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Facing Canada: Portraits in Toronto  
Master of Arts Final Project Paper  
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Ryerson & York Universities  
September 4, 2007

## Abstract

This paper discusses *Facing Canada: Portraits in Toronto*. This project is both an investigation of the visual representation of culture and a methodological exploration of ways to visually speak out and speak together, in multiple collectivities, about: Canada, national identity, self-identification, belonging and multiculturalism. The photographs are at the nexus of a web of official and remembered histories that have been represented overwhelmingly through official or nationalistic imagery and through the (re) use of colonial, often ethnographic, photographs and stylistic conventions. The vehicles of this exploration are photographs and the photographic process. Moving beyond the usual photographer-subject relationship, I experiment with a photographic engagement that recognizes “subjects” as research partners whose contributions are integral to the content and impact of the resulting image.

## Introduction

Today, after generations of working toward the self-representation of culture through visual media, there remains much to rework and re-mobilize. Framed by Canada's history, "images... serve as 'windows' that routinely interpret social reality from a certain point of view as natural and normal while dismissing other interpretations as inappropriate" (Fleras & Kunz 2001, p.158). Drawing on colonial, ethnographic and war photography, contemporary photographic practice, cultural studies, visual anthropology and film studies, my project has two main objectives. The first objective is to produce photographs that contest the records of colonial/ethnographic and Victorian portraiture photography, while questioning the possibility of creating a sense of national identification, a unifying frame, in Canada today. Portraiture's history is embedded in European artistic traditions that cross over into the photographic practices of European colonialists.

My use of the term *frame* enacts a duality at work on the Canadian social landscape: the tension between the national, or nation building, and Canada's colonial history. I use it also to delineate the borders of a photographic image; I am asking about what can be contained within a frame, particularly one that seeks to imagine certain people in certain ways according to how or whether they are included in, or excluded from, a society. I apply the notion of a *frame* to the notion of a national context of societal unity and the existence of shared experiences in a geographically and culturally vast country like Canada. I likewise apply it in reference to the photographs in a parallel

inquiry into visualizing my project questions. The frame is therefore both a formal photographic tool as well as a discursive tool in my project.

The second objective is to create visual spaces akin to a temporary agora within which to discuss many of the issues relevant to daily life in a growing Canadian metropolis in order to foster new spaces, dialogue being the primary way in which to generate social reality. Following Elizabeth Edwards, throughout this project I have considered “[...] photographs in terms of the history within them and the histories around them: their historical refiguring” (Edwards 2001, p.86). I aim to produce images that are about unforgetting a collective Canadian history of colonialism and attempted assimilation, while producing narratives about a diversity of history through the photographs; I follow Lyotard’s argument that the idea of progress has decayed over the last two centuries, noting the victimization of less advantaged groups by a lack of development, as well as disputes over the groups to be emancipated. My project is a contribution to the *anamnesing*, or the unforgetting, that Lyotard proposes is possible in the postmodern, and to a continued opening up of physical and conceptual spaces, in the building and (re)production of Canadian society (145).

While the many topics that came up in the semi-structured interviews are integral to my analysis of the images, and relevant to multiculturalism, a detailed analysis of the interviews themselves is not contained in this paper. The interview data will be analyzed as part of a planned future project, while this paper concentrates on the process of image-making and the information expressed visually by research partners in the portrait photographs. Our informal discussions during the photo sessions paralleled the semi-structured interviews in content, as these areas of inquiry (national identity, self-

identification, belonging, and multiculturalism) were as much a part of the photographic process as the interview process. As with many projects, the depth and breadth of the interviews exceeded expectations and grew beyond the scope of this project. The interviews will be edited and selections used as oral accompaniment to the visual storytelling in a future exhibition.

In total, there were 25 research partners in my project. All but one agreed to be photographed. I chose to use the term “research partner” to indicate the participatory nature of the project and the necessity of the partnership into which each willingly entered. The term also references the contribution each made to the project and the integral part they each played. The research partners were of varying age, socioeconomic status and represented the following ethnic groups: Sikh, West African, Japanese, Aboriginal, Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, Indian, Jewish, Québécois, Caucasian, Armenian, Latin American, Indonesian, Russian, and Métis. Identification with and/or as Canadian was an identification most often in flux, hyphenated or notable for its non-presence.

Groups can be labeled national, ethnic, and/or cultural based on external appearance, whether skin colour, facial features or mode of dress, how English is spoken and with/without an accent, and which kind of accent this is if the listener(s) can locate it. This demonstrates both the fluidity and ambiguity involved in any categorization. Each category of identification could be further broken down along lines of gender, sexuality, age, class and so on. In fact, each research partner could have been represented by several racial and ethnic terms. While some had been born in Canada, many had been born

elsewhere and had come to Canada at various ages, for various reasons, whether theirs or their parents’.

Through my experimentation and image production, I sought to at least temporarily displace or suspend existing judgment and stereotypes surrounding certain types of images and image production by engaging with what Homi K. Bhabha calls “the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized) (Bhabha 2004, p.95). This further complicates the notion of representation within my project, and expands it to take into account the identification processes, the ongoing process of *othering*, and the use of stereotypes and/or myth that are at the core of colonial discourse (*ibid.* p.95). The dominant framework for the project is multiculturalism, and is an elaboration of Bhabha’s theory, as quoted above, while the photographs seek not only to reflect this material, they also to challenge it. Multiculturalism seems to be in harmony with the salvage approach to culture in so far as its very name is in recognition of the many cultures within Canada’s borders and the desire to have them co-exist. While outwardly the emphasis is on the detection, representation and inclusion of culture, it is also places the simultaneous salvaging and destruction that were enacted against many cultures, particularly the indigenous populations, during high imperialist expansion, outside the nationalist frame. The project seeks to complicate this notion of salvaging otherwise disappearing cultures, or those that would otherwise be assimilated or acculturated to such a degree as to be unrecognizable to those from home countries. Instead, it seeks to include a notion of survival, resilience and resistance to the implicit

neocolonial ideals within multiculturalism, and the existence and thriving of multiplicity in this social environment that has only recently begun to appear inclusive.

Research partners wear colonial style costume in the photographs in order to abstract their social bodies from time and place, while simultaneously referencing colonialism and the framing of colonialists in a particular way. The overwhelming majority of popular images, and certainly those that continue to be reproduced for popular consumption, such as the phone company advertisement featuring what I surmised were three Yanomamö from the Amazon jungle, are objectifying, images that were *taken*, in the most violent sense of the word. Portraiture with such costume and using minimal lighting adheres to the stylistic conventions of European portraiture in both painting and photography. However, while I began with poses, body language and gesture typical of the portraits I examined, I quickly became determined to bend these rules. I explored different ways to frame research partners and used perspectives unusual to portraiture in order to draw attention to the impossibility of imposing a one-size-fits-all frame to people, particularly in a multicultural context.

The images of world fairs and colonial exhibitions, books of Canadians and Canadiana, Victorian portraiture in painting and photography, early ethnographic photographs, old and new examples of self-representation by cultural groups in Canada, and the initial documentary photographs of war, were the historical ingredients that created the fermentation and eventual distillation of my photographic project (See for examples Coupland 2002, 2004; Edwards 1992, 2001; Karsh 1960, 1978; Kazimi 2005; Neel 1992; Maddow 1977; Moonsang 1999; and Modica 2003). This imagistic history and its continued presence catalyzed my own cultural production. I have always been

intrigued by the notion of the visual prosthesis, whether still or moving. I have often wondered where an image takes its audience, bound as it seems to be by a kind of voicelessness, an involuntary stillness, an entity outliving the intentions and very existence of its creator. Though seemingly still, the contents of an image are a moment captured, but the contents and contexts change, perhaps radically, over time. The photographs in this project are reflexive documents of this momentary capture, the literal freeze framing of people, places and time.

I locate colonial portraiture in the years during which imperialism and its ideals were wending their way through spaces believed uncharted by colonialists. As European expansion continued, photographic technology became adequately portable and was used to document the faraway places and the people the colonialists found living in them. These are particularly the years of world fairs and exhibitions, both in Europe and in the colonies. As Maxwell points out in her Preface, “the period from 1850 to 1915, sometimes known as the age of high imperialism, witnessed the birth of two types of mass-produced images of colonized peoples that were to have a powerful impact on the way in which non-westerners have been portrayed in twentieth-century popular culture” (Maxwell 1999, p.ix).

It was in 1851, the same year as the Great Exhibition, that the wet plate development process was introduced (Mathews 1974, p.20). This meant that photography was more portable than ever, and costs plummeted (*ibid.*). The Carte-de-Visite became popular, and photography was open to most people. As Mathews reports anecdotally, “it is told that [Napoleon] marching through Paris at the head of his troops who were en route for Italy, halted them outside [André] Disdéri’s studios (...) while he just popped in for his

likeness to be taken” (Mathews 1974, p.22). The popularization of cheap portraits and, later, the larger format, more expensive cabinet portraits, by the upper echelon of European societies cemented the portrait in the realm of the upper classes. Although access to the technology had increased, the portraits emulated European class ideals and ideology. The only images of non-Europeans in the book are a handful of quasi-ethnographic images, which maintain the stylistic conventions of European portraiture. A few of these images are also those of deliberate spectacle: a trio of small circus performers and a pair of male Siamese twins. The “truth” of these images must always be in doubt, however, for, as Mathews noted, all manner of backgrounds and props were employed by portrait photographers in order to convey as much or more about their subject than the subject themselves (1974, p.24).

Likewise, the history of ethnographic, particularly salvage, photography, is fraught with issues of manipulation and ideologically motivated representations of other cultures. As Maxwell notes in the caption to the reproduction of Edward Curtis’ photograph *American Navaho*, “Edward Curtis used wigs and other devices to mask any signs of adaptation that might hint at ‘inauthenticity’ in his Native American subjects, but in fact the costumes...were often made by Curtis himself, as the dancers were so nervous about having their ceremonies photographed that they refused to appear in clothing that had religious significance” (Maxwell 1999, 112). Crossing boundaries, forcibly reframing and overtly manipulating subjects to reinforce an imposed framework are legacies not only of colonial, ethnographic photography, but also of war photography. The tradition of war photography is the earliest photographic documentary tradition, with the first photographically documented war commonly listed as the Mexican-American War.

(1846-48). War photography, like the Victorian portrait and early ethnographic, colonialist photography, must be interrogated alongside collaborators *truth, authenticity, representation, identification and belonging*.

These interwoven traditions, of ethnographic and photojournalistic photography, are my project's catalysts: the combined legacy of Victorian portraiture and the documentation and representation of other/non-European cultures, the *taking* of photographs without permission and with ideological motivations and the framing of other peoples' bodies in abstraction. My project sought to visualize these histories through photography; their multiplicity and moments of overturn are indeed represented by contemporary and historic examples of photographic resistance (See for examples Modica 2003, Moonsang 1999, Neel 1992). Nonetheless, the majority of historic and contemporary portraiture of *us* and documentation of *them* maintains colonialist ways of looking, and thus reinforces that ideology despite a social milieu of multiculturalism.

My project focuses on the photographic representation of culture and the complicated dynamics national identity and multiculturalism in Canada in relation to its history of colonialism and photographic representation, and present reverberations of both. As Frosh and Wolfsfeld argue, "the construction of cumulative media representations of societies...are implicitly national: images and narratives of bounded social and territorial wholes in possession of distinctive characteristics. Taking this concept of the "imagined community" as my backdrop for juxtaposition, the images produced within the project are a cultural production, catalyzed by these topics and the simultaneously contiguous and conjoined constellations of (hi)stories and images enmeshed in Canadian society today (Anderson quoted in Frosh & Wolfsfeld 2007). The

*whiteness* in order to point out that it is not universal, as well as to point out what it has effected in the past (See for example Roediger 2006).

main objective of my project is to *make strange* that which is taken for granted (Erllich 1973, p.629). In other words, I approached issues of representation and belonging that are integrated into many peoples' lives in Toronto in a new way, from many angles, to get at lived experiences. I applied Shklovsky's Formalist concept of *making strange* to my photographic process in order to make visible negotiations and questions of representation, belonging, nationalism and multiculturalism that are like the air: they are experienced daily, yet must be approached differently in order to see differently that which is all around.

While I am not engaging in a formalist analysis, I am using this concept in order to distanciate readers from the image content and defamiliarize what is already familiar: portraiture, colonial dress, diversity in photographs. Through the re-framing of otherwise conventional or familiar subject matter, my photographs achieve a momentary slip between what is readily or already understood, and what must be *gotten to* or *worked towards* in the analysis of these images. It is essential for this process of questioning the notion of a national frame that defines Canada and what it means to be Canadian, and the parallel reworking of the formal frame and photographic elements, that a sense of strangeness be achieved. Each image therefore must reference Victorian portraiture while simultaneously engaging in disjunctive activity in the space between what a reader may expect, what is already accepted in portraiture, and what does not immediately add up.

I approached my photographic practice cognizant of my symbolic position as a self-identified white<sup>1</sup> person taking pictures in order to represent a moment in social time, and a moment when the very notion of culture is in flux alongside so many bodies across

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<sup>1</sup> I use this term with reference to critical race studies that have theorized the necessity of recognizing *whiteness* in order to point out that is *not* universal, as well as to point out what it has effaced in the past (See for example Roediger 2006).

the world. My engagement with research partners was such that they contributed not only their physical (and thus social) body to the image-making process, but they also had the freedom to respond to the queries I made about how to represent Canadian identity and their own cultural identity in a gesture, posture or facial expression. Canadian identity refers to questions of who gets labeled Canadian, who considers themselves Canadian, and how this mix and flux of identities can be represented in photographs. This process was instructive for me as a researcher; I found myself leaving more up to the partner while maintaining the basic framework for the sake of a certain level of consistency. This meant that I would explain the project in the same way, picking out relevant points about how photographs were used and by whom to represent those who were considered different, non-white, inferior, unusual etc. However, partners could choose to bring objects or apparel, and their responses to my queries about embodying identity were certainly not limited by anything other than their own ideas.

### **What is the project?**

The project's questions are as follows:

1. How can portraiture be utilized as an expressive medium for individuals with unconventional, unrecognized, unofficial or multiple (self) identifications?
2. Can portraiture be used to reframe conventional forms of colonial and ethnographic photography and by extension, the way its subjects identities are located within a larger national frame?

3. How can portraiture be used as a tool of distancing to draw attention to the limitations of the frame—both national and photographic—as well as to the continued difficulties and contradictions of building national identity in an era of multiculturalism and mass trans-global movements of people?

This project is a collection of portraits of people living in Toronto today. The photographs are an exploration of the questions listed above. The questions are concerned with Canada as a nation state growing largely as a result of continued and expanded immigration. Toronto stands in for Canada not only because of the popular myth of Toronto being the country's cultural centre, but also because it is popularly known as Canada's most multicultural city, and its largest. These features combine to create an epicenter from which reverberate the economic and socio-cultural implications of (im)migration and the myriad fluctuations that come with the global mass movement of people. Toronto has particular qualities that symbolize, and mythologize, the issues everyone living in Canada faces to varying degrees. This is due to the quantity of people living in and moving into Toronto. While I recognize that Toronto is not the centre of Canada, geographically or culturally, it remains a microcosm of global forces that are changing the scapes of many countries including Canada. This city provides the density and proximity that are both requirements and catalysts for my project. I also recognize that different parts of Canada face different sets of issues. Canada is geographically vast and with this comes a dispersion of people into many smaller communities, and the issues they face are evidently different than many urban concerns. However, my project is

focused on the phenomenon of cultural proximity and/or mixing—now officially named multiculturalism—, which is seen most obviously in Canada’s urban centers.

Research partners were invited to contribute their perspectives on multiculturalism, perceptions about language and the visualization of cultural identity in relation to how to constitute and construct a nation state that has always been a nation of nations. The photographs of each research partner are meant to stand as contemporary portrait photographs that reference Victorian portraiture in both paint and film. The costumes are reflective of Victorian modes of dress (See for example Maddow 1977). Research partners are costumed in order that their bodies, and thus their identities, are dislocated from contemporary time and place. While many people do not wear culturally specific clothing in their daily lives, wearing Victorian clothing draws attention to inter-research partner differences, to colonial portraiture and ethnographic photography, as well as to ongoing contributions to the neo-colonial imag(in)ing of Canadians that excludes many and visualizes cultural “diversity” in particular ways. The images embody questions about who is included within the national frame, who visualizes whom as Canadian, how visualizations of Canada have been constructed in particular ways about particular groups, and the negotiations between Canada’s public multicultural image and its multicultural realities. My project is a parody of these forms of photographic representation.

I investigated and aimed to de/reconstruct notions of multiculturalism, how social bodies can be read or misread through and in photographs, and the limitations and possibilities of photography as historical record. My exploration is embedded in my experiences with archival photographs, and particularly ethnographic and colonial

photography (Brown 1972, Chaudhary 2005, Edwards 1992, Maxwell 1999, and Silversides 1994). As such, this project aims to challenge the established methods of anthropology and image production, and the continued trend in anthropology to examine the *other*<sup>2</sup>, the exotic, rather than an anthropologist examining a socio-cultural environment in which they live or to which they are proximate, but may not otherwise move through. Instead of continuing to examine oppressed, marginalized or exoticized *others*, I aim to contribute to the fields of anthropology, cultural studies and photography using methods drawn from all three. I recognize and am motivated in part by movements within anthropology and other disciplines within the social sciences and humanities (See for examples Stewart 1996, Tanaka et al. 2005), to work with and alongside research partners, rather than approaching their study counterparts as subjects in a top-down, unequal power relationship.

Fabian's concept of *coevalness* underlies my methodological approach (2002, p.30, emphasis in original). His concept of the coeval and the simultaneity of communication define my photographic and interview processes—in short, the way I approach my questions as well as the research partners: in a way that recognizes coevalness, our mutual embeddednesses in the communicative web, which is now global and simultaneous. Though I reference the past, and the possibility of certain broad commonalities of experience in the past, the concept of history and myth are interrogated rather than reinforced. Instead of attempting to achieve distance, and therefore any sense

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<sup>2</sup> My use of the terms *other*, *otherness*, and *othering* are referencing colonial discourse and the constant (re)negotiations and (re)articulations of identifications, both verbally and visually (see Bhabha 2004, Hall 1997).

of objectivity, by placing time and space between any of the questions or people involved, I am informed by Fabian's concept of *Intersubjective Time* and the synchronicity of experience, widely divergent as it can be (2002, p.31, emphasis in original).

As the researcher, I was speaking *with* research partners, working in recognition and production of coevalness in the research process. Rather than creating an object of anthropology, a subject of inquiry, my methodological orientation is one of mutual participation and creation of a dialogue that is at once productive and indicative of change. Reality is constituted by the way people talk about things; dialogue is of utmost importance in the constitution of *the way things are* as well as in shifting and altering them. Through this process I aim to achieve a leveling or consensus in the research process. Given the presence and agenda of any researcher, it would be difficult if not impossible in any research context to entirely level power relations. Nonetheless, in my engagement with research partners I focus on the mutual importance of asking and answering when any question is asked.

The portraits are also an interrogation of photography that represents Canadians, as well as ethnographic, colonial photography more generally, in relation to who was or was not represented, who was doing the representing in Canada's past, and the stylistic conventions to which various types of photography adhered. Contemporary photographic production has most often continued to represent Canada and Canadians in particular ways, as exemplified by the books of portraiture I referenced earlier in this paper and the contrast between research partners' embodiments of national identity and their own self-represented cultural identity in gesture, pose and expression.

Method Based on my engagement with research partners, national identity and cultural identity are not synonymous in Canada today. Citizenship, in its official capacity, appears to play a small role in identification next to the role of culture and a sense of global belonging. Research partners' ideas about what represents a Canadian, and their attachment to a nation in terms of citizenship, were much more fluid and fragmented than I had expected. National identity was often not considered; the majority of researching partners focused on identifying spaces and experiences that constitute their self-identification or to which they feel a nationalistic attachment or sense of duty.

While research partners were unified in their impressions of Canada's goals as a country, including a right to a life of betterment and allowance of all cultures to practice, they acknowledged the challenges of reaching them. Furthermore, research partners were emphatic that, regardless of reaching any of the multiple goals or descriptions about Canada and Canadian society including those pertaining to tolerance, acceptance, welfare, and health care, life in Canada was simply better than in many places in the world. They agreed it is imperfect, but noted that policies that seem focused on building equality, such as multiculturalism, are in place.

## **Methodological Approach: Truth, History & Photographic Documentation**

Issues of truth and documentation are at the core of photography's history. These are not only issues of documenting, or salvaging, something that would otherwise potentially disappear, but also of visual manipulation, framing and representation—of other cultures, victims of war, those facing colonial forces and the dead. A brief historical overview of war photography makes evident that the supposed truth or objectivity of the earliest documentary photographs, those of war, were often manipulated by photographers to further an ideological argument. Aside from overt manipulation of the photographic content, such images are framed according to the ideological orientation of the image-maker. It is with this awareness, of historic photographic manipulation and ideologically motivated construction, that I approach my photographic practice. The following demonstrates that even at the beginning of what would become a visual age, representation was political.

Many early war photographers manipulated their subjects before the shutter clicked. While manipulation can occur in more subtle ways, these examples highlight the precedent setting actions of early war photographers. These examples are important in recognizing the conscious manipulating of truth-value for ideological purposes in photography, as a human being with culturally informed subjectivities is responsible for every photograph's existence. They are also instrumental in the argument of continued subjectivity, manipulation and cultural biases and judgments tinting and framing photography produced of others—whether victims of war, or those negotiating the imposition of neo-colonialist practices. Photojournalistic images, and ethnographic

documentary images, while officially recording fact and “real life” events in a timely and objective manner, are unofficial messengers of cultural ideology, mores, tropes, and thus ideas about deserving subjects<sup>3</sup>.

Felice Beato was the first photographer to take pictures of the dead, during the Third Opium War fought by the French and the British against China in 1860, while the American photographer Mathew Brady is commonly referred to as the first professional war photographer (Keegan in Knightley 2003, p.7). He assembled a team to photograph the American Civil War (1861-65). Brady often rearranged his subjects, moving bodies and weaponry for his shots (*ibid.* p.7). Likewise, Beato’s photographs of the Sepoy revolt of 1857-58 against the British in the Punjab were taken five months after the conflict, and after Beato had exhumed many of the dead and strewn them about in the vicinity of where the battle took place (Chaudhary 2005, p.68).

Soviet photographer Dmitri Baltermants, photographing The Great Patriot War (1941-45), altered his photographs in order to create more emotional impact on the viewer (Von Laue and Von Laue 1996, pp.55-56). For example, he darkened the sky in his photograph entitled “Grief (The Dead Won’t Let Us Forget)”, taken in January 1942. It is a striking image of a flat countryside strewn with bodies, their survivors bent over them and looking at the scene in various poses. The Soviet government censored many of his photographs. His photograph, entitled “On the Road to War, Smolensk Front, 1941”, was banned from publication because it showed a Soviet soldier lying dead on a dirt road

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Deserving subject’ makes reference to feminist theorists who argue that the deserving subject in Western societies is the heterosexual, white, middle-class, and Christian male. This means that every time we see images of ‘non-white’ (often referred to in terms of what they are not) people in situations of war, they are doubly victimized in photographs which portray them, using a subjective sense of what constitutes a ‘powerful’ ‘news’ image, as ‘Others’ and as victims (see Hamilton 2005, Crow & Gotell 2005).

in the countryside and “the Soviet government did not want the public to see the great extent of destruction and death (*ibid.* pp.55-56).

However, such strict conventions have not always been in place. Regardless of whatever rules were in place at the time, the photography of other cultures by anthropologists, photojournalists, adventurers—imperialists—was motivated by documentation and discovery, and underwritten by colonialist attitudes about *others* (Chaudhary 2005, Edwards 1992, Maxwell 1999). As Taylor argues, “photography is everywhere in the service of the fable, enabling its transportation to the real” (Taylor 1991, p.165). This means that photographs cannot and do not simply trade in reality, for reasons beyond their potential manual or digital alteration. Wherever they are published, photographs continue to support ideologies, and these ideologies trade on stereotypes and mythic elements in a society (*ibid.*, p.165).

As the above examples illustrate, whether film or digital, the concept of an objective photographic truth is impossible given the myriad interventions and choices involved in the production and publication of an image. The way in which an image is framed is significant in how it will be read. Elementally, it determines what is included or excluded. In my project photographs, I place each research partner within a photographic frame, while seeking their engagement in the production of self-representation that troubles and holds in tension the concept of a national, and thus societal, frame. By doing so and having them wear Victorian costume, I am asking questions about what, historically, has or has not been included in the frame, who was photographed how and by whom, and what aspects of identification lie beyond the frame, or were previously excluded by hegemonic image-making/photo-taking practices. This project was not about

keeping the frame tight, but recognizing its construction and the way in which it has been used to bind and represent in certain ways. If anything, this project is about loosening the frame in order to see what lies within and beyond its arbitrary, ideologically driven, placement.

In addition, the psycho-cultural interventions that occur in the mind of the photographer are of equal importance in the process of taking a photograph. Photographs travel a long journey from their pre-existence in a photographer's presence at the scene, whether embedded in armed forces, working freelance and hoping to sell the image, working for a syndicated news corporation, to their decision about which photographs to take, to censorship by governments, all the way to the pages of a newspaper, or a computer screen. While technology changes, perhaps the motivations for certain modes of representation do not. Nonetheless, as technology has changed over time, alongside conceptual and physical social movements, so too has the critical reflexivity of image-makers and of image consumers. The use of technology, and often its development, is motivated by the society that bears it. Photography was considered a tool for capturing reality and, in European societies in the midst of imperialist expansion, was used to document the cultures they encountered abroad. At home, the portrait became popular alongside early photojournalism. Following the development of portable photographic technology, cameras became ubiquitous on battlefields around the world and indeed the most insidious battles were fought with cameras, not guns.

Whatever kind of violence is depicted through an image, "the understanding of war among people who have not experienced war is now chiefly a product of the impact of these images" (Sontag 2003, p.21). According to Christopher Pinney, there are two

colonialist photographic paradigms: “salvage” and “detective” (Pinney in Chaudhary 2005, p.78). Anthropological photography and war photography each fell into one of these two paradigms, and either mode of photography was simply “war by other means” (Chaudhary 2005, p.77). Many anthropologists sought to document what were considered to be “disappearing cultures” put at risk by imperialism and colonialism—by invasion, genocide and attempts at assimilation and indoctrination. The detective paradigm is akin to documentary photography; a photographer working in this paradigm seeks out and reports on events and the world around them. The expression “taking a photograph” is indicative of what has often been a violent interaction between photographer and subject, an invasive and ideologically forceful interaction, evident in many of the images that result. My project seeks to reference this record of behaviour and practice, while also consciously moving away from, perhaps beyond, the salvage method of image production in favour of an engaged practice in which the *subjects* are *research partners*, consciously engaging with the image-making process.

The detail images of research partners’ hands refer to the abstraction of the body from context in much colonialist, ethnographic “portraiture”. They represent a further opening of the frame, though a surface analysis might suggest that the frame is actually more tightly placed. However, these images are detached from their surrounding signifiers and become floating signs. Abstracting hands from bodies allows space for the hands themselves to become expressive elements. Their positioning as centred content of each image in this series draws attention to the inclusion, exclusion and the placement of significance in a photograph. The need to draw understanding from, and to make sense of, the world is perhaps a universal human instinct. Removing all but certain elements

from an image pares this process down to its basic elements, further concentrating the elements of photography and representation questioned in my project. With less information within the frame, the image is bound yet freer; without a reader drawing on socially supported ways of looking, these images require a distinct way of reading that cannot be as readily passive as it could be if the reader were saturated with information. Meaning, then, becomes more ambiguous with the first glance at the images in this series. However, their purpose is to further the questioning of the frame, of the representation of culture and national ideology in photography. These images unbind the social body from its constraints within a frame, instead providing space in an image whose content appears uncomplicated.

Informing my methodological practice is Bhabha's argument that "it is the public sphere of language and action that must become at once the theatre and the screen for the manifestation of the capacities of human agency" (2000, p.205). These communicative spaces and events are where the political nature of history is most visible. As the signs are (re) negotiated and used in different times and cultural spaces by diverse agents, it becomes clear that language, as a symbolic system, is not relegated to the page. Any language, as a symbolic system, possesses an ever-changing lexicon, and includes oral and visual texts, as much as any written texts. The questions and embodiments I asked of research partners were motivated by this concept of the "public sphere of language", and engaging in conversation with research partners was in and of itself a demonstration of this human agency. While the project is small it has tremendous potential to grow through every connection made with the research partners, and the connections the images and text will make in the future with new audiences.

Research partners were cognizant of how complicated identities are. Changes in identity were contingent not necessarily upon any changed ideas within a person, but rather upon changes in their environment, or shifts in the cultural groups around them. Not every research partner interviewed self-identified as Canadian. Rather than a strictly hyphenated identity I had come to expect, research partners responded in much more ambivalent terms. Interestingly, some respondents thought that birthright was necessary to be considered a true Canadian. Without being born here, they suggested, a person would always be from somewhere else, partially Canadian and partially something else. In other cases, regardless of the country of birth, research partners explained that their life experiences made them global citizens. Although they wanted to avoid the cliché, they felt more a part of a global community than loyal to Canadian society as a bound entity.

While the narratives I collected are partial, they are personal, intimate accounts of individual's experiences with living, working, speaking and being in Canada. By starting with basic questions about language and provenance, and moving forward through space and time, the interviews become metaphors for Canada's history as a colonial nation state as well as the trajectory of a person's life. Though this relies on a linear notion of time and even movement through space, the combination of issues and the non-linearity of life experience serve to create a web rather than a path within each interview, and within each image. They become puzzles rather than lifelines; they are fragments, figments and folds of fabric instead of files, accounts and facts.

I included a few questions on gender and sexuality as an addendum to my interviews. I did so because I hoped to include some discussion on these topics in relation to cultural (mis)interpretations and photographic representation of them, but I quickly

realized this area of inquiry was beyond the scope of this project. I therefore utilized the responses as a preliminary sounding board of this topic. The research partners who responded to my query about this topic agreed that this was an interesting project idea and important area of inquiry given the prevalence of all manner of cultural misinterpretations and stereotypes.

### **The Photograph as Historical Prosthesis**

This section is concerned with the potential for photographs to act as historical prosthesis, extending a person's memory to times and events they did not experience firsthand. It discusses re-imag(in)ing colonial, ethnographic photography of *othered* peoples, *documented* as specimens, bodies, and the almost-disappeared, deserved of salvaging through the portraits that are simultaneously referential and new. A prosthesis is a construction and a tool; so, too, are the portraits of this project. Robert Burgoyne's argument about film as an embodiment of Alison Landsberg's term *prosthetic memory* can be extended to photography as a visual medium used to document and reinvent our own histories and the histories of those photographed (Landsberg in Burgoyne 1997, p.105). This concept is integral to my project's involvement in the construction of identity and history through images in order "to describe the way mass cultural technologies of memory enable individuals to experience, as if they were memories, events through which they themselves did not live" (*ibid.* p.105). As a result of consuming, and experiencing, these *prosthetic memories* as they circulate through Western societies' occularcentric channels of communication, limbs detached, uprooted

like plants, and transplanted into other earths that receive them, where they join new environments (transformed by their voyage through time and space) whose inhabitants understand them, differently (Marks 2000).

WJ Mitchell's concept of the "perceptual prosthesis" has become a companion concept to Burgoyne's. He identifies the role of photography in the representation not only of the past, but also of something that is unlike whomever the perceiver may be (Mitchell 1992, p.28). It acts as an extension into something otherwise unseen or unknown, let alone understood. A photograph not only speaks through time, echoing erratically as its voice tends to do, but also through and from spaces that might otherwise remain strange or estranged, dislocated and apart. In utilizing the stylistic conventions of Victorian-era, colonial portraiture, I referenced not only the time when such pictures were taken, but also the spaces in which such portraits were made.

I asked research partners to create a visual embodiment of their cultural identity, and of Canada's. They verbalized these identifications with catch phrases, nicknames and the labels applied to their social bodies by external social (mis)readers. The photographs revealed a distrust of the camera, and only through conversation during the photographic process did it become clear that many of the partners considered many of the labels that had been applied to them, based on their appearance and others' desire to categorize them tidily, to be incorrect. The categories are not one-size-fits-all, their borders are not sealed, and the eye may not be accurate. For example, one young female research partner was born in Korea, and grew up in Bolivia where she was called *Little Chinese Girl* in Spanish. When she moved to Canada, she didn't speak English. Once she learned English, nobody could place her accent. Inflections of Spanish and Korean remain in her

English today. She is now a Canadian, but carries with her both the memories of being elsewhere, as well as people's continued difficulty at labeling her cultural identity, unable as they are to categorize her based on appearance, accent or mode of dress.

This project increased in significance to me as I began to explore Canadian and colonial portraiture. The way in which Canada has historically been conceptualized photographically corresponds with the colonialist ideals upon which the country was founded. Its inhabitants have been photographed in ways that reinforce the colonial invasion and the social hierarchy the colonialists imported and upon which Canadian society is founded. This means that historical portraits of Aboriginal peoples are those of exoticization, and those of non-European peoples are most often absent if they are not produced from within a community. The portraits that follow Victorian painting aesthetic conventions are of white people while what stand as ethnographic images of other cultures taken for anthropometric study, documentation of disappearing cultures or as a record of world fairs and exhibitions are of members of non-white cultures (See for examples Maxwell 1999, Lamb 1971, MacLennan 1967, Maddow 1977, Pouliot 1992, Silversides 1994). This established the backdrop against which my photographic production would stand. However, there are recent examples of work being done to visualize Canada's cultural communities in ways that break, or have historically broken, with colonial imagery.

Some of these works mimic colonial practices of looking yet they complicate the gaze by being cultural products from within otherwise marginalized cultural groups in Canada, recognizing that current borders are the result of wars between colonial powers. One of the first and most famous is *The North American Indians* by Edward S. Curtis,

portraits taken in the early 1900s to document what was conceptualized as a disappearing way of life (Brown 1972). The questions that needed to be asked were why such cultures were supposedly disappearing, and what, aside from taking pictures, acts of salvage, could be done about it. Of extreme importance would have been to speak *with* these peoples and work together to counteract the forces working against them, if only to innovate within the parameters that had been set by colonial territorial take over and genocide.

If the photographers were not European, they were colonialists working most often from an American perspective, though Canada is often mentioned and some volumes are dedicated both to the early Canadian landscape and some of its peoples. However, there are examples of the internalizing of portraiture conventions, and contemporary imaging practices that resist the hegemonic imaging of non-colonialist cultures. For example, Faith Moonsang's book *First Son* reveals historical portraiture of members of the Chinese-Canadian community taken by a Chinese-Canadian photographer. Andrea Modica's book *Real Indians: Portraits of Contemporary Native Americans and America's Tribal Colleges* is another example of visualizing members of a culture from within while utilizing the traditional conventions of portraiture. David Neel produced a book, *Chiefs and Elders: Words and Photographs of Native Leaders*, in order to show the contributions native people have made to Canada and to their people, and to visualize them in a narrative context that demonstrates the respect and importance their people accord them. These examples stand in contrast to the repetitive content of Euro-colonial visualizations of Canada. They do so by a shift in convention, showing Aboriginal peoples in a spectrum of occupations and modes of dress. They are alive and

living culture, not hunting or dressed traditionally; they are not frozen in time, static, images salvaging and recording disappearing cultures. Their cultures have not disappeared and these images are a testament not only to their continued vitality but also to their change and dynamism. These are examples of self-representation and the use of photography to picture culture in an emic way. These books are an example of a shift in conventions, utilizing portraiture in a resistive way that moves away from the historical essentialism and exoticization of non-European photographic subjects.

The data in my project, if it were to be framed as such, are the photographs. It wasn't collected in the traditional sense so much as produced, born of the engagement between myself, photographer-researcher, and the research partners. The photographs evidently were also produced by the research partners themselves and the agency they exercised during their participation in the project. The following is a discussion of the complexities of photographic production, and the theory that informs my methodology. However, the data cannot be analyzed solely by the producer. The photographs will be analyzed by the audiences, or readers, who will encounter them in the future. Reading an image involves a dual process of project and reception. The reader receives information about the image content, able to receive that which is part of their frame of reference, while projecting this frame upon the image.

Marcus Banks emphasizes the complexity of image production, how images are read and thus how meanings are attributed to them. He explains that "while the materiality of the visual object is important, so too are the technologies for the production, dissemination and viewing of the object. Anthropologists are well aware that there are no socially neutral technologies—all are embedded in complex historical, social

and ideological frameworks (hence the fallacy of the ‘invisible camera’ (...))” (Banks in Prosser 1998, p.19). What has been taken from people, photographed by those seeking to document, study or supposedly “salvage” what remains of a culture they have damaged, can only be partially symbolized by the scrutiny and invasion these images represent. My images stand as after effects, as visualizations of socio-temporal reverberations, past into the present. The faces are moments of opacity and complication in the undulating forces of time and space, simultaneously dividing us and bringing us face to face with a varied yet collective history of histories, a handful of which are represented in the faces in my photographs. My photographic production fits into the documentary tradition in so far as these images are recording a moment in Canadian history. However, their premise of re-framing and drawing attention to the ways in which photographic subjects were framed and forcefully identified historically, distinguishes them both from documentary and colonial ethnographic photographic traditions.

## Categories & Identification: Applying the Linguistic to the Visual

Images of Canadian landscape and its inhabitants have historically been about reproducing stereotypes and utilizing images to create a carefully crafted vision of Canada. Such images were used to advertise Canada to Europeans in immigrant recruitment efforts. Today, many images continue to be used to create an image of Canada; new specters of togetherness simultaneously reference and cast into shadow the history of such imaging and the colonial foundation of such nation building image production. Visual persuasion is incredibly effective; the ubiquity of images in every area of life, particularly in Western nation states, attests to this. While variations on a theme continue to be reproduced, and while this may appear to leave little space for counter-narratives, the reality is that as visual saturation has increased so has the ability to produce visual counter-narratives. My project seeks to resist and turn a critical eye on the hegemonic practices of representation so often utilized to create a sense of belonging or identification with a national (in this case *a state*) entity by engaging in a self-reflexive and collaborative photographic and interview relationship with research partners. Not only that, but the images and dialogue produced critically discussed and asked questions about these issues, thereby not only foregrounding them, but producing texts from this investigation.

It has often been the case that those in power can maintain the construction of difference through representation. Powerful groups often reinforce the categories that benefit them, and thus the state, at the expense of *others* (Bhabha 2004, Hall 1997). Examples of how the state benefits economically at the expense of *others* include the

Live-In Caregiver program wherein Citizenship and Immigration Canada brought in mostly Filipina women to work, without benefits, security, or the protection of unions, as domestics for wealthy, white Canadians (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007). Nonetheless, the program was publicized as a way for these women to have better lives. Another example is the disproportionate poverty rate among Aboriginal peoples (York 1990). The media also routinely “miscasts” groups and individuals whom Fleras and Kunz (2001) call minorities. They argue “news casting continues to frame minorities as people who are a problem, who create problems, or who pose a threat to Canadian values” (p.66). While the notions of so-called minority and nationalist and neocolonial discourses that underlie the concept of Canadian values are complicated to articulate, the news media are one example of the public, popular representation of *othered* cultural groups by powerful factions.

As several scholars, including Hamilton (2005) and Fleras & Kunz (2001), have pointed out, Canadian immigration policy remains racist and discriminates against women, people with disabilities and those with less economic potential, as defined by the state, while immigration issues in the media are most often represented as being the fault of those seeking entry into Canada. This Western ethnocentrism devalues other educational and economic systems in favour of its own, while simultaneously attracting immigrants based on images, in word, in mind, in the visual, that presents an ordered, appealing social totality. The shared cultural *heritage* of Canada’s founders is considered to be the foundation of what is currently the Canadian nation state. The transposition of the dominant culture’s characteristics onto a social and national stage is rooted in colonial

power relations, and continues to divide Canada along lines of race and so-called ethnicity.<sup>4</sup>

Ethnicity is another problematic category, not only because it reproduces the white/non-white binary, but also because many cultural groups that continue to be defined as “ethnic minorities”, such as black Canadians, do not constitute a minority in terms of numerical presence or in terms of how long they have been in Canada. Like questions of belonging and generational claim to national identity, the question here returns to time: *how long does a citizen’s history have to be in order to be considered Canadian?* There are all kinds of caveats and restrictions that come along with officially bestowed citizenship. Not only that, but time as a tool of reaching objectivity and distance between that which must be analyzed and examined as Fabian (2002, p.30) argues, functions in a similarly powerful and scrutinizing way in the case of immigration and achieving official belonging. A subjective sense of belonging is certainly never bestowed and is achieved by perhaps even more complicated means.

While I did not refer specifically to the postmodern era in the interviews I conducted, it underlies the very concept of multiculturalism. This shift towards the plural and away from mono-narratives, for example the glossing of multiple identifications as one, is reflected in this mode of society building. The narratives I collected are certainly intertexts, whose complexity was expressed by research partners themselves. Weaving their stories from many social and cultural experiences, sidestepping official multiculturalism and its pitfalls for a moment, the research partners in my project all produced narratives that were by their very nature inter-textual, demonstrating points of

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to erase the cultural diversity found between European countries. However, in this “New World” context, the differences have converged sufficiently to create a societal union based on similarity, rather than difference.

hybridity, synthesis, and social polysemy. Here, social polysemy refers to social becomings: differing perspectives and analyses of Canadian society itself as well as the fragmented, enfolding production of identities and cultural spaces. I asked research partners to visualize a Canadian and describe whom they saw. Reflecting their own pastiche identifications, many of the research partners responded that they picture anybody when they picture a Canadian. Some didn't know how to respond, and others said the image was still a white male.

If language, as a linked system of written, oral, and visual texts, is culturally born and sustained, when one system encounters another, or many others simultaneously, it logically follows that renegotiations will occur as each symbolic constellation is received. The separation of the social and the cultural here is crucial for the advancement of this argument, and for the progression of this causal chain towards a nuanced, complicated understanding of the processes at work in a multicultural society, and a globalizing world. In his discussion of the postmodern and the postcolonial, Bhabha references Hall's use of "the linguistic sign as a metaphor for a more differential and contingent logic of ideology" in reference to the multifarious nature of any ideological sign, as well as its redefinition in different contexts of (re) production and reception (Bhabha in During 2000, 194). I have drawn on Bhabha's explanation of this metaphor, that it "raises the question of cultural difference and incommensurability, not the consensual, ethnocentric notion of the pluralistic existence of cultural diversity" (2000, p.195). In this conceptualization of language, and thus of symbolic representation, the past is not something officially described as history, but something that can be used to disrupt the present. An extension of language as metaphor to the visual is not farfetched today, when

much of our information is written from centralized media sources, and comes to us, the audience, often in oral and visual forms.

Canadian society is a space of contrast and multiplicity. The liminality that results within this disjunctive space is productive and necessary for what Bhabha terms a “politics of cultural difference” (Bhabha in During 2000, p.195). My project engages in the opening up of new identification processes, for symbolic redefinition, both linguistically and visually, follow from the deconstruction of binary oppositions, a Western, structuralist project that defined the Other against itself as inferior, using negative, connotative language. While I do not subscribe to the position that the current era is postcolonial, this brand of criticism, and likewise my image production, operates in “contingent and liminal times and spaces” that “confuse the continuity of historical temporalities, confound the ordering of cultural symbols, traumatize tradition” (*ibid.* p.196).

Bhabha notes that the language metaphor is itself paradoxical because it operates in a liminal space, which is precisely what makes it productive. In order to interrogate the very scaffolding of an ideological, and hyper-cultural perspective, words must be gotten between in order to see them at every angle and interrogate their uses and their impacts. These concepts, drawn from postcolonial theorizing, mirrored the experiences expressed by research partners in our discussions of living in Canada today. Their responses to my questions during the photographic and interview sessions indicated a negotiation between official and inherited meanings of what it is to be Canadian, who a Canadian is, and the tensions between being spoken about and speaking for oneself. The photographs visualize the absence of a national language in so far as self-identifications—hyphenated,

multiple, layered and complex—abound in Canada today regardless of representations and narratives that purport to be national and unifying. Belonging is negotiated and claimed amidst fluctuation and neocolonialism; the photographs in this project are intended represent this unique situation in Canada today.

### **No Room for Binaries: Multiculturalism & Belonging**

In anthropological theory, Claude Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists theorized that the creation of binary oppositions structure the way a cultural or social group engages with the world (Hall 1997, p.236). One half of a binary opposition is always the sacred; the other side is the profane, that which is weaker, inferior, or even evil. This theory of binary identification is not longer useful in discussing and conceptualizing culture in Canada today. Rather than reproducing a white/non-white binary, my project resists the conventional binary national discourse and instead engages in contestation in recognition of the shifting fields of power and meaning that are always in operation in the social. While limitations of time and space have curtailed my exploration into this sub-topic in particular, it remains a point for future investigation. Mary Douglas (1966) used functionalist theory to examine the ways in which cultural categories govern the ways in which cultures, and entire societies, see the world. This means that one identification relies on its counterpart. The result is negative identification that defines something by what it is not. Canadian identity functions both negatively and through essentializing what constitutes Canadian identity.

Those that do not fit into existing categories of positive identification or refuse to accept being named by those outside *their* culture are seen as inferior and potentially threatening to the social order. Since they are inferior, they can be used and mistreated, and because they are potentially uncategorizable and uncontrollable, the state oppresses them in name of social cohesion. In Canada, this has meant that Aboriginal, Inuit, Chinese, African and Indian people, among others, continue to be used as scapegoats for Canada's problems. This faulty logic fails to acknowledge the underlying systemic inequalities that structure (dis)advantage and race relations in Canada today.

My project photographs represent the way in which difference and history have been visually omitted or set outside the frame, by placing people and gesture in contrast with costume and stylistic convention. The engagement with research partners in a dialogue of critical investigation is action in and of itself. Additionally, participation increased the awareness of many issues, while also holding the potential to produce and collect these conversations as an archive, thereby contributing to and perhaps producing discourses of complexity and resistance.

It became increasingly clear to me over the course of my project that the contours of national belonging and identification are not remotely binary. They are complex and self-complicating, with individuals operating in networks of identification with permeable borders. Rather than a linear, fixed set of identifications, individuals both in appearance and experience self-identify their membership or affiliation with multiple socio-cultural spaces.

The contours of national belonging and identification are informed by a logic much more complex than binary oppositions and functional analysis. To begin, it is worth

questioning whether Canada, as a liberal majoritarian state, could take on a predatory identity, as defined by Appadurai (2006), as globalization progresses. The ingredients for both the development of predatory identities and the mobilization of what Appadurai calls “small numbers” or minorities are certainly at work in Canada today (2006, p.53). However, it remains to be seen what long term effects constitutional multiculturalism, as ethos and law, will have on these various factions and potentialities for conflict in this country. Nonetheless, the continued tensions surrounding identity, identification, and nationhood will certainly continue alongside globalization and its many effects: economic, material, and cultural.

Canada is founded on a defined unity of nationalist ethnos—British, and the sub-national French. I use the affix *sub* in recognition of the colonial discourse upon which Canada is also founded, if not explicitly centered. By critically engaging this discourse, one that Bhabha argues is “crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization” (2004, p.96), my project aimed to produce not only critical images, but also a critical dialogue that resists and contributes to the dominant discourse of multiculturalism as well as the many discourses that run through and all around it.

In relation to the tensions that exist in countries housing more than one nation, Appadurai notes the threat small numbers pose to the dominant majority as well as the mutual dependence of such simplistic identifications. First, there is circularity in the identification and constitution of a so-called minority, arguing that simplistic binary contrast has generally been the process by which what Appadurai calls “we” identities are constituted and consolidated (2006, p.50). The circularity of the identification of

minorities, or small numbers, and their conflation with weakness, occurs in their continued labeling by the so-called majority and the need to define minority boundaries, to confine and contain, in order for the majority to retain power and a sense of mutually constituted identification. Certainly, Appadurai's suggestion "that all majoritarianisms have in them the seeds of genocide, since they are invariably connected with ideas about the singularity and completeness of the national ethos" applies to Canada, and without doubt to its history, marked as it is by attempted genocide and assimilation of Aboriginal peoples and immigrant cultural groups (2006, p.57). While I am not suggesting that all whites, for example, the traditional majority in terms of economic and cultural power held in Canada, I am suggesting that Appadurai's theory parallels the Canadian situation in important ways. The production of images and discourses that resist hegemonic notions of the national and diversity become more important in reference to the parts of Canadian history that are overshadowed by popularly broadcast discourses of multiculturalism and national unity.

The representation of diversity and ethnicity in the photographs is consciously ambiguous and self-generated, reflecting the cultural imaginaries of the research partners, as well as my own. Their agency contributes to the representation of ethnicity and "diversity" in their decisions about how to respond to my queries about representing national and internal identities. Research partners' agency is at work in their responses in front of the camera—which costume (suit or dress) they would or would not wear, how they wore the costume, personally and/or culturally relevant objects they brought to the photo session, the poses they struck on their own and the parts of themselves they chose to reveal. Additionally, the gestures pertaining to the "national" and subjective, personal

cultural identifications that I asked the research partners to embody were designed to draw attention to the social construction of the former, the flux of the latter, and the subjective imaginaries of the research partners. Ideas about what constitutes a national identity change over time, and the research partners were responding in present time, referencing their own experiences of what it is to be, or not to be, Canadian. The exercise of agency by the research partners is evident in the variety of objects, gestures, facial expressions and physical positions; the exercise of my agency as photographer is evident in the (re)framing of bodies and identities, through costume, stylistic references and the abstraction of the body. The images of hands are a reminder of how much can be included or excluded in the frame, a further abstraction of the body from anchors in space and dislocated from any kind of contextualizing information. The body thereby symbolizes the anchoring of context and identification, and of the living culture to which people are attached and yet so often dislocated, (re) contextualized or framed—representationally bound within or without.

My photography fits most closely into the detective tradition, rather than the salvage tradition. The paternalism and violence implicit and explicit in so many images of the salvage tradition are referenced in this project by the distinct absence of context and the costume implying uniformity and forced or superficial belonging. The photographs and the poses, gestures and *subjects* within them are an intervention, drawing attention to the disjunctive space between the multicultural ideal and multicultural reality. A combination of Victorian portraiture and ethnographic image-making, the stylistic construction of the photographs disrupts expectations of the photographic portrait and the photographic representation, the momentary capture, of

culture, particularly in reference to the colonialist photographic gaze—whether on postcards, in live exhibitions or in ethnographic salvage photographs.

My photographic practice in this project is a combination of documentation and detection, seeking simultaneously to engage with a process of identity production, while also documenting an active becoming, and perhaps an act of becoming “Canadian”. My work reverses the salvaging mode: I am utilizing the illusion of a dominant, national imaginary of *being Canadian*, to visualize the contradictions and complications that have always existed within it. Perhaps effacing the presence of contradiction and conflict in favour of promoting national unity is one of Canada’s legacies. Given the frames and contexts I provide, this project is valuable because of how it creates a space of encounter and imagination.

## **Representing A Nation of Nations & Canada's Aboriginal Peoples**

In this section I will focus briefly on Canada's Aboriginal peoples because they were the least represented in the project for many reasons. They are underrepresented in higher education, and do not form part of any networks of which I am a part. I made a concerted effort to connect with many communities in Toronto, but was unsuccessful. It likely would have taken more time and effort to build relationships with members of Aboriginal communities in order to have them participate. The issues facing the Aboriginal peoples in this land are unique and severe enough to warrant individual discussion, particularly in relation to multiculturalism.

The question of Canada's Aboriginal and Inuit peoples is integral in speaking about Canadian society, and certainly in speaking of multiculturalism. However, these cultural groups are indeed somewhere off to the side in popular discussions of multiculturalism. Though perhaps not lying below the searchlights of multiculturalism, having obviously been spotted and much government time spent attempting to reconcile the issues, the day-to-day image is not positive. In Toronto, Aboriginal peoples have a low profile, both positively and negatively. While other groups receive media attention for the good and bad occurring in their communities, Aboriginal peoples most often receive negative publicity—missing women, poverty on reserves, corruption among leaders, protests, violence, and addiction. Toronto no longer has an active political Aboriginal organization to advocate for its various constituencies (Fleras & Kunz 2001, pp.136-7; Wright-McLeod, personal communication, June 5, 2007). When asking about language, physical urban spaces and multiculturalism, Canada's Aboriginal peoples are

always in my mind. Efforts at language preservation and the reclamation of ancestral lands and material culture are some of the movements involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada. I also think of the traditions to which I have been exposed.

This project has confirmed their marginality in much of Canadian society, both physically and conceptually. Many reserves are remotely located and, among the urban Aboriginal population, the popular concept is of a homeless drunk. As Meadows argues, the “mainstream coverage of aboriginal issues is a mono-cultural blot on a multicultural society” (Meadows in Fleras & Kunz 2001, p.80). Though this is trading in stereotypes, of all cultural stereotypes discussed in the interviews, those attributed to Aboriginal peoples are the worst. It is “the framing of aboriginal peoples as those who have problems or ho create problems taps into a cultural and historical reservoir that has long taken exception to the so-called “Indian Problem”” (*ibid.* p.80). They are the most unidimensional and uncomplicated. They are also those that remain static; the voices speaking against them and the people working for change in their communities remain largely invisible in the multicultural project.

Though Aboriginal peoples are represented in tourist shops, government websites, and live all over Canada, media coverage and imagery remain most prominent in my mind, and among those I interviewed. Nobody knew what needs to be done; all respondents were sympathetic, even concerned. Some were active in their own cultural communities, even advocates and activists. The question of representation of Canada’s cultural groups is sensitive given this country’s colonial history and maltreatment of so many groups including, though not limited to, Chinese and Sikh people, and the genocidal and assimilationist activities wrought against Aboriginal peoples. Most simply,

I name these groups because they were represented among my project's research partners. More significantly, I name the former two groups because they have been in Canada for many generations and suffered for being what they are. I name the latter because they have suffered more greatly, and been simultaneously more ignored and maligned, than any other group in what is now Canada (See for examples Lischke & McNab 2005, Neel 1992, Pouliot & Côté 1992, and York 1990). Recognition is essential, as is the movement beyond history, if that is indeed possible, though the terms of this movement will have to be dictated by those who lie at the heart of each debate, whether over curricula or land.

The Aboriginal research partner I interviewed is active in his community, and has become a leader. His assertion was that multiculturalism may be a distraction from the realities that persist in Canadian society, issues that disproportionately affect some groups. Multiculturalism is an effacement, it is a glossing over of a history marked by colonialism and its consequences. Rather than speaking about the postcolonial, I choose to speak of the neocolonial. In my own subjective experience, not all Aboriginal people consider themselves Canadian. The question of where Aboriginal peoples "fit" was a familiar theme throughout the interviews. The vast majority of research partners did not know where to begin in approaching this issue, or how to label/categorize/apprehend these diverse cultures subsumed already under one term. The images therefore elicit this constant negotiation of categories, (self) labeling and the complex tensions between what become composite and, sometimes, fragmented identities.

## **The Visual, The Linguistic & Reading Images**

I would like to return to the question of the visual, the linguistic and the reading of images. As producer, I cannot analyze my own images, at least not if I am to offer an abstract (though not objective or impartial) argument about their meaning and their (re)contextualization. These images are an exercise, an experiment, in decontextualization and the deliberate mixing of space-time and place. Though freshly captured pixellations, each portrait is a collage, a digitally seamless weaving of histories, peoples and ideas held together only by the frame. Digital photography frames the boundless, binds the momentary in a semblance of permanence, the unmoving. My photographs are composites; referents have been uprooted and float about around them. It will be up to the readers to decide what stories they read or produce in these images, what they see when they glance across their surface letting their own ghosts and internal histories speak to them. It is not the context of their making that is necessarily of most importance in how an image is analyzed. Context is something constructed simultaneously from the inside and the outside, of reader and image. It follows from the potential for innumerable readings that “context cannot determine the meaning of a text. Historical texts, with their possible contexts being multiplied across time as well as space, further amplify this point” (DeLuca in Hope 2006, p.83).

While I am still anchored in analyzing images as socio-cultural, temporally tinted texts, I have long recognized the difficulty of assigning meanings to images, particularly those produced at some distance, whether spatially or temporally, from my frame of reference and myself. In addition to considerations of time and space in the complexities of reading photographs, taking those into account only gets us so far. As DeLuca argues,

“because of the...heterogeneity of audiences, context is always utterly undecidable—a fiction of the critic’s imagination” (DeLuca in Hope 2006, p.85). While I do not agree that context is necessarily a fiction, DeLuca’s point is instructive in that he is calling for a different approach to photographs, one that focuses on the image and what can be read within it rather than focusing solely on what surrounds it. This may appear contradictory to my earlier argument of reading images as texts embedded in time and space, whose production and reception seem at times to be governed by context. However, I would argue that instead it supports the earlier way of seeing, and adds further dynamism and subtlety to the process of reading images. Context and social embeddedness and absences must be brought to bear in its analysis alongside the juxtapositions within, and friction between, the visual elements. DeLuca also calls for an approach to photography that begins from a point very much located in the ways people see and, I would argue, consume images today. To get inside an image requires approaching them as spaces of becoming, as fragments of texts, and as living material culture.

By studying the surrounding context at the expense of the photograph itself, Barthes argues that this collapses that which distinguishes the photograph from the linguistic. But a photograph is different from a spoken or written word; it contains time and space simultaneously. The time and space the photograph both occupies and contains within it is its aura, or “that-has-been” (Barthes 1981). This is also what DeLuca argues is “[a photograph’s] irrefutable presence given with mediation, the emanation, not representation, of a referent” (DeLuca in Hope 2006, p.86). If this is the era of the pictorial turn, the ocularcentric, an era of the digital and the visual, it seems necessary to devote focused attention to the image itself rather than privileging its provenance, and

analyze it as discrete cultural materials, pixels momentarily suspended in layers of space and time.

Though I would not have initially considered my images rhetorical, they do align with DeLuca's assertion that "rhetoric is the art of discerning and deploying the available contingent means of constructing, maintaining, and transforming social reality in a particular context" (DeLuca in Hope 2006, p.81). Historical photography deals in rhetoric that may not translate across time but, if nothing else, the formal elements translate and are instructive in reconstructing the socio-cultural context out of which the images were produced. While the idea of context has been problematized, its existence is nonetheless not up for debate, and nor should its diachronicity. Their components—context of production, context of reception, motivation, even content—are shifting intentions and finally unknowable. How can anyone know what an artist wanted to express with a painting? If it is a realist piece does this mean they meant nothing by it but what it shows, a house, a garden, a city street? Likewise, if a photograph is journalistic, is it free from bias, perspective, its *contexts*? Certainly not. Given the unknowable or the difficult to discern, it follows that an analysis of images must occur in the way they are received: with glances and the senses.

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## **How was the project made?**

The project was made using a digital SLR camera, and other traditional photographic equipment. Subsequent to each photographic session, research partners sat with me, usually over tea, as I recorded the interviews. It was very productive to set up the interviews as conversations rather than strict question-answer sessions. This allowed for research partners to have enough space within which to move about conceptually, and to respond honestly and naturally about what it is they have experienced in relation to my queries. The photo shoots were conducted over a period of 4 months, February through May 2007.

The selection process of the images for this project was from a total archive of hundreds of frames I shot. Selecting images entailed seeking those that represented the augmentation of relations, between and among the partners, in relation to their socio-gesture and embodiment of identity, both what the partner considered “Canadian”, as well as their own, as I questioned each partner about what these might be during each photo shoot. I was looking for a moment of authenticity out of each temporary relationship between person, costume, positioning and camera. I sought the images that most vibrantly displayed both the ideals of, and the resistance to, traditional portrait conventions, and a moment of authenticity elicited by each research partner during their interaction with the camera, with their costume, with me, and with the experience as a whole.

Wearing a costume to some research partners was strange, while to others the significance was immediately apparent. Many exhibited some initial trepidation about donning the costume. Once I had thoroughly explained my rationale for the costume, including its necessity for abstracting each partner from time and place, as well as

referencing colonialism and Victorian clothing and portraiture, each partner stepped in front of the camera. It appeared to become clear to most research partners during the photo sessions, as we continued in conversation about my project and the goals of the photographs, that the contents of the images were indeed about them and something they elicited rather than something I was imposing. In this project, the frame is a tool rather than a binding element. Nonetheless, there is an aspect of manipulation in all photography, as the choice of angle, lighting, and closing the shutter remain with the photographer. I aimed for each photographic relationship to be just that: a communicative, exploratory performance within which to elicit and capture moments of (self) identifying and becoming.

Methodologically, I selected the images that, as a series, are an affirmative augmentation of relations, between and among the partners, in relation to their socio-cultural, physical and temporal positions. The photographs are striving towards augmentations and processes of becoming, moving towards recognition of the complexities involved in representation, and the exploration of the overlapped folds that at any one time constitute an individual's constellation of identification. The research partners are not just making physical gestures; they are embodying stories, and parts of stories, bringing the otherwise abstract or unseen into visual form. They *add to* these stories of nation, culture, history and identification, but they don't *add up*; they are processual and always in flux.

The characteristics of the photographs I selected from this archive also included considerations of technique and their translation in the product. I sought images that were lit in such a way to produce the candlelight effect that I associate with many traditional

portraits. This is the sense of the portrait being lit with a diffuse glow, and lighting or highlighting only parts of the subject, making certain of their characteristics stand out and the rest lost in blackness. Those photographs that highlight elements of the research partner's face and body that, engaged in a moment of unselfconscious interaction, were the images I sought, both in production and in selection. Additionally, the images I selected most striking contrast as a series the more stylistically traditional portraits of research partners with those wherein they are expressing something of their own identities within the frame. This project was about bending the frame; it is a comment about the notion that the frame can and should fit the person rather than the person fitting the frame.

The final corpus is 75 images; they do not stand for the larger archive but they have been selected from it in order to talk about the theoretical and topical concerns of this paper. This is one story, one set of questions and conversations; many others could be told both with this archive of images, as well as with future projects. As a future project I am interested in pursuing questions of sexuality and culture in so far as certain cultural bodies are labeled and stereotyped in certain ways based on ethnically based generalizations that are repeated and thereby become popularly mythologized, thereby drawing on the objectifying temporal distancing necessary for myth-making (Fabian 2002, p.30). In future, I would also like to more thoroughly explore the role of cultural categories, in particular regarding the relationship between *whiteness* and vocabulary such as *ethnic minority* and *diversity*.

In addition to the questions I asked the research partners, I was constantly asking similar questions of myself. It is crucial that researchers be aware of their position in a

project in order to monitor their own impact, access and implication. I kept network theory in mind, as applied to urban anthropology, as I gathered research partners for my project, noting my methods of communication as well as noting who responded to which kind of notification (Hannerz 1980). It was not surprising to me that it was more difficult to find research partners from among certain cultural groups than others. In fact, it confirmed my initial feeling that a group's position in society would correlate with both willingness to participate and representation in my project. However, all research partners found the project intriguing and commented that they felt positive about being able to have a conversation about these issues. They were unanimous in expressing how important they thought these questions to be, though nobody was certain they could answer them.

As a white, female Canadian-born researcher I wondered how this project would be received, and until I see the images in a gallery or build some definitive response space into the project, this will be hard to ascertain in any depth. I intend to have an exhibition for this project at which time I will include ways for gallery visitors to participate. For example, participation may include sensors that trigger audio files of interview segments when someone approaches a photograph to view it, thereby creating a unique experience and an insight into the narrative of identification behind the photograph. Since a number of initial research partners were students, I must note the continued relative lack of "diversity" in academia. Though many barriers, or borders, have been lowered or laboriously removed, many remain. I argue that barriers are among the tangled threads of inquiry I wove together for this project. Each one deserves, and

requires, untangling and close examination in order to answer a spectrum of questions about representation, both real and imagined.

### **What have I learned from the project?**

Through my analysis of the images and the research process, I have confirmed many of the suppositions with which I entered this project. I have a renewed sense of the importance of dialogue in order to help create social change. By talking about these issues a different reality is momentarily constituted each time. Raising the issues in dialogue and in imagery align with the two most powerful modes of communication today: voice and image. The spoken word and the photograph can be mobilized, and have been throughout time, to create a certain sense of things, to record, depict, document, support, maintain, collapse, resist and so on. By utilizing the wide-ranging potentialities of each medium I not only consciously mobilized their communicative power, but also used them as tools of resistance and rejuvenation, as practiced in applied anthropology. Renewal must not necessarily come from the creation of something completely new; innovation is that mastery and reworking of the pre-existing. The images and interviews stand as examples of the remobilization of vocal and visual lexicons in an actively reflexive and resistive way.

This project has taught me not only how to conduct semi-structured interviews in an effective way in order to elicit honest and open responses from research partners as much as possible in a short term, artificial (in the sense that they were in my apartment speaking with me in order to participate in my project) situation. I also learned a great deal about the process of photography and the awareness required in any resistive project

not to unconsciously reproduce relationships and dialogue that one seeks to change. Shifts occur slowly in the conscious, but shifts in image making can occur rapidly not only with technology but also by peering down the long corridor of history. It is with this telescopic phenomenon of looking into the past that I am able to look backwards and zoom in on the image making and colonialist discourse and actions that have contributed to the Canada I attempted to get to know through this project.

This project served to emphasize the importance of socio-culturally engaged research that is critical of the traditions and histories of social science research, while engaged not only with the political nature of this kind of research, but also with its importance. This importance is in recognition of a general lack of open, public dialogue about many issues people living in Canadian society face today. I confirmed this by speaking with the people experiencing that which you want to know is, to me, the only way to find out if your hypotheses are reflected in everyday lived realities.

My project has confirmed that many stories and experiences continue to be concealed behind a projected image of what Canada is, and what constitutes a Canadian. Rather than looking at the screen and its images, I chose to pull the screen aside and begin to investigate what lay behind it. I see this project as a beginning, an initial foray into the issues of visually representing culture, the collection of personal histories, complicating the notion of national identity in Canada, and investigating the lived realities of multiculturalism. While this project is critical, it is also positive. Every one of my research partners commented on the importance of talking about these issues, that there is not otherwise a forum within which to speak frankly about our socio-cultural experiences, and that they were glad I was doing this project. In future, I would like to

transcribe and analyze the interviews and continue to collect them and take portraits in order to create a database of portraits and narratives of Canada at this point in time.

### **How does the project break new ground in professional practice?**

My project contributes to the field of photography with an aim to encourage critical reading rather than passive or voyeuristic looking; it is about breaking down the false divides that still exist between us and them in order to show everyone simultaneously as *us* and *them*; it is not an effacement of diversity but rather a focused investigation of that very topic and how it is being negotiated in the daily experiences of people living and working in Toronto, Ontario, currently Canada's most multicultural city.

While making reference to the record of colonial and anthropological photography of *others*, as well as the Victorian tradition of portrait photography, my project utilizes this history in a critical and productive way. By having research partners wear costumes that reference the Victorian period, I simultaneously abstract them from current space and place, removing these markers. Instead, the repeated costumes serve as a leitmotif of time, as well as juxtaposition between Victorian dress and the diversity of bodies that they are clothing. The current picturing of Canada and Canadians continues many of these exclusionary ways of seeing, as I observed in Douglas Coupland's (2002, 2004) and Yousuf Karsh's (1960, 1978) books about Canada. Pierre Berton (1965), Roberta Bondar (2002) produced volumes visualizing Canadian physical geography in hegemonic ways, and official historical books about the history of Canada do the same (See for examples Monk 1968, National Archives of Canada 1993, Palmer 1992, Pierce

1985). While these books certainly make a valuable contribution to the visualization of Canada, and should not simply be discounted, they must be read critically. Nonetheless, there exist instances of various cultural groups in Canada who have taken photographs of themselves. However, many of these images depict non-white peoples adopting modes of dress and visualization that are consistent with the colonial. Books such as Andrea Modica's (2003) and David Neel's (1992) volumes of portraits of contemporary Aboriginal peoples do nonetheless serve to counter the dominant colonial narrative of attempted mono-culturalism.

Certainly, Canada has always been multicultural, and this project aims to deconstruct the continued notions and realities of white dominance and neocolonialism still present in Canada today. However, this project also asks questions about the representation of whiteness and its continued role as a binary in oppositions that are worn out yet still present. They must be emptied of significance in order to visualize, in photography and daily conceptualization, a cultural scenario that is complex but non-binary. This is not deliberate or false simplification. Instead, this recognition of the complexities involved in diversity, as well as an emphatic call for recognition that this complexity cannot rest on a binary which makes it more unstable and more potentially violent than it perhaps otherwise would be. This is not about the effacement of historic violence, but it is about looking at past and present in a different way to move into a future with different dances, costumes and images in cacophony, harmonic and dissonant but not self-destructive.

## **Who has influenced me creatively and intellectually?**

Academically, I have been influenced by professors with whom I have worked, as well as by the theorists whose works I have read. I have mentioned many of my academic and creative inspirations in this paper and I will summarize them now. Reading about Walter Benjamin's ideas about dream state produced within the arcades by the spectre of the commodity inspired me to re-examine the current reverberations of these ideas today. His ideas about the non-auratic, scientific nature of photography, and its democratization of the visual form part of my creative cosmology that I draw on for both my creative and academic work (Buck-Morss 1989, p.133). WJ Mitchell's concepts of the photograph as "fossilized light" and as "visual prosthesis" have extended my visual knowledge, previously rooted in film theory, into the photographic realm (1992, p.24; p.28). Allison Landsberg's concept of film as an "historical prosthesis" is a concept I have used in the past and had often applied to photography as there are many ways in which film footage and photographs are similar in their purported realism and documentation of history (Landsberg in Burgoyne 1997, p.105).

Sarah Pink's discussions of visual ethnography provided me with insights into synthesizing traditional anthropological methodology with a visual research focus (Pink 2003). Collier & Collier's volumes on visual ethnographic methodology contained some useful insights that I have applied in my project (1986, 2003). While not strictly an ethnographic project, in any research project dealing with people it is helpful to apply anthropological method because all stories and histories are bound up in cultural and personal experiences of the informants. All research to a certain degree is, or should be,

culturally informed. Ignoring culture is to ignore *why* a person might hold certain beliefs or opinions, or react in a particular way to what or how you are asking.

I have also drawn inspiration from artists and intellectuals I have discovered through my research, the most important influences remain those whose research and creative work I have either participated in, contributed to, or had the opportunity to learn about and discuss with the producers themselves. My methodological approach is something I learned while in the field and while working with anthropologists more so than being information attributable to a written text. While there is now an abundance of texts about anthropological studies and method, early anthropologists simply went into the field and, through much trial and error, there is now have highly developed methods of working in the field in every anthropological sub-discipline.

While working with Dr. Andrea N. Walsh at the University of Victoria, in Victoria, British Columbia, I had the opportunity to learn about every aspect of engaging in a long-term anthropological research project. Her field is visual anthropology, something I have come to describe as a subfield within, or at very least related to, cultural anthropology. I had the opportunity to accompany her into the field numerous times, to work with members of the Osoyoos Indian Band and other community members in Osoyoos, BC, as well as to the field in Lillooet, BC, to work on an archival photography project. Additionally, I spent a great deal of time sifting through archival photographs and documents, learning to read images, at: the Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria BC, the National Art Library housed in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London England, the British Library Research Archive, London England, the Guildhall Library, London, England, and in the field at the Osoyoos Museum, Osoyoos, BC.

I had the opportunity to work with many archival photographs as an undergraduate research assistant in visual anthropology. I saw them for the first time in the archives as I pulled them out of boxes with gloved hands. My professor, Dr. Andrea N. Walsh, asked me to read each image. At first, I saw only the denotative aspects. Gradually, I learned to open my constricted eye to see the narratives and histories they held. Through fieldwork and reading other archival texts, the stories behind the images literally came to life in the elders and children with whom I was working. The stories captured within the photographic frame spoke to me in different voices at the beginning and at the end of my work with them. In each case, they succeeded in eliciting a visceral response from me, shifting and reframing my perceptions both of history and contemporary Canadian society.

These experiences of reading photographs emphasized for me their power to make strange the ideas, historical narratives and realities I had uncritically accepted. This way of seeing enabled me to accept my conceptual limitations as a cultural agent, while attempting through photography to reframe and refresh the way each of perceives the world. Historical photographs have acted as catalyzing specters, pushing me to see differently and to create photographs that document the world in a way that encourages re-reading and rethinking of what was and thus of what is.

It is the point where theory and method come alive that catalyzes my engagement with a subject. Without engagement—with people, with visual culture—culturally related research would be emptied of much of its significance and import. Theorizing is one thing, but without a basis for theory, and one based in the lived experiences of those about whom the theory is being developed, it risks becoming disengaged, purely

academized production. My interest lies in being a storyteller, and perhaps that makes me as much a story collector as storyteller. Images are stories, framed and bound in time and space, yet carrying within them pieces of all times, of many stories, depending on whose eyes are filtering their light and shadow.

I consider my project experimental as it blends methodology and theoretical positions drawn from the visual arts and the social sciences. The artistic practice of such artists as Jin Me-Yoon and Allan Sekula has created a fertile space for criticism and alternative imag(in)ings of Canada's culture past and present. Likewise, the critical writings, ethnographic, culturally focused, and about images, that I have referenced throughout this paper have been tremendously stimulating and educating for me. While not an ethnography by any stretch, I nonetheless approached it in such a way that gathering information from my research partners had to happen in a semi-structured environment that allows their own personal narratives and perspectives to surface rather than them be confined by my goals or my agenda as the researcher.

Other photographers who have inspired me include Susan Orkin. Her famous photograph entitled *American Girl in Italy, Florence, 1951* and many of her other black and white images have captured me. However, it wasn't until I met the subject of this famous photograph that I began to understand in more depth the complexity of creating and reading photographs. Since she is still alive, she was able to tell me about how the photograph came about, and the degree to which it was natural, and the degree to which it was staged. Working with extant photographers has also given me important insights into the production of images. Vincenzo Pietropaolo's socially engaged images of workers and religious processions, as well as his long-term documentation of the Italian

immigrant community in Toronto, inspire me to create artistic products that hold in tension politics and aesthetics. Jim Allen, another local Toronto photographer, has become a mentor from whom I have learned about the practicalities of photography as an industry, as well as about the behind the scenes aspects of taking photographs and finishing them in the studio.

Visual artist Christian Boltanski is an inspiration to me because he plays with portraiture, faces, memory, and history. Experiencing art, a way of communicating visually, is not a consecutive, linear experience. Rather, it is enveloping, at least momentarily, and this is an experiential element I aim to achieve with my visual production. Paul Strand's photography is inspirational to me because of what he was able to capture in his portraits, as well as for embracing the trick of photography, using a camera that appeared to be focusing elsewhere in order to capture his subjects unawares and penetrate any veneer or defense they would otherwise use to deflect the camera's penetration.

**What have I learned from the program as a whole?  
How will I carry this work into the future?**

During the course of my master's program I have had the opportunity to pursue the academic interests I developed as an undergraduate student. The double field placement I completed was of huge importance to my development as a photographer. I worked closely with Vincenzo Pietropaolo both in the darkroom and in his studio. I accompanied him on professional shoots. I completed an inventory of almost his entire portfolio. This exposed me to a huge collection of photographs and allowed me to observe and analyze not only the content and style of his photographs, but also the trajectory of his photographic career. I was very fortunate to work with such a meticulous, creative and socially engaged photographer. Not only are his photographs of superb quality, the majority of which he processes and prints himself, but many of them are documents of diverse socio-cultural situations including public displays of religion and migrant workers, as well as projects such as his visual narrative of Cuba's current socio-economic circumstances.

Locating myself in Toronto formed part of my attraction to the program. As Canada's most multicultural, and as its largest, city, I knew this would be the ideal place within which for me to pursue both my visual and anthropological interests. In order to gather narratives about the issues individuals and groups face living in a complex socio-cultural space, it was necessary to me to become a part of the space I desired to study. Thus the program not only offered to me the benefit of living in Toronto, but I was also able to structure my coursework in such a way as to support and enhance my interdisciplinary foundation.

Subsequent to my field placement, I began a mentorship with another local Toronto photographer, Jim Allen. I have been learning from him by accompanying him on shoots and observing both his shooting and editing techniques. Working with him as a photographic assistant is giving me extremely valuable professional experience. I was in part prepared for this position, and this professional relationship, through my participation in the Communication & Culture graduate program. I have continued my own photographic work throughout the program. My photography has continued to improve and be informed by the theory and experiences offered by the program. While these opportunities exist within the program, it was through self-direction and conceptual invention that they materialized and became fruitful.

I will carry many of the skills I have continued to build upon during my master's into my future work. I have improved my public speaking skills, my photographic skills, as well as my writing and visual analytic skills. All of these will be of great use as I begin full-time work in the fall of 2007 as a research and production assistant for a local feature documentary film production company, Stuart Samuels Productions.

## Storytelling

The role of storyteller, while not lost today, has almost been submerged beneath the weight of so many voices speaking simultaneously yet so often telling us naught. It is impossible to go through a day in Toronto without being bombarded with information. I have read about the forecasting of this social milieu, and moving into a late capitalist era, the ideas of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Mosco among others, retain their salience when applied to our current socio-economic regime (Adorno 1991, Adorno & Horkheimer 1977, Horkheimer 1972, and Mosco 1986). Though there is an abundance of technology with which to tell stories, and a cultural industry anchored by this technology, there exists a widespread popular understanding that even the stories told by technology in the past have been falsified—whether early war photographs, propagandistic newsreels, or sensationalized news articles. The debates over falsification of images today seem to me overblown in importance. All texts have always been manipulated, if not falsified, in order to achieve the ends the producers desired. Telling the stories of those who remain outside the conventional frames is something I intend to continue in my intellectual, creative work. I recognize that they have a voice, and I am not so naïve to think anyone *needs* me to tell their stories. However, bringing my vision to a project and working with research partners can create fertile ground upon which to build a productive, engaging project that can benefit everyone involved, even if it is in subtle ways.

## Picture Making

Creatively, I am pursuing both photography and visual art. In these fora, I am interested in:

Photographic preservation of time and place

Representations of space and place

Formalist notion of *making strange* in order to come to new visions and understandings of past, present and future

## Cultural Production

Working in the film industry will require the application of many of the skills I have obtained through academic work and study.

I am interested in:

Producing non-traditional documentary films

Questions of the visual representation of history and the past

Combining visual sensibilities and technologies to create experimental visual stories

The questions I have asked in this project are open ended and meant to be answered in thought and ideas. The project is about process and becoming. My project writing and images are representative of this inconclusivity, as well as of the potential both for this project to expand in the future and these issues to be approached and renewed continuously as Canada continues to metamorphose.

While I have noted the disciplines and many theorists and artists who have influenced me academically and creatively, I cannot say I subscribe to any one theoretical position, nor do I feel I am part of one singular discipline. In future, I intend to continue studying anthropology, film and photography, as these are three subjects about which I am passionate. I am excited at the prospect of the continuation of this project. Continuing to collect oral and visual expressions of cultural identity in Toronto to create an album of images and a database of conversational interviews is something I would like to do. Such a collection of images and orally-expressed stories about personal identity and multiculturalism in Canada could prove a valuable resource in future and, at very least, provide insight and impetus for continued creative treatments of important issues that differentially affect people living together in any given society.

The continuation of collecting oral (hi)stories and creating illuminating and engaging visualizations is something I will continue in my professional and creative work.

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