
have shed their feathers; now they
are beautiful women.
Dai Lo creeps to the bank and takes
hold
of the Kingfisher Queen's cloak.*

what i became in that house was
determined/hard as stone/a jewel in
my chest/i had to write my own story
/one that would take me away from
there/from the dark box of my moth-

er's madness/a story that could carry
me away/like wings

*Frightened, the bird-women
put on their feathers and scatter to
the sky – all
but the Kingfisher Queen, who has
fallen in love
with this poor earthbound mortal
whose eyes are bright
as the stars.*

so much of my love/drained dry by
my mother's need/leaving only an
empty space full of wanting/desire
like a drum/beating the sound of to-
morrow, tomorrow/i lived for tomor-
row/for the day when my love/my
life/could belong to me

*Enraptured, the lovers return
to Dai Lo's cottage. For a while, all is
well,
but the Kingfisher Queen misses her
kingdom.
Pity, the bird who cannot fly! But
Dai Lo is afraid –
who is to say she will return? So he
hides the feathers
of his wife's freedom.*

i went to college/ studied anatomy
and health sciences/just another

Asian girl/with glasses and a bag of
textbooks /i learned so much about
medicine/but found nothing that
could heal that empty space/where
the well of my love/was dry

*The Kingfisher Queen waits and
dreams.
In a year, she bears a daughter. Pity
indeed,
the child who is half the earthbound
world
and half the sky! Always searching
for the secret
of belonging, the girl spends her time
playing in forbidden places.
And one day, this rebellious daughter
finds a box in the cellar –
underground, where no bird would
ever look*

in my last year of college/my mother
died of cancer/i spent days trying to
feel sad/wrenching salt water from
the dry riverbed of my tear ducts/she
left me two things: her black lacquer
box/and a letter

*“What's this, mother?” the little girl
asks. Aha!
Joyous indeed, the bird who at last
may return to the clouds!
The Kingfisher Queen, without a*

*thought, seizes her cloak,
so long and dearly lost,
and returns to the kingdom of heav-
en forever. So it is,
that love kept too long is lost. So it is,
indeed.*

she left her money to my brothers/
that's the Chinese way /i felt so bitter,
holding/that empty box in my hands/
until i opened it/and found it wasn't
empty after all/it was full of feathers/
my wings

*Stories are like birds;
It is their nature to fly away.
I give them to you,
so that you may return.*



the language of pain.

part one: pain as a noun

simone lucas

((Simone is a senior at McGill University where she is a member of the QPIRG board of directors and is writing an Honours thesis on site-specific feminist performance art.))

introduction

In her memoir "Inside Chronic Pain", Lous Heshusius shares her struggle to articulate the persistent pain she has lived with for over a decade. She experiences pain that is impossible to put into words, and that is alien to others. Conveying pain to her doctors is a particular challenge: "I try to speak to doctors about the severity of my pain. My words float strangely in the air. As I pronounce them, I myself become a spectator. As soon as I begin to speak, I am no longer there." (15) For millions of people living with chronic conditions around the world, all-consuming pain is a daily occurrence, and leads to social isolation. People living with chronic pain confront reactions of disbelief, and find themselves convincing friends, health professionals and strangers that their pain is real, present and disabling despite the fact that it is invisible. Yet often language fails. The "McGill Pain Questionnaire" (MPQ), a questionnaire developed by Ronal Melzak for use in clinical settings, attempts to enable the expression of pain by providing a list of seventy-eight words. The questionnaire aims to present health professionals with a fuller picture of the characteristics and intensities of a painful experience. In this paper, I will examine the MPQ as a communication and measurement tool that mediates patient-doctor interactions. I argue that though it may help patients find words to describe their pain, it objectifies their experiences as scientific data and enables the continued neglect, fear and stigmatization of people living with pain.

The papers that Simone and Eve present here are based on a co-authored paper they gave at Study in Action 2012, Montreal. Longer versions are available at www.convergencejournal.ca

Their collaboration began with exchanges about women writers. Recently, their discussions grew into a shared project on pain and disability as lived experiences and as subjects of study. Their joint research focuses on the social construction of pain and on the intellectual and technical means used to describe and evaluate it.

the pain scale

Doctors and researchers have devised a number of tools to not only understand a patient's pain, but also to measure, quantify, chart, track and abstract it. An example of one such tool is the pain scale, which asks you to rate your pain. Different institutions use different vocabulary to describe the numerical range of pain intensities: from 0-10, from mild to excruciating, or from "no pain" to "worst pain imaginable". For people living with persistent severe pain, these scales are used to track their condition over time. But can pain be reduced to a single number? And what if my "worst pain imaginable" is only your #3? Eula Biss devoted a poem to the experience of measuring her pain. She wrote: "The pain scale measures only the intensity of pain, not the duration. This may be its greatest flaw. A measure of pain, I believe, requires at least two dimensions. The suffering of Hell is terrifying not because of any specific torture but because it is eternal." (30)

fig 1: pain scale

In the mid-1980s, Dr. Ronald Melzack, a psychologist at McGill University, realized the failings of the pain scale. He conceived of another way to understand pain, not as a one-dimensional scale, but as a noun with qualifying adjectives. He reasoned that pain does not only vary in intensity, from "mild" to "extreme", but also in temperature, pressure, pulse, spatiality, heat, dullness, and even in psychological qualities such as tension, fear, and punishment. Based on his initial observation of the pain scale, Dr. Melzack, along with Dr. Torgerson and other colleagues, began the development of the MPQ. The questionnaire is a form given to patients to fill out prior to an initial assessment at a pain clinic or specialist office. It lists a total of seventy-eight words separated into twenty unnamed groupings. Patients are told to make a mark next to the words that describe their pain. They can only choose one word per category. This form is meant to help patients find the precise words to communicate their pain to doctors.

the questionnaire

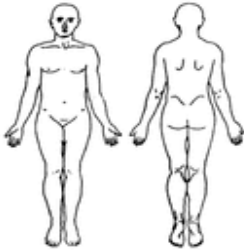
In his paper, "The McGill Pain Questionnaire," Melzak describes the processes and methodologies used to develop the form. A close reading of this paper will show that patients were only marginally involved in the process of explaining their own use of language to express pain. While the study made use of patient's words, it was empiricists who assigned meanings and numerical values. Melzack and Torgerson began the development of the questionnaire by gathering a list of forty-four words describing pain from a 1939 psychology textbook (40). They added to this list other words gathered from "clinical literature and from descriptions given by patients at hospital clinics." (41) They arrived at a list of one-hundred-and-two words, and found that it "was a meaningless jumble." (41) And so, they had physicians and university gradu-

ates classify them “into small groups describing distinctly different qualities of pain.” (41) The words were then organized into three major classes and sixteen subclasses. The three classes were: 1) the sensory class, which includes temporal, spatial, pressure, thermal, brightness, dullness, and other properties of pain; 2) the affective class, which describes psychological effects, such as fear, horror, or tolerance levels; 3) and the evaluative class, which is similar to a pain scale in describing the subjective intensity of the pain from mild to excruciating. These sets of sensory, affective, and evaluative classes, each containing subclasses, are compiled within the questionnaire to be presented to patients.

McGill Pain Questionnaire

Patient's Name _____ Date _____ Time _____ am/pm

PRI: S (1-10) A (11-15) E (16) M (17-20) PRI(T) (1-20) PPI _____

<p>1 FLICKERING QUIVERING PULSING THROBBING BEATING POUNDRING</p> <p>2 JUMPING FLASHING SHOOTING</p> <p>3 PRICKING BORING DRILLING STABBING LANGINATING</p> <p>4 SHARP CUTTING LACERATING</p> <p>5 PINCHING PRESSING GNAWING CRAMPING CRUSHING</p> <p>6 TUGGING PULLING WRENCHING</p> <p>7 HOT BURNING SCALDING SEARING</p> <p>8 TINGLING ITCHY SMARTING STINGING</p> <p>9 DULL SORE HURTING ACHING HEAVY</p> <p>10 TENDER TAUT RASPING SPLITTING</p>	<p>11 TIRING EXHAUSTING</p> <p>12 SICKENING SUFFOCATING</p> <p>13 FEARFUL FRIGHTFUL TERRIFYING</p> <p>14 PUNISHING GRUELLING CRUEL VICIOUS KILLING</p> <p>15 WRETCHED BLINDING</p> <p>16 ANNOYING TROUBLESOME MISERABLE INTENSE UNBEARABLE</p> <p>17 SPREADING RADIATING PENETRATING PIERCING</p> <p>18 TIGHT NUMB DRAWING SQUEEZING TEARING</p> <p>19 COOL COLD FREEZING</p> <p>20 NAGGING NAUSEATING AGONIZING DREADFUL TORTURING</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>BRIEF</td> <td>RHYTHMIC</td> <td>CONTINUOUS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MOMENTARY</td> <td>PERIODIC</td> <td>STEADY</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TRANSIENT</td> <td>INTERMITTENT</td> <td>CONSTANT</td> </tr> </table> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  <p style="margin-top: 10px;">E = EXTERNAL I = INTERNAL</p> </div>	BRIEF	RHYTHMIC	CONTINUOUS	MOMENTARY	PERIODIC	STEADY	TRANSIENT	INTERMITTENT	CONSTANT	<p>0 NO PAIN</p> <p>1 MILD</p> <p>2 DISCOMFORTING</p> <p>3 DISTRESSING</p> <p>4 HORRIBLE</p> <p>5 EXCRUCIATING</p>
BRIEF	RHYTHMIC	CONTINUOUS										
MOMENTARY	PERIODIC	STEADY										
TRANSIENT	INTERMITTENT	CONSTANT										

COMMENTS:

Fig 2. The McGill Pain Questionnaire

Following the organization of these pain descriptors, Melzak and Togerson proceeded to assign a numerical value to each word in the questionnaire. Based on a ranking system, they ranked words in each class along a numerical scale. For instance, within the "incisive pressure" subclass, the words were rated in the following order, from slightest to worst pain: 1) sharp, 2) cutting, 3) lacerating. They then devised various numerical units associated with these rankings and with the overall questionnaire: 1) The pain rating index, which assigns a numerical value to each word 2) the number of words chosen by the patient, and 3) the present pain intensity, the overall intensity rating at the time of the questionnaire, from a level of 0-no pain, to 5-excruciating. The questionnaire is meant to help doctors understand what kind of pain the patient is having, and to assign a numerical value to that pain.

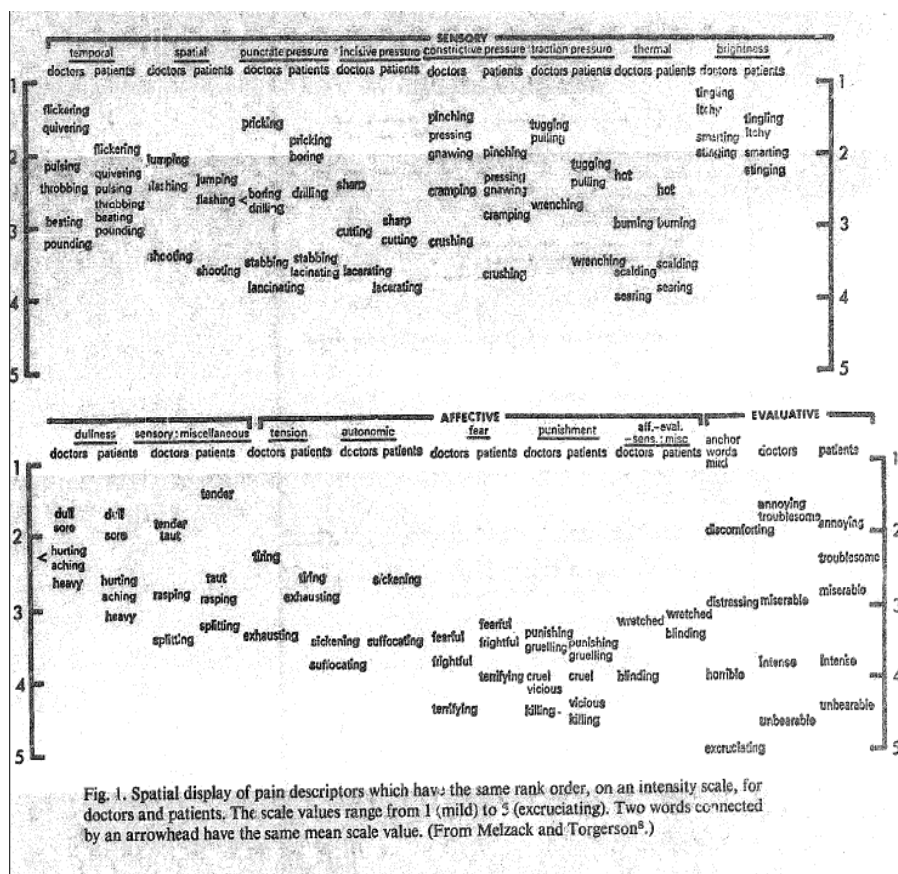


Fig. 1. Spatial display of pain descriptors which have the same rank order, on an intensity scale, for doctors and patients. The scale values range from 1 (mild) to 5 (excruciating). Two words connected by an arrowhead have the same mean scale value. (From Melzak and Togerson⁸.)

Fig 3. Chart Showing the Numerical Ranking of Pain Descriptors

When patients fill out the questionnaire, they are unaware of the various categories to which words refer or of their numerical values. Because the words on the questionnaire are adjectives and not numbers, patients remain under the impression that they are only describing their pain, not rating its numerical intensity. How could they guess that “gnawing” would indicate less pain than “crushing,” that “lacerating” would be worse than “boring,” or that psychological qualifiers—such as vicious, killing, and terrifying—would be rated higher than sensory adjectives? In the original development of the questionnaire, patients were uninvolved in the interpretation and organization of words into various subclasses with numerical rankings. When put into practice, the questionnaire similarly excludes patients’ understanding of pain while also obfuscating the way their answers will be understood by doctors. Doctors may execute medical decisions based on the numerical values assigned to words while bypassing their patients’ personal account. The “McGill Pain Questionnaire” supplements the patient’s subjective narrative with an empirical measurement of pain.

the social meaning of pain

Presumably, the “McGill Pain Questionnaire” was designed to give patients a voice to describe their suffering. Yet there is more that separates patients and doctors than a loss for words. Relationships between people living with persistent pain and their doctors exist within a social sphere of stigma, fear, and systematic oppression of the disabled. Feminist disability theorist Susan Wendell argues that our society idealizes the productive, functional body. This idealization leads to the marginalization and fear of people with disabilities. Pain is particularly feared, as it can remind us of the possibility of our own physical pain. We might even blame the person for their pain: “I may tell myself that she could have avoided it, in order to go on believing that I can avoid it.” (343) Because we cannot confront the imperfection of our own bodies, and the possibility that we too can be incapacitated through pain, we treat the disabled person as fundamentally other. Wendell continues to argue that in a medical setting, doctors fear their inability to fix the body and return it to standard functionality. They are often more focused on curing physical ailments than on understanding long-term illness and disability. Therefore, it is not only the fundamental inexpressibility and unsharable nature of pain that sets apart people with chronic pain, but also the fears they inspire in society at large.

Though the MPQ may help patients find words to describe pain in certain instances, and though it may provide reproducible numbers for clinical trials, it circumscribes the patient-doctor relationship to the goal of measuring and curing disease. It translates the patients’ symptoms into nouns with qualifying adjectives, into fixed measures and descriptors of pain. The questionnaire does not give people living with pain the

space to tell their story, to describe the unique form and shape their pain can take depending on the time of day, and the many ways it affects their lives.

Despite the presence of this test in clinical settings, doctors regularly dismiss chronic pain patients. Lous Heshusius describes numerous harrowing experiences of being avoided or mistreated. Though she noted her suicidal depression on multiple questionnaires, most doctors avoided addressing it while including this information in their reports, and sharing it with other doctors. The questionnaire prescribes a fixed framework of words and values, yet does not allow for patients to explain what their pain means to them or give doctors the specific information about their condition. The questionnaire desocializes words. It takes words out of the context of the patient's life and social situation, and transforms them into objective, numerical data for the empiricist. In a culture where people with chronic pain are routinely dismissed by doctors and socially stigmatized, this questionnaire gives answers in the form of hard data without urging doctors to examine their own prejudices towards chronic pain, or to truly consider the person in front of them.

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the language of pain.

part two: pain as verb and as narrative

eve sanders

((Eve is a creator and designer of jewelry. She embarked on a second career as a jeweler, initially as a way of recuperating from an accident that resulted in severe persistent pain and the loss of cognitive capacities. In her first career, she was a professor of English literature; she taught Renaissance drama and poetry and published work about the intersection of literature and history, including an award-winning book on gender and literacy.)))

Pain, in its most elemental form, is pre-language. Its outcry is often raw, disruptive. Yet in our statistic-driven society, as Simone Lucas' analysis shows, pain has been defined largely in terms set in the 1970s by the McGill Pain Questionnaire (MPQ), a diagnostic tool translated into more than twenty languages worldwide. The MPQ was based on the research of Melzack and Wall later published as The Challenge of Pain (1983). It presents pain as a subject for description and inquiry, a noun to be modified by a series of adjectives chosen from a list.

Simone Lucas has described two of the primary objectives that the MPQ serves: communication and measurement. The questionnaire is meant to provide physicians with descriptive information that will assist in assessing qualitative aspects of the patient's pain. Second, it is supposed to provide physicians with a quantitative account of the patient's condition: to measure the amount of a patient's pain via a yardstick with which to calibrate progress or setbacks.¹ A third aim of the MPQ is more covert: to evaluate the patient's psychological state. The questionnaire asks patients to assign different numeric values to sensory experiences linked with the pain (throbbing, stabbing, crushing, wrenching, burning, etc.) and also to emotive dimensions attributable to the pain (viciousness, wretchedness, punishment, etc.). Without the patient being informed of the fact, the questionnaire is being used to assess mental as well as physical health. In the process, pain conditions (disorders of the brain and nervous system such

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as phantom limb pain, cluster headaches and burning mouth syndrome) are being set apart from most other medical conditions (for example, heart disease or pancreatic cancer) by making their diagnosis partly an assessment of the patient's emotional response to his or her illness.

In spite of imperfections and a lack of transparency, the MPQ nonetheless has played a critical role in changing theoretical and clinical understandings of pain. By providing a mechanism for collecting statistical data about the pain of different patient groups, the questionnaire helped foreground Pain Medicine as a valid field for research and helped make the alleviation of pain a reasonable expectation on the part of patients. By the 1990's, for the most part, pain was no longer seen as an unavoidable stage of illness to be observed rather than counteracted; instead, untreated pain was widely understood as a dynamic that could set off cascades of lasting system-wide effects and, in some cases, lifelong disability. Pain as a noun with adjectival qualifiers helped found both a field of study, Pain Medicine, and a clinical setting for carrying out research and for treating patients - the Pain Clinic.

Today, however, what progress had been accomplished from the seventies to the nineties under the rubric of "Pain as a noun" is being threatened in the twenty-first century by an emerging alternative: "Pain as a verb". The Washington State doctor proposing this new definition, part of a larger movement aimed at reducing opioid prescriptions, explains his views in a video titled, "Pain as a Verb" (Seattle Times, 2012). He argues that in order to better address the problem of pain a shift in paradigm, accompanied by a redefinition of pain as a verb, is required. In fact, "pain" is already used as a verb in English; the existing usage is that of a transitive verb meaning to cause emotional distress to someone. However, the new usage being proposed by the Washington State doctor is that of pain as an intransitive verb. According to his video, the patient must be educated to see pain as an action in his or her control. This patient would not tell a doctor, "I have pain," but would say, instead, "I pain." As the video explains, speaking for the patient with severe pain, "Pain is not in the brain . . . pain is in me." The idea that pain is not in the brain contradicts decades of research on pain and the brain, particularly in the field of neuroplasticity and changes in brain structure and chemistry associated with protracted pain. By focusing on the attitude and language of those in pain, the video changes the subject of the discussion from that of alleviating pain and addressing its neurological basis to that of controlling the patient's behavior. From this perspective, severe persistent pain is less an alarm-bell for prompt medical intervention by doctors and specialists than it is a signpost of a psychological problem to be owned and dealt with by the patient.

The redefinition of pain as a verb is not just an exercise in semantics. Although this specific shift in terminology is the proposal of a single individual, the idea behind it is part of a larger campaign to rewrite actual laws governing the prescription of opioid medications, the most potent medications available today for treating pain. In Washington State, a new law went into effect in 2011. This law was drafted by the author of the video, together with a state representative (a former drug addiction counselor) and the medical director of the state's Department of Labor and Industries (a manager of worker's compensation) (Meier, 2010). The law places new restrictions on pain medication with the aim of decreasing the number of opioid prescriptions being written; for the remainder of patients in severe pain still eligible for opioids under the new law, urine testing is now mandated, even when patients are in no way suspected of breaking the law or of abusing their doctor's trust (Berens & Armstrong, 2011). Now that the law is in effect, patients prescribed opioids to reduce their suffering, grandmothers with trigeminal neuralgia and paraplegic war veterans, must find transportation to drug testing centers and wait in long lines holding cups of urine. False positives, a regular occurrence in drug testing of the kind, risk making patients who are just trying to get better, subject to harassment or even criminal charges.

The change of focus in public policy from reducing pain to reducing opioid prescriptions is having a profound impact on doctors, patients, and society at large. Some 116 million Americans live with an intractable pain condition.² Pain impacts more Americans than diabetes, heart disease and cancer combined. In Canada, chronic pain affects up to 40% of the population, according to some studies; a recent newspaper article puts the number of chronic pain sufferers at 6 million.³ Yet current media and political campaigns are re-framing this critical public health concern as a problem of drug abuse rather than a problem of effective treatment for millions living with pain disorders.

Theoretically and practically, pain is being redefined from a complex neurophysiological dysfunction amenable to treatment to an emotional-behavioral problem that is medically insoluble. In other words, what was once treated as a scientific and clinical matter, is becoming a behavioral and law-enforcement issue. In "Pain as a Verb," the Washington State doctor explains what this re-conceptualization of pain means in practice:

I see patients that pain very well. They have things I don't even understand how they survive. But they pain in a good way and I learn from them. And then there are others who pain very disruptively, disruptive to them, destructive to their family nucleus and to society. So our goal is to help them to pain a little better (Seattle Times, 2012).

Only patients who pain without complaint, without disruption to the “family nucleus,” earn the doctor’s praise: “they pain in a good way.” One consequence of seeing “Pain as a verb” is a change in the doctor’s relation to the patient. Under the rubric of Pain as a verb, the doctor’s role shifts from that of healer to that of moral judge who rates patients as praiseworthy or blameworthy on the basis of their supposed pain endurance.

The novelty of this approach is not that the attitude of the person in pain is being assessed. The McGill Pain Questionnaire, as we have seen, has a psychological dimension; it asks patients to describe pain sensations they experience by selecting words meant to reveal their emotional responses (e.g. “cruel,” “fearful,” “miserable”). However, Melzack and Wall dedicated *The Challenge of Pain* to “the millions of people in every country who live and die in needless pain” (1983, v). They attended to the emotional dimension of pain in order to highlight kinds of suffering they believed to be treatable and therefore “needless.” By contrast, those who today promote a shift to a more disciplinary approach depict pain as a burden to be borne by the patient rather than a medical condition to be remedied or improved upon by the doctor. While the video states that the doctor-narrator wants the patient to be “the driver of this bus,” i.e., the master of his or her pain condition, in reality the extent of the actual agency to which the driving metaphor refers is limited to the stoic toleration of pain, a capacity to pain intransitively, avoiding outbursts or demands. The patient is invited to drive a bus that seems to be permanently parked on the side of the road.

Is pain a noun? Is pain a verb? Clearly, it is both. But what both these models of pain leave out are nouns, verbs, and adjectives chosen by patients themselves and formed by them into sentences and paragraphs. In other words, Pain as a narrative. In art and literature, narratives of pain are central to works as varied as Michelangelo’s *Pieta*, Picasso’s *Guernica*, Frida Kahlo’s self-portraits, Verdi’s *La Traviata*, Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*, and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. Yet the engagement with pain that audiences find enthralling when it concerns an imaginary character in a novel or play somehow does not carry over to the pain of actual people in the world around us, in medical settings, in the workplace, in neighborhoods and communities. In the real world of the twenty-first century, even in doctors’ offices and hospitals, there is mostly aversion to hearing what people in pain have to say in their own words. Nonetheless, the stories that each person living with protracted pain has to tell are crucial for the medical system to hear so long as alleviating pain remains a fundamental responsibility of every physician. In addition, those stories offer knowl-

edge of our shared humanity and matter for society at large. Understood in its full complexity - not abstracted, reduced, judged or disembodied - pain brings us to crucially important places: to the limits of language and of numbers, to intersections of our spiritual and physical beings, and to moral questions about deciding what others should suffer.

endnotes

1. In the words of Melzack and Wall, "If the study of pain in people is to have a scientific foundation, it is essential to measure it" (Melzack and Wall, 37).
2. Maia Szalavitz, "Report: Chronic, Undertreated Pain Affects 116 Million Americans," TIME Healthland, June 29, 2011 (<http://healthland.time.com/2011/06/29/report-chronic-undertreated-pain-affects-116-million-americans>, accessed August 10, 2012).
3. Chronic Pain Association of Canada, "What is CPAC" (<http://www.chronicpaincanada.com/cpac.html>, accessed August 10, 2012); Sharon Kirkey, "Treating the invisible affliction," Montreal Gazette, October 3, 2011, p. A4.

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unbounded embodiment vs. containment and control:
a critical analysis of fatphobia.
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This paper was presented at Study in Action 2012, Montreal. A longer version is available at www.convergencejournal.ca

“Fat! It’s three little letters. What are you so afraid of?”

-Joy Nash, “A Fat Rant”

Joy Nash’s self-produced video, entitled “A Fat Rant,” has garnered 1.6 million views on YouTube. During the course of its eight-minute running time, Nash unabashedly declares her weight (224 lbs), criticizes the fashion industry for its narrow range of clothing sizes, and cackles at the prospect of dieting. Embedded in her sassy monologue lies a radical proposal: that it’s okay to be fat. Indeed, fatness is overwhelmingly feared and reviled within contemporary Western culture. The medical establishment, the diet industry, insurance companies, advertising media, reality television shows, and physical education curricula seem unanimous in their message that fat is unattractive at best, and lethal at worst. A critical feminist framework proves immensely helpful in dissecting discourses that position fat embodiment as undesirable, immoral, and dangerous. By investigating fatphobia through this lens, I endeavor to expose the cultural ideologies that underpin oppressive constructions of fatness and that designate fat bodies as requiring intervention. In their introduction to the anthology *Bodies Out of Bounds*, Brazil and LeBesco state that psychological discourses associate fat with recklessness, immoderation, and profligate gratification, and therefore with the violation of corporeal limits (3). Similarly, biomedical discourse serves to establish the fat body as excessive and uncontained, as “unbound” and “out of bounds”

(Braziel 235). The body in excess or the body out of bounds is transgressive, and thus subject to regulation and punishment, because it draws attention to the fluid nature of embodiment. Our bodies are not fixed; their boundaries are more flexible and more permeable than we might like to imagine (238-239). Bodies that fluctuate in their size and shape demonstrate the instability of material forms, and defy static categorization. Therefore, they trouble the binary logic that lies at the root of Western thought – that which is invested in concrete divisions between inside/outside, mind/body, male/female, Self/Other (232, 243-244). The intense fear and revulsion with which fat and fat bodies are treated thus becomes readable as a fear of that which crosses, confuses or challenges established boundaries.

Braziel notes that in Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, fat is gendered as female. The dualistic understanding that governs categories of mind/body and male/female necessarily associates corporeality with the feminine, placing both in subordination to the mind and masculinity (238-239). Fat, then, as “excessive corporeality,” is also excessively female (239, 245). In a similar analysis, Margrit Shildrick theorizes femininity, corporeality, excess, and fluidity through the notion of the “leaky” body. She suggests that the desire to exert control over the body is a desire to contain the body within its appropriate borders, and thus to preserve the supposedly discrete territories of internal vs. external, mind vs. body, self vs. other. However, the female body is represented as unavoidably leaky; what belongs inside inevitably flows outwards. Women’s bodies therefore provoke anxiety and suspicion insofar as they are perceived to threaten the rigidity of barriers that keep “corporeal engulfment” at bay (16-17). Through a synthesized reading of Braziel and Shildrick, we can begin to understand how the Western metaphysical tradition constructs the fat body, like the female body, as exceeding normative standards of acceptability.

Braziel suggests that the gendered nature of fat is what produces such anxiety around fat embodiment. Heather Sykes explores this anxiety and elucidates the inscription of gendered meaning onto fat bodies. In accordance with dualistic conceptions, fat symbolizes the feminine. Fat women are therefore “too much woman” in a patriarchal culture that already devalues and circumscribes female subjectivity (54, 130). Additionally, the fat male body undermines its own gender performance: soft flesh is present when binary associations dictate that firm musculature should appear (54). Whether invoking feminine excess or failed masculinity, fat bodies transgress the boundaries prescribed by normative gender categories. Sykes also insightfully remarks that fat bodies enact transgression not only because of the way they look, but because of the way they move. In a culture that prizes athleticism, the “motions associated with fatness disrupt the type of human movements that are

socially constructed as acceptable, productive and skillful” (97). Since bodily movements are themselves highly gendered, fat bodies potentially “queer” normative gender definitions, if those bodies do not move through the world with masculine strength or feminine grace (95).

Applying a gender analysis to the visual perception of fat embodiment exposes the gender anxiety in which fatphobia is rooted. However, Susan Bordo avers that the desire for food and the act of eating are also saturated with gendered meanings that merit consideration in relation to fatphobia. Media images overwhelmingly depict women’s appetites as requiring restriction, while the indulgence of male hunger is portrayed as ordinary, even favorable (108, 112). In order to explain this discrepancy in representation, Bordo delineates the ways in which hunger is discursively linked to “sexual appetite,” highlighting the symbolic overlap between sexual and alimentary pleasure. Proliferating interdictions against “female indulgence” also convey and reinforce lessons about what constitutes befitting female sexual behavior (110-112). Imposed standards of female self-control over alimentary consumption can thus be understood as an element of ideological efforts to constrain female sexuality (114-116).

To substantiate her thesis, Bordo highlights the metaphorical man-eater as exemplary of the threat posed by the “devouring woman.” The man-eater’s ravenous hunger manifests as unbounded sexual desire, which has the power to consume and destroy her male counterpart (117). Her unfettered appetite is doubly grotesque in that it signifies transgression of normative female sexuality: she refuses her socially assigned role as a passive object of male lust. Within the popular imagination, the corpulent woman is akin to the man-eater in that she is assumed to eat voraciously and, by extension, to be sexually deviant, having abandoned all sexual discretion (Mazer 266-267). However, Sykes is careful to note that fat women are also regarded within hegemonic discourse as asexual and sexually undesirable, because their bodies do not conform to normative standards of femininity (130). These analyses reveal the heterosexist paradigm that supports fatphobia, wherein female sexuality is believed to require male presence and validation. At the same time, they hint at questions about fat’s queer potential.

If fatphobia is inflected with worries about the boundaries of gender and sexuality, it is also concerned with those encircling race. Cartesian thought holds the categories of white/black in binary opposition, dressing each side with the meanings attributed to mind/body, male/female and Self/Other. In the same way that corporeality, fatness, and femininity come to be conjoined, so too are people of

colour symbolically associated with the body and materiality. When placed within dualistic formulations, fat is both feminized and racialized (Sykes 54). Furthermore, the standards of female beauty that idealize thinness are themselves standards of whiteness (Bass 225, 228-30). Fatness is discursively ascribed to racialized bodies as a way of further marking and marginalizing them as outsiders, as Others. The figure of the black female body has been historically represented as fat within American culture – the mammy and the jezebel comprise conspicuous examples (Sykes 54, 130). Therefore, the insistence upon slenderness as a Western ideal of beauty is also an impulse to distance the white body from the bodies of racial Others. Feminine attractiveness is constituted as that which is expressly not characteristic of women of colour (LeBesco 59).

However, LeBesco reminds us that the rejected body always hovers against the signifying borders of the normative center. In her analysis of fatness and citizenship, she cleverly articulates the relationship between fatphobia, racism and classism:

“If fat people are understood as antithetical to the efficiency and productivity required to succeed in our capitalist economy, then their presence haunts as the specter of downward mobility. Big, profusely round bodies also provoke racist anxieties in the white modern West because of their imagined resemblance to those of maligned ethnic and racial Others; fatness haunts as the specter of disintegrating physical privilege in this case.” (56)

Fat is threatening because it prompts recognition of our own unboundedness, and the instability of our own bodies and social locations. LeBesco’s invocation of the ghost metaphor is especially appropriate here because it underscores the pervasive fear with which fatness is regarded. More significantly, her references to capitalism and the economy also provide a valuable entry point into thinking through fatness as a threat to the borders and integrity of the nation.

LeBesco posits that the regulation of fat bodies arises out of ideas surrounding citizenship. Because fat is presumed to signify the laziness and lack of self-restraint inherent to whichever bodies it marks, fat people are perceived as eschewing the moral values of hard work and self-discipline that supposedly define the American nation. This notion hinges on the assumption that body weight is within the domain of individual influence.¹ Of course, hard work is also required of bodies in order to perpetuate America’s capitalist economy. Discursive constructions of the upstanding American citizen come to equate morality with the ability to productively contribute to capitalist growth (55). As April Herndon indicates: “[A] major-

ity of people in the United States believe that fat is unhealthy, immoral, and often downright disgusting” (125). This designation of fat as immoral partially originates from the symbolic position of fat as that which prevents or opposes productivity, and by extension, the accumulation of wealth.

In direct contrast, the valorization of strong, athletic bodies is linked with the construction of the muscular, military body and its ability to secure the nation's borders while simultaneously advancing American imperialism abroad. Indeed, the strength of the nation depends on the fitness of the military body to defend the boundary between foreign pollution and domestic health (Sykes 31-32). Nationalist projects employ and rely upon metaphors of the body in order to reify distinctions between inside and outside, Self and Other. Anxieties about the fortitude of the nation-state are consequently brought to bear in the surveillance, regulation, and control of bodies that are suspected of transgressing boundaries in all their permutations. It is therefore unsurprising that the fat body, which challenges illusions of bodily containment and disturbs the defining limits of gender, sexuality, race and class, should be regarded with fear and suspicion.

The marginalization of fat embodiment is consistent with the marginalization of all bodies considered transgressive, excessive, or burdensome. Fatphobia is pervasively and intimately connected with racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination. By approaching the fat body as a body out of bounds, the insidious hatred and pernicious fear of fat within our culture becomes intelligible as a hatred and fear of all that transgresses normative boundaries.

endnotes

1. It is also worth noting that the alleged mutability of fat is itself contested by many medical researchers (Herndon 125; Solovay 193-94)

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police brutality.

part one: a testimonial

julie matson

((Julie is a Vancouver-born, Montreal-based social justice activist, organizing around police impunity, police brutality and issues of class equality. She is also a hairdresser, and can be heard on the airwaves of CJLO 1690 AM, Concordia's campus radio station. Julie also performs musically, under the moniker Echo Beach.)))

My name is Julie Matson, and my dad, Ben Matson, was killed, without reason, by the Vancouver Police Department in May 2002. He was beaten and kicked to death, choking on his own vomit while being restrained in a prone position.

Losing a loved one is one of the hardest things to go through, but losing them in such a violent, surreal way is beyond imagination, especially at the hands of those we are led to believe are here to serve and protect.

Throughout the process of dealing with my dad's death, from the initial investigation, through to the public inquest, I couldn't ignore the blatant use of profiling, be it class, race or otherwise, and the continual upholding of systemic impunity and privilege that the police have.

I am fortunate enough to have found an amazing group of friends within the other families and supporters that have united to speak out against police violence and impunity. Together, we have organized memorial marches and vigils around October 22nd, a date that is recognized internationally as a day against police brutality and impunity.

Julie presented on related topics at Study in Action conference 2012, Montreal on behalf of the Justice for Victims of Police Killings Coalition. The Justice for Victims of Police Killings Coalition in Montreal brings together directly affected families and friends of police killings, as well as their allies.

One of our main focuses is to commemorate the lives of our loved ones, and demand an end to police violence. Whether the killings were a week ago, a year ago, a decade ago, or three decades ago, we are here to honour the memories of those that have been killed at the hands of the police

We are planning another march for this coming October 22nd, and welcome all to the processes of organizing and supporting our efforts. We have a website for more information at www.22octobre.net.

We need to find other strategies of harm reduction on our streets. We need better ways of dealing with people suffering from mental health issues other than the police. Our society needs a better way to care for vulnerable people with support and compassion, rather than with violence and weapons.

I've seen first-hand how proposed solutions become the next wave of tools of death and injury, such as the use of tasers. We need to identify that the problem is not crime; the problem is not violence. The problem is the police unjustly killing and injuring people.

We need radical solutions for radical problems - I am calling for the police to be disarmed, and for a ceasefire on our streets. We need less violence and more compassion on our streets.

police brutality.

part two: misconduct and the marginalized

julie matson

A longer version of
this essay is
available at
[www.convergence
journal.ca](http://www.convergencejournal.ca)

The US History Encyclopedia defines police violence and brutality as a form of police misconduct that constitutes intentional use of excessive force by police officers. Force should only be used up until the point of compliance, for a legitimate lawful purpose. Other forms of misconduct can include false arrest, racial profiling, intimidation and police corruption. Throughout history, race and class discrimination have laid the groundwork for ongoing policies and prejudices that still exist in current times. As a result, police violence and impunity remain publicly sanctioned means of social control, perpetuating race and class stereotypes and the ongoing criminalization of those most marginalized in Canada. How do police use race and class profiling to criminalize marginalized communities and then rationalize all levels of violence, including death, when “policing” our streets? By considering some cases from the Montreal area, this paper aims to delineate connections between race and class profiling in everyday police patrol and activity, and to consider some possible means of address.

There have been over 60 deaths caused by the Montreal police since 1987 (Flics-assassins), most of which have been visible minorities or economically impoverished people. The institutionalized logic that people at the bottom of the social and economic classes are the first to commit crimes is the dominant discourse informing everyday police work, judges' decisions, and many other public service departments. Skin colour is closely tied to one's position in society, and those marginalized by race and class are also often seen as disposable and inferior (Tator & Henry, 2006, 10). "Racial profiling" refers to police behaviour based on stereotypes and prejudices, and refers to the discretionary authority of the police to control racialized minorities.

Mohamed Anas Bennis was walking home from morning prayer at his nearby neighbourhood mosque on the morning of December 1, 2005 when he was shot by a Montreal police officer. The officer claims that Anas attacked him with a kitchen knife, although no evidence has been shared to support this claim. The authorities are withholding valuable video footage of the attack, something the family has requested repeatedly to help shed light on the incident. The family is still waiting for a public inquiry into Anas' death; they are asking for the release of investigation reports concerning his death, a full public independent inquiry, and an end to racial profiling and police impunity (Bennis, 2010).

Quilem Registre, a Haitian-born Montrealer, was tasered six times in the span of 53 seconds, and was the second person in a week in Canada to die as a result of being tasered. He died in hospital on October 18, 2007, just four days after Robert Dziekanski died at the Vancouver International Airport. Medical staff at Sacré-Cœur Hospital were initially told that he was in a motor vehicle accident, and did not treat him for the taser injuries that were unknown to them. He suffered cardiac arrest, and coroner Catherine Rudel-Tessier stated that "multiple electrical shocks possibly contributed" to his death. No charges have been laid against any of the officers involved, and the family is still waiting for a public inquest (Registre, 2010).

Gladys Tolley was an Algonquin woman struck down on the side of Highway 105 by a patrol car just outside Maniwaki, Quebec on October 5, 2001. The family was informed of her death after the case was closed. The coroner made his report without even seeing Gladys' remains. The investigation was conducted by the brother of the officer driving the patrol car. The family is still struggling to receive data regarding her death, and continue to seek justice through independent investigative channels (Tolley, 2010).

Fredy Villanueva was just eighteen years old when he was shot to death on August 9, 2008. He was unarmed, playing dice with friends in Henri-Bourassa Park in the subdivision of Montreal North. The ballistics evidence shows traces of gunpowder on his shirt, estimating the gun that fired the shot that killed him to be within fifteen inches of him (Montgomery, 2009). Fredy's brother, Dany, who was one of the key witnesses to Fredy's death, is currently waiting for a hearing that will decide if he will be deported back to his native Honduras (Solyom, 2010). Following the police's investigation into the death of Fredy Villanueva, the Quebec director of prosecutions recommended no charges be laid for the officer that fired the gun. Ombudsman Raymonde Saint-Germain proposed the establishment of a Special Investigations Bureau, specifically so that the police are not investigating police misconduct, but Public Security Minister Jacques Dupuis rejected the report (Dougherty, 2010).

In each of these cases, racial profiling was present in the judgement to act by the police officers involved. The Ontario Human Rights Commission declared in a 2003 racial profiling inquiry report that "practical experience and psychology both confirm that anyone can stereotype, even people who are well meaning and not overtly biased (Tanovich, 2006, 14). Police officers and other law enforcement agencies may not even realize they are racially profiling. Our country's history of racism has laid the foundations of our institutionalized race-based judgements, which have linked racial groups to certain types of activities and stereotypes. This stereotyping has also been fed by the media, as well as through the misinterpretation of information in reports and studies by police and government agencies (Tanovich, 2006, 15).

Proactive policing means being able to identify what abnormal looks like before assessing what do in a given situation – this means that people tend to be categorized by how they look instead of what they are doing (Tator & Henry, 2006, 27). This is evident in police patrolling in Montreal and other Canadian cities, where police officers looking for crime will find it according to biased perceptions. They over-police poorer, more racially-diverse neighbourhoods, searching out crime (Pedicelli, 1998). In a survey of Toronto area high school students in 2000, non-white students were four times more likely to be stopped and six times more likely to be searched by police than the white students, even though none of them were engaging in illegal activities (Tanovich, 2006, i). Research also shows that in Canada police are more likely to use force when dealing with visible minorities and the poor, reflecting the institutionalized race and class biases ingrained in Canada's Criminal Justice System (Pedicelli, 1998, 20). There is more and more evidence of racial profiling in Canada, with one of the most recent being a UN report released in March 2010 outlining the poor treatment of minorities in Canada. Ms. Gay McDougall, the UN's Independent Expert on minority issues states:

The concerns included racial profiling as a systemic practice, over-policing of some communities in which minorities form a large percentage of the population and disturbing allegations of excessive use of force leading to deaths particularly of young Black males. Perceptions persist that the police act with impunity in some localities and that investigations are not conducted by independent authorities. Minorities feel that the justice system is failing them and that mechanisms of redress, including Human Rights Commissions are inaccessible, underfunded and under threat. It is essential that investigations into serious allegations of police misconduct are carried out by bodies that are perceived by the communities to be independent and that mechanisms of civilian oversight are established (McDougall, 2010).

Section 25 of Canada's Criminal Code states that an authorized law officer is allowed to administer use of force in the enforcement of the law, in self-defence, in defence of others, and in situations of arrest if it cannot be done with less force. It is not allowed if "unjustified" or intended to cause death or grievous bodily harm (Chappell & Graham, 1985, 35). This gives an incredible amount of power to police, without setting guidelines for what constitutes an appropriate or justified use of force. Issues of police misconduct and guidelines for reprimands need to be clarified. Officers involved in in-custody deaths must be held accountable and face consequences for their actions.

A thorough review of how police officers are trained could be a good place to start. In early 2009, two off-duty police officers in Vancouver were charged with the assault and robbery of a delivery man. They had asked the delivery driver for directions, assaulted him when he couldn't help them immediately, and took his phone so he couldn't call for help. One of the officers involved in the altercation was a use-of-force expert at the Justice Institute. In this case, his "use of force" involved punching Indian-born Feroz Khan three times in the head as he was out delivering newspapers. The officer was suspended, without pay, and lost his position at the Justice Institute (Hansen, 2009). Examples like this highlight not only the racial mentality of many working police officers, but also their inability to rationalize the consequences for their actions. The officers were charged with robbery, one served an in-house arrest term of three weeks, and both were able to keep their jobs. Khan, the victim of their unwarranted attack, was not able to return to work, and is now emotionally damaged and destitute (Hall, 2009). Changes need to be made in terms of punishments for police involved in cases of police violence, both in order to end race and class profiling and discrimination, and also to ensure that police are aware that there will be repercussions for their actions.

To make a significant impact, the processes of dealing with issues of police impunity must come from a place of compassion. The involvement of outside communities to come up with solutions in the instances of police brutality could be a positive approach toward coming up with a greater picture of healing, not only for the families involved, but also for the community as a whole. Community input could also help build accountability for injustices committed by police or other official institutions. Combined with stories of human experience and emotion, this could help to provide a more complete picture of each incident, rather than having the hegemonic race and class of society determining what the public will see and know about these incidents. Finally, the biggest impact toward accountability in cases of police brutality and impunity will come through external investigative bureaus that review each case brought forward, rather than through the same police departments that were involved in the initial complaints.

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parole sans parole, the prequel: the vulture (a play).

the termite collective

(((The Termite Collective is a group of creative and concerned people who want to expose the ever increasing repressive nature of prison through political parody and criminal cabaret. Most of the situations and experiences in the skits are lived and true, only the names and faces have been changed.)))

This play was performed at the Study in Action conference 2012, Montreal. A longer version of this play is available at www.convergencejournal.ca

PRE-ACT/ENTRY

The stage is filled with posters. They read: “no tobacco beyond this point”, “photo ID required”, “no cell phones”, “all persons can be searched beyond this point”, “all information acquired is kept on file”, and “all persons can be subject to Ion scan, search by drug dog, strip search, metal detector”. A laptop is visible, its screen filled with a game of solitaire. Two screws, eating bananas, sit near the laptop. Their name-tags read “my name is Screw.”

As ‘program’ is being handed out, the two screws ad-lib with the dialogue below as audience members filter in, the kind of questions you would get if you were entering a prison.

SCREW #1, SCREW # 2: How many rings are you wearing? Do you know this person? Do you have a prescription for those glasses? Are you carrying a cell phone, tobacco or more than \$10 cash? Then you'll need a key for this locker. Are you willing to submit to being searched?

OPENING

MEGAPHONE VOICE (heard from offstage): END OF ACTIVITIES. RETURN TO YOUR CELL BLOCKS FOR COUNT.

ACT I

SCENE I

Twilight Zone theme music plays as Rod Sterling enters the stage.

SHOW HOST, ROD SERLING: What you are about to experience is like being in another dimension; another dimension of illogic and of no reason; a journey into a land that boggles the mind. Surreal as these stories may seem, these stories are true. This is a truth that is hardly ever written, but a truth that is real none the less. You are entering the 'parole sans parole' zone.

ACT I

SCENE II

Mr. Rogers' Neighbourhood theme music plays as characters enter.

A powerpoint displays statistics on UTAs and ETAs*

Mr. Harper is escorted in by two Vultures. Mr. Harper takes a seat and Vultures stand on either side of him. Occasional cash register (cue \$) sounds are heard throughout the speech.

MR. HARPER: Hello everybody and welcome to Mr. Harper's neighbourhood. I am Stephen Harper. Yes, the Stephen Harper. I am a lucky man. I live in a nice neighbourhood, but more importantly, I live in a safe neighbourhood. How about you? Are you living in a safe neighbourhood? You may think it is safe, but are you sure it is? You see that house down the street? Well, there is an ex-convict living there. A dangerous man. How come he's not in jail? Well, he is on parole. Yes, I know, our parole system is too lenient. Blame it on all those years of Liberal governments.

So, you still feel safe knowing who lives there? Well, I've got more bad news for you. Check that building over there. Right now as I speak, there are a half dozen prisoners attending a meeting there. No, not ex-prisoners but actual inmates that aren't on parole. How can this be possible? Well, these "people" benefit from a program called escorted temporary absences. Meaning that for a few hours, they are allowed to roam about your neighbourhood.

'Well', you'll say, 'at least they are escorted by guards who won't let them do anything harmful.' No, sorry, that's not how it works. Do you want to know who escorts those criminals? Volunteers - soft-hearted, left-wing pinkos who should take care of victims of crime instead of giving support to the scourge of society. Oh, by the way, those inmates attending that meeting over there are not petty thieves. They are murderers. The only thing that stands between them and you are unarmed volunteers (mostly women, on top of it). So, I'm asking you again. Do you still think you live in a safe neighbourhood? That's what I thought.

I don't want to scare you even more but there is another program for inmates called un-escorted temporary absences. Yes, you heard me, un-escorted. No supervision. Not even softy volunteers to rein them in. They're on the loose! So, now every time you'll be walking around your neighbourhood, you'll always be wondering, "Is he one of them?" and "What about this one, he's got a mean face." Well, thank the Lord I am your Prime Minister. In the past four years, through all kind of administrative measures, I have managed to cut down the number of escorted absences by 19% and the un-escorted ones by 30%. And, believe me, that's only the beginning. I intend to do anything in my power to cut them down by another 30%. And...Oh excuse me, my cell phone. Bear with me please. Hello?...Oh really? Is that so? Well, thank you, I'll catch you later.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a scoop for you. We're going to call elections! So, as I was saying before being interrupted, I plan to cut down on inmate absences by another 60%.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I thought you said 30%!

MR HARPER: Excuse me? I said 30% before? Are you sure? Then I misspoke. I meant 60%. But let's not waste our time with figures. The bottom line is that I want to keep more people in jail for a longer time. And make it harder for those who are out to stay out! So you can finally live safely in your neighbourhoods. I invite you to join me in a discussion on this topic. I'm confident that you will all endorse my views on public

security. Thanks for listening to me. And, God bless me.

Mr. Rogers' neighbourhood music plays as Vultures escort Mr. Harper offstage. Birds theme music plays between acts.

ACT II

SCENE I

Twilight Zone theme music plays as Rod Serling enters the stage.

SHOW HOST, ROD SERLING: You are holding a key. A key to a door that is seldom ever opened by those not used to the inexplicable, the absurd, the non-logics of the workings of the Correctional Services of Canada. For those not used to confusion and irrationality, be warned: these stories are not suitable for those who use their minds.

Twilight Zone theme music as Serling exits stage.

ACT II

SCENE II

The Screws sit around a table covered with stacks of papers and folders. There is a large rock on one of the stacks of papers.

characters:

screw #1 newbie

screw #2 jerk

screw #3 vacationer

Screw #1 and Screw #2 are sitting at the table sifting through papers, disinterested, talking about what they did this weekend, up-coming holidays, golfing, salaries, whatever.....at one point one of them decides it's almost lunch time and maybe they should do a little 'work'

SCREW #1: So, I've got this one case. No institutional charges, no incidents. I was thinking of giving him a full recommendation to the board.

SCREW #2: No charges? That doesn't mean he didn't do anything - just means he didn't get caught. Screw 'em... I got this one guy I hate. I didn't submit the psych report - he can wait. (cue \$)

SCREW#1: What's with the rock on those files?

SCREW#2: Oh that... those files aren't going anywhere anytime soon. (cue \$)

Screw #3 walks in with file in hand and adds it to the pile with a rock on it.

SCREW #1: What's with that file?

SCREW#3: Oh, I've only got this one for 6 months 'cause someone's on mat leave. She's a lifer anyways. What's another six months! Plus, I'm going on vacation for the next few weeks and I already hit my quota for this month. I can't have any more people going out. Doesn't matter how 'eligible' they are. You've seen the press...it's not a good time to let people out on 'passes.' (cue \$)

Screws exit taking some files with them, leaving others behind, engaging in idle chatter. Screw #1 returns and sits down, profile to audience so that prisoner can sit facing them, sifting through some papers.

ACT II

SCENE III

Enter Prisoner #1, sits facing Screw with profile to audience; Vultures in the periphery.

SCREW #1: I'm not recommending you for full parole. I don't think you're ready yet. You've been inside for too long. You have to take it slow. You don't have enough life experience to be on the street.

PRISONER #1: (obviously trying to control temper) My granddaughter's turning ten in a few months. I was hoping to be out for her birthday.

SCREW #1: I just don't think you're ready. In six months, we'll see. What's another six months to you anyway? (cue \$)

PRISONER #1: *#@* if I'm not ready now, when will I be ready?! You're twenty years old! What the *#@* do you know about being 'outside'!! I could be your grandmother!!!!

Vultures drag her offstage. Screw #1 shaking head. Birds music begins. Screw #2 enters and they talk amongst themselves. Screw #1 takes out sheet of paper and scribbles some-

thing on it, puts it on top of files that she takes with her and, with determination, leaves. Screw #2 sits. Enter Prisoner #2.

SCREW#2: I'm recommending you for a closed half-way house.

PRISONER #2: But I thought we talked about how an open half-way house would be better?

SCREW #2: Yeah, but times have changed.

PRISONER #2: Since last week?

SCREW #2: You haven't done anything to make me think you could handle an open half-way house. You need maximum structure.

PRISONER #2: But I've done all the programs you've asked for... at least twice. (cue \$) I haven't been hit with any infractions since I've been inside!

SCREW #2: Hey! You're expected to follow the rules! A clean record doesn't count for anything. (pause) Are you questioning my judgment? Maybe you still have a problem with authority. Maybe another 'anger management' program will do you good! (cue \$)

Prisoner #2 stares at Screw #2. Nothing more is said. Prisoner #2 stands up and exits. Screw #2 closes file and leaves. Enter Prisoner #3 who waits, waits and waits some more. Screw #3 eventually enters without any regard for delay. They both sit and continue to wait until lights dim.

ACT III

SCENE I

Twilight Zone theme music as Serling enters.

SHOW HOST, ROD SERLING: You have been witness to an utterly disturbing bureaucracy. Within this bureaucracy parole eligibility dates are meaningless. They are lost in a time warped machinery of control where past, future and present have no reference point to time or context. Here peoples' lives are subject to the workings of 'the national parole board'.

Serling is interrupted by the distant voices of prisoners chatting offstage. Their voices are silenced by a megaphone announcement, also offstage.

MEGAPHONE VOICE: END OF ACTIVITIES. RETURN TO YOUR CELL BLOCKS FOR COUNT

ACT IV

SCENE I

Twilight Zone theme music starts up again.

SHOW HOST, ROD SERLING: You enter this world at your own risk because it leads to a world that is ‘half-way’ into the future. This is not a new world. It is merely an extension of what began in the old world - a prison. It has patterned itself after every power-hungry ruler who has planted the imprint of a boot on the pages of history. This world has regulations, technology, a system of rules and a legal approach to the destruction of human freedom, but like every other disciplinary apparatus that has preceded it, it has one primary rule: logic is an enemy and truth is a menace. Any state, any entity, any ideology that fails to recognize the worth and dignity of every human being is obsolete. These words are direct quotes from Rod Serling, of the Twilight Zone.

Twilight Zone theme music as Serling exits.

Powerpoint image appears. It reads: “Do not leave a 100km radius without receiving permission from your parole officer.” Below the words is a map of the island of Montreal with a red circle around it.

ACT V

SCENE III

Powerpoint image appears. It reads: “Testimonial of lack of transparency.”

PRISONER #2: After spending 22 years in prison, I was finally released to a closed halfway house, but things didn’t go the way I expected. I was told that since I’m a lifer, I have to tell my potential employer that I have a criminal record before I start working for him. This took away a lot of job possibilities, so I ended up only getting minimum wage jobs that nobody wants. Since I have to do at least 3 years in the halfway house before I’m eligible for full parole and since my room and board is free, I tried many different jobs. If, after a couple of weeks, it wasn’t the job for me I’d quit and find another

one. I wanted to work, but the jobs I was getting were in bad places. In one place they were making paint. You had to wear a mask, and after work you'd take a couple of showers and still smell. So I quit, as did other people that had started the job at the same time as me.

Believe me, I really wanted a job, even if it was at minimum salary, but I wanted one that I would like, that I could get ahead with in the future. But after three month of this, my PO decided that wasn't ok, that he wasn't recommending me for an open halfway house. So, I got another 6 months in the closed halfway house. One month later I did find a job that I liked and things seemed to be going well for me. Or so I thought. First there was a problem with money. I bought a car and my mom was supposed to help me financially with the insurance, but she didn't make the payment. She couldn't remember that she was supposed to (we later found out that my mother was in the early stage of Alzheimers). So, I was labelled as being disorganized. This was not enough to send me back to prison, but I had a red mark on my file.

Then I started going out with this girl from my home town and my PO found out that for many years my girlfriend had been a stripper. I hadn't mentioned this to him. I told him that yes I had known about this but that she hadn't been a stripper for the last ten years. She had quit when she got pregnant with her little girl. I didn't try to hide this fact from my PO. It was ten years ago! I didn't think of mentioning it! Me being a criminal in the past...I certainly didn't judge her on it. Anyway, as far as I know being a stripper isn't a criminal offence. My PO accused me of something called "lack of transparency" and sent me back to prison. I did two years in prison before I was released to a closed halfway house again. Can you believe that?

**UTA stands for unescorted temporary absences and ETA stands for escorted temporary absences. These are "codes" that prisoners serving longlife sentences can qualify for part of the way through their sentence as a supposed way to ease them back into the community. The Harper government has been adamant about cutting down the number of allowed UTAs and ETAs, the stats are changing drastically from year to year.*

**The money sounds are just a cash register "cha ching" sound. They symbolize money CSC is making off of various changes in the prison system.*

**The BIRDS sound is supposed to be the sound of the birds in Alfred Hitchcock's movie of the same name. Throughout the play it is used to symbolize the repression of resistance.*

**Conditions are things that people are required to do or not do once they are out on parole. Examples include non-association with other people with criminal records, not being allowed to drink or go into bars, weekly urine tests, weekly psychologist visits, and attendance requirements for programs like AA, CA etc.*

self-referred: a quebec trans health survival tool (excerpts).

astt(e)q

((ASTT(e)Q (Action Santé Travesties et Transsexuelles du Québec) aims to promote the health and well-being of trans people through peer support and advocacy, education and outreach, and community empowerment and mobilization. For more information go to <http://astteq.org/index.html>)))

This is excerpted from ASTT(e)Q's guidebook, "Self-Referred: A Quebec Trans Health Survival Tool". The full document will be available online soon at www.santetranshealth.org.

why we made this guide

Trans people often have a hard time navigating health and social services. Everybody deserves to be treated respectfully by their family doctor, nurses, and social workers, and members of trans communities are no different. Furthermore, trans people need jobs, stable housing, and support if and when their rights are disrespected. Trans people also need services that are specific to and respectful of their needs and experiences. Many of us find that community organizations and resources, as well as our friends and communities, can support and care for us in conjunction with more standard health and social services.

A presentation on the content, creation and distribution of the guidebook was presented by Jackson Ezra, current resource coordinator at ASTT(e)Q, at Study in Action 2012, Montreal. For a complete version of the guidebook, go to www.convergencejournal.ca

Regardless of the stage of transition you are at or plan on taking, finding health and social service professionals you trust and who treat you with dignity can be challenging. There are few resources that are specific to trans realities. Much of the wisdom and information within our communities is only shared informally between individuals.

what is included in this guide

Knowledge is power: the more information you have, the more you'll be able to advocate for yourself, whether it be against a disrespectful doctor or social worker, uninformed staff at a shelter, discriminatory landlords or employers, or abusive cops. Having access to trans-specific resources and knowledge can even help if you are confronted by rejection from your family or community.

“Self-Referred” was conceived of by trans people from a variety of backgrounds and has information specific to the needs of trans people living in Québec. Because it was created in an urban context, by people living in Montréal, the scope is limited. Many of the resources listed are Montréal based, but resources relevant to rural communities and other cities in Québec have been integrated throughout. Topics include a look at daily struggles in the lives of trans people, hormone therapy, surgery, legal name and sex designation changes, HIV/AIDS, sex-segregated spaces, and legal rights and advocacy tools.

The term ‘trans’ is used throughout the guide. Trans is usually used as a short form for ‘transgender’ and/or ‘transsexual.’ It literally means “crossing to another side.” Someone who presents, lives, and/or identifies as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth is trans. At the same time, we acknowledge that trans communities have diverse needs, priorities, identities, and ways of talking about themselves. Ultimately, we support the right for people to self-determine and self-identify using whatever words suit them best.

who we are

Self-Referred is an initiative of Action santé travesti(e)s et transsexuel(le)s du Québec (ASTT(e)Q). ASTT(e)Q is a project of CACTUS Montréal and was founded in 1998, largely in response to Montréal’s lack of health care and social services that were sensitive to trans people’s needs. The project grew out of a support group for trans women living with HIV and was informed by a trans community–led needs assessment that aided in determining the shape and direction of ASTT(e)Q. The organization is part of a long and rich history of activism, advocacy, and community organizing for improved access to health care and social services, housing, decent working conditions

(particularly for sex workers), HIV prevention, and an overall greater quality of life for trans people in Quebec.

ASTT(e)Q aims to promote the health and well-being of trans people through peer support and advocacy, education and outreach, and community empowerment and mobilization. We understand the health of trans people and our communities to be related to economic and social inequalities that have resulted in trans people experiencing disproportionate rates of poverty, un(der)employment, precarious housing, criminalization, and violence. We believe in the right to self-determine gender identity and gender expression free from coercion, violence, and discrimination. We advocate for access to health care that will meet the many needs of our diverse communities, while working collectively to build supportive, healthy, and resilient communities.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge and honour the work and lives of those who have come before us: trans people who have struggled and fought for their right to live in peace and dignity, and to make decisions about their bodies on their own terms. This guide is dedicated to all of the trans elders whose work and persistence make it possible for resources like this one to be created, and to the resiliency and strength of trans youth who build and foster supportive community even in hard times.

Trans people have been pushing for greater access to health and social services throughout history. This activism continues today, and the state of access to services is constantly shifting.

an eye to the future

We wanted to end this guide with an eye to the future. “Self-Referred” is meant as a roadmap for trans people dealing with health and social services in Québec. Please share this guide and the knowledge that you have gained from it with others, because the more we equip our communities with knowledge and information, the stronger and more resilient we will become.

Finally, we also wanted to speak to the activism of day-to-day survival, in other words, how sharing our stories, standing up for each other, or simply making it through a really rough day are all ways in which we are struggling for broader social change in our communities. When we look out for each other, talk about our challenges, support a friend when they feel like their options have run dry, persuade a new GP to start prescribing hormones, and build families and tell our children our stories, we become stronger. When we support each other post surgery, write to our friends and loved ones in jail, warn each other about bad clients, create spaces for our youth to meet and

socialize, we are activists and leaders in our communities. When we fight against police brutality and repression, demand our right to easier access to name and sex designation changes on our IDs, help create networks of doctors and providers who work with the undocumented migrants in our communities, we are telling the world that we live here, too!

It is in part because of this activism of day-to-day survival that social services for trans people exist today. This guide was initiated as a part of a project that was started by trans people fighting for trans support services in Québec . There will always be a lot of work to do to improve trans access to respectful and relevant health and social services, but changes will happen, as long as we are empowering ourselves with knowledge and information.

développer les études trans dans la francophonie: présentation de quelques résultats et enjeux issus de deux recherches utiles aux communautés trans.

mickaël chacha enriquez, billy hébert, line chamberland et jean dumas

((Mickaël Chacha Enriquez est étudiant-chercheur engagé, allié à la cause trans, qui rédige actuellement son mémoire de maîtrise sur la militance trans au Québec (UQAM). Il est adjoint de recherche à la Chaire de recherche sur l'homophobie, où il coordonne un projet de recherche-intervention auprès des aîné-es trans en partenariat avec l'Association des Transsexuels et Transsexuelles du Québec.

Billy Hébert est chargé de projet au sein de l'initiative SIRA – Aîné-es Trans, un projet québécois de recherche et d'intervention sur les besoins et expériences des personnes transsexuelles et transgenres de 50 et plus dans les milieux de la santé et des services sociaux. Il a obtenu une Maîtrise en Anthropologie sociale et culturelle à l'Université Concordia de Montréal au printemps 2012. Étant intéressé à concilier recherche académique et militantisme, il se considère comme un chercheur « engagé » qui désire participer à des projets ayant pour but de contribuer à l'empowerment des groupes marginalisés.

Militante de longue date et sociologue de formation, Line Chamberland a réalisé plusieurs études sur les discriminations envers les minorités sexuelles dans divers contextes de vie : écoles, milieu de travail, services sociaux et de santé. On lui doit aussi un grand nombre de publications sur l'histoire du lesbianisme au Québec ainsi qu'en études gaies et lesbiennes. Depuis novembre 2011, elle est titulaire de la Chaire de recherche sur l'homophobie de l'UQAM, laquelle veut établir des ponts entre les milieux institutionnels, communautaires et scientifiques afin de lutter plus efficacement contre l'homophobie, la lesbophobie, la biphobie et la transphobie.

Jean Dumas est titulaire d'un doctorat en communication à l'UQAM. À partir de 2007, il a travaillé comme adjoint de recherche dans l'équipe Sexualités et genres: vulnérabilité, résilience de l'UQAM, sur les usages d'Internet liés à la santé parmi les minorités sexuelles LGBT (les personnes lesbiennes, gaies, bisexuelles et transgenres). Il est actuellement stagiaire postdoctoral au CSSS Jeanne-Mance dans le cadre d'un projet visant l'évaluation de l'adéquation des services de sociaux et de santé avec les besoins en matière de santé des minorités sexuelles.))

Lors de la conférence Étude en Action, 2012 Mickaël Chacha Enriquez a présenté le contenu ci-dessous pendant la table ronde intitulée: Santé, recherche et ressources transgenre.

Pour la version non-abrégée, consultez le www.convergencejournal.ca

J'ai décidé de présenter un survol de deux recherches trans menées actuellement à l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM): l'une sur les aîné-es trans, l'autre sur les usages d'Internet pour des informations en santé. Ainsi, je ne vais pas aller en profondeur, je me contenterai de partager avec vous quelques éléments de ces recherches, afin de montrer en quoi elles sont utiles aux communautés trans. Cela me permettra de montrer l'importance d'inclure des personnes et organismes trans dans ces recherches.

I. les aîné-es trans

Le premier projet a pour but d'améliorer les conditions de vie des aîné-es trans. Il est issu d'un partenariat entre l'Aide aux Transsexuels du Québec (ATQ) et la Chaire de recherche sur l'homophobie (UQAM), et est subventionné par le ministère de la Famille et des Aînés. Le projet est constitué d'un an de recherche et d'un an d'intervention. Il s'agit de la première recherche de cette envergure sur les aîné-es trans au Canada.

Ce projet part des préoccupations de cette première génération d'aîné-es trans, qui partagent de nombreuses craintes face au vieillissement, comme nous l'ont rapporté les différents organismes impliqués (ATQ, Astd(e)Q et Iris-Estrie). Ces organismes apportent une aide très importante pour la recherche, notamment lors du recrutement des participant-es. En effet, beaucoup d'aîné-es trans ne fréquentent plus ces organismes ou vivent en dehors des grands centres urbains. Sans le soutien de plusieurs membres de ces organismes, nous n'aurions pas pu avoir un échantillon si diversifié. Nous avons interrogé 12 aîné-es trans, dont la moitié vivent en dehors des grands centres urbains. Par ailleurs, deux hommes trans ont été interrogés, ainsi que deux femmes d'origine latino-américaines.

Un autre défi de la recherche de terrain était de créer un cadre de confiance avec les personnes trans rencontrées. Plusieurs ont fait leur transition dans les années 1970, 1980 ou 1990. Ayant connu une marginalisation sociale autrement plus forte qu'aujourd'hui, beaucoup sont habituées à filtrer ce qu'elles disent par crainte du jugement des autres. On s'est rendu compte que quand l'intervieweur disait qu'il était trans lui aussi, les langues se déliaient beaucoup plus, car un lien de confiance avait été créé ou s'était aussitôt établi.

Ces deux éléments montrent à quel point il est important que la recherche trans soit menée en partenariat avec des organismes trans et que des personnes trans soient incluses dans les équipes de recherche.

Puisque lors de la présentation nous n'avions pas encore commencé les analyses, la section suivante donne quelques résultats préliminaires de la recherche de terrain.

1. refus de traitement et impact sur la confiance des patient-es trans plus âgé-es envers les professionnel-les de la santé.

Lolita, 58 ans, a débuté sa transition (le processus émotionnel et/ou physique lors duquel une personne se perçoit et est perçue comme changeant d'identité de genre, et qui peut inclure des aspects sociaux et médicaux, comme par exemple le changement de nom, la prise d'hormones et certaines chirurgies) il y a plus d'une quinzaine d'années et vit « stealth » (sans parler de son passé de transition) depuis un bon moment. Elle a eu une vaginoplastie (chirurgie dite de « réassignation sexuelle ») il y a déjà plusieurs années, mais n'a pris des hormones qu'au tout début de sa transition. Elle lie cet arrêt au refus d'un endocrinologue de continuer à lui prescrire des hormones parce qu'elle est fumeuse, bien que les risques y étant associés sont selon elle négligeables. Cette expérience, dans ses mots, l'a fait « décrocher du système de santé ». Malgré cela, après quelques années, elle est retournée voir un médecin afin d'avoir un suivi médical. Cette professionnelle de la santé lui a offert de faire une cytologie, un examen gynécologique consistant en une analyse des cellules du col de l'utérus. Lolita raconte l'échange qui a suivi cette demande du médecin : « J'ai dit : "Je suis une femme trans". Elle m'a dit : "Moi, je traite pas ça!" » Lolita a donc eu un refus de traitement. Elle est récemment entrée en contact avec d'autres personnes trans, afin d'avoir un meilleur réseau de soutien et les coordonnées de professionnel-les sensibilisé-es.

2. relation positive établie avec un-e professionnel-le de la santé

Pierre, un homme trans de 59 ans dont la transition médicale a aussi été entamée il y a de nombreuses années, avait un médecin traitant qui a pris sa retraite. Il s'est alors tourné vers le médecin de famille de sa conjointe, elle aussi trans. Cela fait maintenant 17 ans qu'il voit cette professionnelle de la santé. Il préfère se déplacer à 45 min de son domicile (de la banlieue montréalaise à Verdun), puisqu'il considère ne pas recevoir des soins adéquats dans les services de santé de sa région. Pierre a développé un très bon rapport avec cette professionnelle. Il lui a révélé être un homme trans après quelques visites, alors qu'elle devait lui faire un examen physique général. La réaction de ce médecin a été, selon lui, très professionnelle – elle n'a fait aucune remarque déplacée au sujet de la transidentité de Pierre et n'a pas eu de réaction de surprise ou de curiosité, ce qui a mis ce dernier en confiance. Pierre raconte que son ancien médecin ne lui avait jamais proposé de faire un examen gynécologique, en partie car il n'est lui-même pas à l'aise avec ce type de situation. Pourtant, son nouveau médecin a insisté sur la

nécessité d'une telle procédure bien que Pierre n'ait en avoir besoin - elle lui a rappelé que c'est son rôle en tant que professionnelle de la santé de lui faire passer les tests adéquats. Cet examen s'est finalement très bien passé.

3. quand une professionnel de la santé aide une femme trans à faire sa transition

Julie a 67 ans, elle a entamé sa transition il y a un an, et ce, grâce aux conseils d'une psychologue qu'elle voyait pour des problèmes d'alcoolisme en région. Cette psychologue la soutient beaucoup dans toute sa démarche. Julie vit maintenant à Montréal pour pouvoir « vivre ce qu'elle a à vivre ».

4. les aîné.es trans développent aussi des stratégies

Céline a 59 ans, elle a entamé sa transition il y a plus de 20 ans. Elle a développé une stratégie afin de passer ses examens de la prostate sans être stigmatisée dans la salle d'attente. Elle vient toujours accompagnée d'un ami homme, pouvant ainsi passer pour sa femme. Cela lui permet d'éviter de dévoiler qu'elle est une femme trans lorsqu'on l'appelle dans la salle d'attente – ce type de stratégies peut aussi être employé par les personnes trans dont les papiers d'identification ne reflètent pas leur identité de genre.

Un rapport de recherche exhaustif sera produit dans l'année à venir, soit d'ici au printemps 2013. Grâce à cette recherche, un dépliant, un atelier de sensibilisation et des outils pédagogiques seront également développés. Ils permettront de sensibiliser les intervenant-es de la santé et des services sociaux aux besoins et aux éléments facilitant l'accès des aîné-es trans à leurs services. Il s'agit donc d'un projet qui aidera à améliorer les conditions de vie des aîné-es trans.

II. les usages santé d'Internet parmi les personnes trans au Canada

La seconde recherche utile aux communautés trans est celle sur les usages santé d'Internet par les LGBT (Lesbiennes, Gais, Bis, Trans), dirigée par Joseph Levy du département de sexologie de l'UQAM. Il y a eu un effort d'intégration des personnes trans dans cette recherche, notamment en consultant certaines d'entre elles qui ont donné des conseils quant à la formulation des questions. Je dois préciser qu'aucune recherche n'a été repérée concernant spécifiquement les usages santé trans d'Internet. Au total, 2187 personnes ont répondu au sondage en ligne parmi lesquels 135 personnes ont répondu à la question « quel est votre sexe ou votre identité de genre? » par « une personnes transgenre ou avec une identité de genre non-conforme ».

Je ne suis pas entré dans les chiffres précis lors de la présentation, mais plutôt simplement exposé quelques éléments saillants. En comparant les réponses de ces 135

répondant-es trans aux autres répondant-es cis LGB, on voit que les personnes trans interrogées :

- sont plus nombreuses à rechercher de l'information sur la santé via le Web et le font à une plus grande fréquence;
- ont tendance à privilégier des outils plus interactifs, comme les forums de discussion, les échanges de courriels avec des professionnel-les de la santé ou des intervenant-es communautaires, les blogues et les sites de réseautage;
- priorisent des thèmes de recherches en lien avec la transition (hormonothérapie, interventions chirurgicales, etc.);
- discutent plus de l'information trouvée avec des personnes de leur entourage, en ligne avec des inconnus ou avec des médecins, d'autres professionnel-les de la santé ou des intervenant-es communautaires;
- ont une satisfaction moins grande par rapport à l'information obtenue, jugée moins facile à trouver, moins sérieuse, moins crédible, moins exacte, moins complète et moins facile à comprendre.

On remarque également que malgré le manque de satisfaction quant à l'information trouvée, celle-ci a un impact similaire à ce qui est observé chez les LGB cis, voire plus élevé : elle a davantage modifié leur façon de penser sur leur identité de genre, leur orientation sexuelle et leurs relations interpersonnelles et sociales. Elle leur a également permis, plus qu'aux personnes cis, de poser de nouvelles questions à leurs professionnel-les de la santé ou d'obtenir une seconde opinion.

Cette recherche montre que les personnes trans sont d'importants utilisateurs de la e-médecine, qui appelle à une reconfiguration du lien entre médecin et patient en leur permettant de constituer leur propre expertise¹.

Un poster est disponible et un article est actuellement en rédaction, avec les détails des données. Cette recherche est utile aux communautés trans, car elle démontre qu'elles ont un grand besoin en ressources d'information concernant la santé trans disponibles sur Internet. Cette recherche va, par exemple, pouvoir servir de point d'appui à un organisme communautaire, afin de rédiger une demande de subvention pour développer un site internet en lien avec des professionnel-les de la santé et des intervenant-es communautaires en santé trans.

III. Conclusion

On remarque ces dernières années un développement important de la recherche trans à l'UQAM. De plus en plus d'étudiant-es s'intéressent à la question et mènent des recherches sur le sujet, et cela risque de continuer à évoluer dans ce sens. Pour terminer, il faut insister sur l'importance d'intégrer des personnes trans au sein des équipes de recherche LGBT et de mettre en place des mécanismes de consultations et de collaboration avec les organismes trans.

endnote

1. Hardey, M. (2004). « Internet et société : reconfiguration du patient et de la médecine ? », *Sciences sociales et santé*, vol. 22, no 1, p. 21-43.

study in action

STUDY IN ACTION is an undergraduate conference designed to link students and community activism. The conference is organized by a collective of students through QPIRG Concordia and happens every year in March. Study in Action seeks to foster ties between undergraduate students and the broader Montreal community in order to strengthen the spirit of social and environmental justice, promote undergraduate research, and emphasize links between the two.

Its vision is to provide an opportunity for students and people outside the academic community to come together to work on and discuss approaches to social justice, while creating a forum to highlight undergraduate research. The conference is a forum for students to engage in and present meaningful academic work that will benefit their communities as well as their academic experience and careers. Panel presentations showcasing undergraduate research provide students with the opportunity to present and develop their university work and direct its application to community issues.

With a hope of energizing both communities in question, the conference also seeks to create concrete links between grassroots organizations and undergraduate work by providing research and volunteer bases for community organizations to call on.

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art in action

ART IN ACTION is affiliated with STUDY IN ACTION and is also co-sponsored by QPIRG Concordia.

ART IN ACTION highlights creative student and community contributions related to social and environmental justice issues through diverse mediums including: drawing, painting, photography, performance, film & video, installation, music, spoken word, zine, collage, water colour, poster, and print.

www.qpirgconcordia.org/studyinaction/art
studyinaction@qpirgconcordia.org
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cure

The Community-University Research Exchange (CURE) is a database by which students can integrate their academic research with the work of local movements and activist organizations. Through the administrative infrastructures already in place at McGill and Concordia University, students may complete a CURE research project as an independent study course, internship, or thesis advised by a departmental professor, or as a term project for an upper-level class. By connecting students to non-profit community groups with limited resources, we hope to encourage and support academic research that is socially relevant.

The CURE program was initiated by the Study in Action organizing collective and QPIRG Concordia, following the second annual Study in Action Conference in April of 2008. The program was formed as a response to concrete research needs voiced by community groups lacking resources. Through CURE, we wish to channel the resources and privilege of the University towards groups working for social change, and to provide resources for students to perform relevant, action-oriented academic work. CURE operates on the principle that the University is an institution which maintains systems of privilege and oppression around race, class, and neocolonialism. By redirecting resources to groups and individuals in need of theory, information, and the energy to supply them, CURE encourages students to acknowledge their institutional advantage, and convert it into a useful tool for political action. We hope that by allowing students both to engage in anti-oppressive academic research, and to work with local movements for social change, CURE will begin to make rubble of the walls which enclose academic privilege.

www.curemontreal.org
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thank-you:

QPIRG mcgill & QPIRG concordia • those who offered time & skill • those who agreed to have their work published in this little journal <3 <3 <3

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a journal of undergraduate & community research

volume 3

