

## Editorial

### **Culture, Heritage, and Art**

This special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Communication* explores the nexus between culture, heritage, and art. The first section of the *Journal* is devoted to papers generated for an ongoing series of workshops to study “The Social Effects of Culture” sponsored by Canadian Heritage. Selected contributions to these workshops have been adapted for publication and supplemented by recent submissions to the *CJC*. The resulting collaboration features a range of articles produced by cultural workers, community activists, policy makers, and scholars.

Culture, like any concept with a long and contested history, is difficult to pin down. Raymond Williams himself once exclaimed “I don’t know how many times I’ve wished I’d never heard the damned word” (1979, p. 154). That said, Bhikhu Parekh offers this working definition in his book on multiculturalism: “Culture is a historically created system of meaning and significance or, what comes to the same thing, a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life” (2000, p.143). This usefully identifies three moments when culture, notoriously fluid, is actualized: in language, in material practices, and in institutions.

Culture, in the first instance, is embedded not only in semantics (meaning) but in the rhythms of our speech, in our syntax and our grammar. In the second instance, culture takes material form in cultural productions such as “the arts, music, oral and written literature” (Parekh, 2000, p.145). Given that culture is connected to structure and order in human life, culture is articulated within the “rules and norms that govern social relations” (Parekh, 2000, p.151). As such, culture is connected to economics, politics, and institutions. This explication of the flexible articulation of culture as it moves within language, material practices, and institutions links culture to communication.

Readers of the *Journal* may well question the term “effects.” After all, the effects tradition has been critiqued for assuming a transmission model of communications with its ontological assumption that receivers are merely “impacted” by a message (Carey, 1988) and for its neo-positivist epistemological assumptions that the human world produces actions and behaviours that are measurable, predictable, and generalizable (Hardt, 1992). Further, in recent years there has been a movement within cultural studies from the study of effects to affect (Grossberg, 1992). Within this particular collection of papers, gathered under the rubric of “the social effects of culture,” the meaning of the term “effects” is more subtle than that found in the official tradition that has dominated empirical communication scholarship in the United States since the 1940s.

Dick Stanley's introduction names a multiplicity of interconnected "effects" belying a simple causal relation between cause and effect and negating the isolation of discrete variables in laboratory-like, decontextualized, conditions of participation and production. The myriad cultural activities taking place in Batchewana First Nation discussed by Gayle Broad, Stephanie Boyer, and Cynthia Chataway as well as Lon Dubinsky's description of the rich array of activities occurring in Kamloops highlight the significance and value of culture in these locations outside of the dominant centres of Canada. Indeed, in this special issue *effect* is often an analogous to *significance* or *value*. The papers included herein offer detailed analyses, most often in the form of case studies, of cultural activities, heritage sites and artistic endeavours that underscore the processes of cultural participation in a variety of locations. Those papers that rely on statistics, such as M. Sharon Jeannotte's examination of the data on cultural contributions to the government sponsored *Millennium Project*, exemplify how such data may be used to assert the significance of culture, art, and heritage. At a time when the value of culture is being questioned by sectors of the government, which can only understand value in narrow economic terms, data becomes political.

Raymond Williams famously argued that culture signifies both art and learning and is about "whole ways of lives" (1977, p. 129). The insights generated from these locations, and cultural dis-locations, reminds that cultures transform over time. However, as they do they create a "complex and unsystematized whole" (Parekh, 2000, p.144), a point illustrated in Paul Williams' consideration of the contested histories buried in a single location, the Little Dutch Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia. While there may be dominating tendencies that bind a culture "every culture is internally varied, speaks in several voices, and its range of interpretive possibility is often indeterminant" (Parekh, 2000, p.144). Diasporic transnational movements, which accelerate this condition, demand new metaphors for thinking about the evanescent nature of the nation-state as Brian Osborne argues. Within this global flux all is not pure movement. Hegemonic processes are insistently present in a nation that may be increasingly transnational, but whose existence is not merely a past event — witness Anne Whitelaw's reading of the new Aboriginal section of the National Gallery of Canada and Zoë Druick's historical reading of the influence of UNESCO on the Massey Commission. The former takes the reader through the twists and turns of the attempt to reconfigure traditional narratives of nation in this major cultural institution, while the latter examines the international connections influencing the development of a national cultural policy.

For those living the consequences of transnational flows of people, media, culture, or economics these are not just theoretical questions or circumstances to be idealized (Appaduri, 1996). Many of these papers touch upon history as they query how we are touched by historical forces. These forces do not just effect us but become sites of contestation and struggle. Homi K. Bhabha has stated that "both imperialist and nationalist views of colonialism often missed the importance and complexity of the sociopolitical struggles being fought out on the cultural front . . . the daily struggles that were conducted over things like rice and

bread—the more subtle and everyday struggles for equality, survival and cultural autonomy” (Makos, 1995). The cover image of Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohen on the set of Isuma Igloolik’s latest film production *The Diaries of Knud Rasmussen*, reported by Katarina Soukup, crystallizes the ingenious ways that Inuit communities appropriate technologies to preserve traditions and to foster change. Sharon Fernandez’s account of the Toronto arts festival, *Desh Pardesh*, rectifies an absent history through the voices of participants. Monika Kin Gagnon’s account of her journey to the Neikki Memorial Internment Camp addresses the deeply affective aspects of research into the “vexed histories” subtending the incarceration of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. Like Andrea Fatona’s moving depiction of the dynamics of visibility and invisibility at play in Melinda Mollineux’s wonderfully evocative photographs of Cadboro Bay, a site recalling the Emancipation Day picnics held by Black people to commemorate the end of slavery, these papers viscerally engage with art, heritage, and culture within a legacy of racism and the struggle for survival. These analyses do not eschew rationality, cognition, reflection, or assessment but like Williams’ deliberately oxomoronic concept of the “structure of feeling,” thought and feeling are combined to draw out the corporeal dimensions of the politics of culture and of remembrance (1979, pp. 128). Traces of culture, of our past and our future direction, are not only located in official monuments but in a grain of wheat, as Charlene Elliot’s commentary on the labelling of genetically modified food products indicates.

Many of the papers use familiar methodological approaches found within communications and cultural studies such as discourse analysis, interviews, focus groups, and personal testimony. However, several stretch the boundaries of standard methodological practices in the social sciences to provide imaginative empirical traces of cultural participation. Here Broad, Boyer, and Chataway’s commitment to community involvement, and use of visual materials in their research practice, is crucial. Kin Gagnon’s “tender research” and Douglas Worts’ notes and reflections on his experience as a cultural worker respectively call to mind the possibility of research as a “creative analytic practice,” to quote sociologist Laurel Richardson, which may combine storytelling, and merge fact and fiction (2000, p.929).

These case studies testify to the profound personal and social investments in cultural activities and document the transformative potential of engagement and creation, even if the experience may be contradictory. Participating in culture may indicate those invisible borders of simultaneous belonging and exclusion. These paradoxes are inflected in not only our “findings” but are an integral part of our research practice. For many of these writers, these case studies are not objective reflections on a culture where being purely an outsider or an insider is possible. Instead, these are cogent meditations on culture, art, and heritage that highlight the researcher’s dialogic imbrication in the site under study. They indicate, palpably, the place of culture within our social, economic, and political lives as well as the

centrality of culture within the variegated field of inquiry that is communications (Williams, 1961).

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