

**INDIGENEITY IN URBAN COMMUNITIES: RELATIONALITY, DUALISM, AND  
THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INDIGENOUS PERSONS WHO LIVE IN  
VANCOUVER AND NANAIMO, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**

by

Johnnie Manson

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2013

M.A., The University of British Columbia, 2015

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES  
(Resources, Environment, and Sustainability)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

October 2021

© Johnnie Manson, 2021

Indigeneity in Urban Communities: Relationality, Dualism, and the Lived Experiences of  
Indigenous Persons Who Live in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada

ii

## **Abstract**

In Canada, approximately half of Indigenous peoples live in urban communities. However, in academic and popular discourse, ‘authentic’ Indigenous peoples are often located in rural ‘natural’ environments away from ‘man-made’ urban communities. I think this sets up a contradiction – where Indigenous peoples are factually present in urban communities but are absent in the contemporary academic and popular imaginary – and so marginalizes the realities of Indigenous persons who live in urban communities. The overall purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate the diverse ways contemporary Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities conceptualize and operationalize their values and enact their lives as this intersects with the meaning of land, reconciliation, relations, and work. Theoretically, I discuss different non-Indigenous and Indigenous discourses on what constitutes the land and their implications for how Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities recognize themselves, are recognized by others, and how they recognize others. I also consider the implication of different liberal (individualistic and relational) and Indigenous relational discourses on the project of transforming liberal institutions into relational institutions. The four substantive chapters include Chapter 2, which investigates how non-Indigenous and Indigenous discourses on reality (or what academics refer to as their ontological worldviews) structure how Indigenous persons see themselves and their relationship to others (human and nonhuman). Chapter 3 engages with the everyday acts of reconciliation of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo – whereby they seek to improve the relationships with themselves and others (Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and nonhumans) across several urban communities. Chapter 4 engages with liberal and Indigenous relational discourses on reality, particularly, how they are expressed in contexts assumed to be meritocratic. Chapter 5 engages with five Indigenous persons who live in urban

communities' conceptualizations and enactments of work and their economic lives and how they structure and are structured by their desire to build community and become the persons they want to be. I conclude this thesis by arguing for the importance of recognizing Indigenous diversity and the relational reality of existence.

## **Lay Summary**

In Canada, approximately half of Indigenous peoples live in urban communities. However, because of social stereotypes that associate ‘authentic’ Indigeneity with a more rural form of existence, the experiences of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities are often ignored or seen as ‘inauthentic.’ In my dissertation, I examine how Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada understand reality and live their lives. To do this, I sought to understand how Indigenous scholars and Indigenous participants from Vancouver and Nanaimo understood the nature of reality and how people ought to live their lives as it relates to nature, politics, work, and economics. My dissertation demonstrates the necessity and utility of recognizing and learning from the diverse perspectives of Indigenous persons who live in urban communities for the development and practice of theoretical and political alternatives which challenge the political status quo in Canada.

## **Preface**

I wrote this dissertation and it is my original work. I intend to submit Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 to academic journals for publication. Resultingly, these chapters are meant to be read as stand-alone articles, though there are shared themes among them. As such, each chapter has elements of repetition. I developed the research questions, methodology, and methods for this dissertation, with critical feedback on each chapter from my supervisor Dr. Terre Satterfield, and my two committee members Dr. Janette Bulkan and Dr. Hannah Wittman.

I conducted all field research for Chapters 3 and 5. For these chapters, I hired a research assistant to help me transcribe some of the interviews. I conducted all of the data analysis in this section, with critical feedback from my supervisor Dr. Terre Satterfield. That being said, this research (except where noted) is my own.

Chapters 3 will be submitted to an academic journal and will contain multiple authors (Dr. Terre Satterfield and Dr. Janette Bulkan). I developed the research questions, designed the research framework, did all of the analysis, and wrote these chapters in their entirety. Dr. Satterfield, Dr. Bulkan, and Dr. Wittman provided detailed critical feedback on each iteration of these chapters.

My research was conducted under the approval of the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board, Human Ethics certificate H-1802908.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Lay Summary .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Preface.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1    Introduction and problem context.....	1
1.1.1    Theorizing on Indigeneity in urban contexts .....	3
1.2    Political philosophy and Indigenous peoples.....	10
1.3    Methodology and methods.....	17
1.3.1    Analytic paradigm.....	20
1.3.2    Community-based versus engaged research .....	21
1.3.3    Methods.....	25
1.3.4    Positionality .....	29
1.4    Chapter overviews .....	31
1.5    Dissertation summary .....	35
<b>Chapter 2: Discourses on the land and Indigeneity in urban settings .....</b>	<b>37</b>
2.1    Introduction.....	37
2.2    Dualism and liberalism .....	40
2.2.1    Implications of dualism and liberalism for Indigenous persons who live in urban communities .....	48

2.3	Relationality and its variants.....	51
2.3.1	Automated relationality .....	54
2.3.2	Dead(ly) commodities.....	59
2.4	Dialectical discourse on reality and Indigenous peoples .....	62
2.4.1	The anti-colonial appropriation of Hegel.....	72
2.5	Indigenous dialectical discourse on reality .....	73
2.5.1	Relationality, dialectics, and Indigeneity in urban settings .....	77
2.6	Conclusion .....	80
<b>Chapter 3: Cities as sites of Indigenous reconciliation.....</b>		<b>82</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	82
3.1.1	Hegelian objectification and recognition .....	86
3.1.2	Methods: attending to Indigenous life in the city .....	90
3.2	Indigenous recognition and reconciliation in Vancouver and Nanaimo.....	92
3.2.1	Indigenous dualism, Indigenous relationality, Indigenous pluralism .....	92
3.2.2	Commodities, Indigenous relationality, and dispossession of the dualist-self .....	95
3.2.3	Indigenous relationality, misrecognition, recognition, and self-recognition .....	99
3.2.4	Indigenous relationality and nature in the city.....	105
3.2.5	Indigenous relationality and nature as the city .....	107
3.3	Implications for reconciliation and conclusion.....	113
<b>Chapter 4: Relational governing logics in individualistic contexts .....</b>		<b>118</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	118
4.2	Part I: Ontological conflict and internal critique .....	123
4.3	Part II: Liberalism, relationality, and meritocracy .....	125



4.3.1	Relationality and individualism in Cartesian dualism .....	125
4.3.2	Liberal relationality and individualism in the concept of self-ownership .....	129
4.4	Part III: The liberal rejection(?) of meritocracy .....	135
4.4.1	Free-market liberalism, welfare liberalism, and merit .....	135
4.4.2	Privilege theory, education, and “earned” privileges .....	137
4.5	Part IV: Indigenous relational discourses on reality .....	141
4.5.1	Indigenous relationality and gifting practices .....	144
4.5.2	Indigenous internal critique of liberalism and capitalism .....	146
4.6	Part V: Conclusion and reflection .....	151
<b>Chapter 5: Indigenous peoples’ conceptions and enactments of work and their economic lives in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada .....</b>		<b>156</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	156
5.2	Methodological practice .....	159
5.2.1	Recognition, misrecognition, objectification, and alienation .....	161
5.3	Working as a leader .....	167
5.4	Working in the service industry .....	172
5.5	Working in the gig economy .....	178
5.6	Receiving one’s income through disability assistance .....	183
5.7	Receiving one’s income through temporary assistance .....	188
5.8	Conclusion .....	192
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion .....</b>		<b>195</b>
6.1	Key Findings and contributions .....	199
6.2	Limitations .....	202

6.3	Reflections on relationality and the gift.....	203
<b>Bibliography</b>	.....	<b>210</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the following people who helped me craft this dissertation. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Terre Satterfield for her guidance and support throughout this process. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my committee members, Dr. Janette Bulkan and Dr. Hannah Wittman for their support and helpful insights and critiques.

I would also like to thank my research assistant for her tireless work in transcribing the words of the participants. Finally, I would like to thank all the Indigenous persons who participated in the empirical portions of this dissertation.

This dissertation was supported financially by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRC) Four Year Doctoral Award; a SSHRC Insight Grant FAS F18-05599; SSHRC Insight Grant, Relational Values; The University of British Columbia (UBC) Graduate Scholarship; and the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction and problem context

In Canada, as of 2016, approximately half of Indigenous peoples<sup>1</sup> live in urban settings<sup>2</sup> (Canada 2017a). However, in academic and popular discourse, ‘authentic’ Indigenous peoples are often located in rural ‘natural’ environments away from ‘man-made’ urban communities (Andersen 2013). As an Indigenous person who lives in the city of Vancouver, I think these contradictory perspectives (where Indigenous peoples are factually present in urban communities but are absent in the contemporary academic and popular imaginaries) have marginalized the perspectives of Indigenous persons who live in urban communities. This contradiction is not merely an academic concern, but rather, is one that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities experience daily.

Thus, the overarching goal of this dissertation is to understand how a diverse group of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize or enact their lives as this intersects with the meaning of land, reconciliation, relations, and economic practices.

To help me achieve this goal, I sought to answer four research questions:

---

<sup>1</sup> Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) understands Indigenous peoples to mean “the people and peoples who identify their ancestry with the original inhabitants of ... Canada and other countries worldwide” (S. Wilson 2008, 34). I agree with this definition, but also think the *intersubjective* nature of Indigeneity needs to be highlighted. Thus, I add to this definition, arguing that an Indigenous person is one who traces their ancestry to the original peoples of the world *and* claims and is claimed by other Indigenous peoples (such as an Indigenous nation or community) and persons as Indigenous. Such language is used to counter colonial attempts to turn sovereign Indigenous nations into racialized populations who are mere wards of the state. When speaking of Indigenous communities, I will be using the term Indigenous peoples synonymously, when speaking of Indigenous individuals, I will be using the terms Indigenous person or persons.

<sup>2</sup> I understand urban communities (which includes cities and towns) to be communities which are dominated by human-built structures (such as buildings, cars, etc.) (Corburn 2017), larger than 30,000 peoples (Canada 2017b), with the added caveat that Indigenous reserves which neighbor these communities are also urban (which I discuss below).

1) How have non-Indigenous<sup>3</sup> and Indigenous persons conceptualized ‘the land’ and subjecthood, and what are the potential positive and negative implications of such understandings for how Indigenous persons who live in urban communities are recognized by others, how they recognize themselves, and how they recognize others? (Chapter 2).

2) Do Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo *reconcile* two different discourses on reality – dualism and Indigenous relationality? And if so, what implications, if any, do these acts of reconciliation have for the process of reconciliation *writ large* between Canada and Indigenous peoples?

3) What are the implications of liberal and Indigenous relational scholars’ conceptualizations of effort, subjecthood, and desert<sup>4</sup> for the process of transforming liberal economic and educational systems into relational social systems? (Chapter 4).

4) How do Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives? (Chapter 5).

---

<sup>3</sup> I use the terms Indigenous and non-Indigenous in lieu of terms like settler and Indigenous. This is because like Metis scholar Emma LaRocque (2015), I am not enamored with terms such as ‘settler’ to distinguish non-Indigenous peoples from Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples ‘settled’ and governed our lands for centuries; the idea that we ‘roamed over’ and did not govern our lands is a myth that was used to justify dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their lands and governing authority.

<sup>4</sup> The philosophical concept of desert is simply the idea that people *deserve* particular goods or harms based on their actions (Sandel 2009).

Before I answer these questions, I engage with how Indigeneity in urban settings has been theorized to date, broadly stated. This allows me to develop language to conceptualize and engage with Indigeneity in urban settings.

### **1.1.1 Theorizing on Indigeneity in urban contexts**

The literal and conceptual evacuation of Indigenous presence from urban spaces naturalizes the idea that urban communities are spaces exclusively reserved for non-Indigenous persons (Coulthard 2014). Building on Dene political scientist Glen Coulthard's insights, I think that much research on Indigeneity in urban settings takes for granted and naturalizes the distinction between 'reserve-based' and 'urban' Indigenous communities. This process of evacuating Indigenous presence from urban communities is also premised on the idea that Indigenous peoples did not settle in communities with large populations, but rather roamed over territories (LaRocque 2015). As LaRocque (11) notes,

Europeans used the concept of "settlers/settlement" as a mark of civilization (assumed to be European) in direct opposition to the "nomadic" "Indians," nomadism being a sign of savagism. So, in archival literature, "Indians" are often described as "roaming" or "ranging rather than inhabiting" – an early colonialist mantra that rationalized and soon legalized dispossession of Native lands, resources, and communities ... The concept of "settlement/settler" became a moral argument advanced by European justifiers of colonization.

Currently, the term settler is loaded with the inverse moral meaning (to be a settler is to be complicit in the process of colonization, we are told) (Fortier and Hon-Sing Won 2019); however, even when posited in this manner, the term settler still implicitly retains the notion that Europeans settled and Indigenous peoples roamed. The implication that follows is that one has property rights, the other does not. Further, it seems to me that all peoples (including Europeans) roam in their territories. Thus, the idea that Indigenous peoples didn't settle in communities, and that roaming in one's territories is somehow a bad practice would be farcical if it wasn't also tragic. To be clear, some Indigenous peoples in pre- and post-contact British Columbia lived in densely populated areas, while others did not (McMillan 1999). Whether they would be considered urban by today's standards is a matter of debate. The fact that Indigenous peoples lived and continue to live in large settlements, small settlements, and/or roam within their territory is not a good or bad thing, but rather a fact that is true or false about the world.

This brings us to our current understanding of urban communities as communities that are dominated by human-built structures (such as buildings, cars, etc.) and densely populated (Corburn 2017). In the case of this dissertation, I combine this understanding of urban communities with Statistics Canada's (2017b) understanding of urban communities (which includes cities and towns), as being having a population with 30,000 peoples or more, and with the added caveat that Indigenous reserves which neighbor cities are also *a type* of urban community.

I recognize that designating Indigenous reserve communities as urban is seen as controversial or factually incorrect. Part of the reason for this is because, as Indigenous studies scholars (Carpio 2011; Peters and Andersen 2013) argue, designations of urban and reserve are often informed by and reproduce a vision of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities

as culture-less and place-less peoples who lack an authentic connection to their homelands and cultures, and as such are assimilated, or are in danger of being assimilated into non-Indigenous societies. Such discourse is often informed by a political perspective that is sympathetic to the plight of Indigenous peoples (Simpson and Smith 2012). However, non-Indigenous governments, corporations, and persons who do not hold a sympathetic view of Indigenous peoples also view Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities as persons who are assimilated into or are attempting to assimilate into non-Indigenous society (K. Wilson and Peters 2005; Coombes, Johnson, and Howitt 2013). Here, Indigenous movement to urban communities is seen as a sign that Indigenous persons have abandoned their supposedly ‘uncivilized’ and ‘backward’ communities and lifeways in favour of ‘civilized’, and ‘progressive’ communities and lifeways. Thus, whatever the political persuasion, urban areas are often discussed as zones of assimilation, where malevolent or benevolent modernity absorbs Indigeneity whole.

At first blush, the distinction between ‘reserve-based Indigenous communities’ and ‘urban communities’ seems intuitively correct. However, the distinction between Indigenous communities as ‘reserve-based or ‘urban’ communities is less easily delineated. While there are certain Indigenous reserve communities located in rural settings, there are also Indigenous peoples who live in rural communities such as towns, villages, *etc.* My empirical research (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5) was conducted with Indigenous persons who live in the cities of Vancouver and Nanaimo.<sup>5</sup> The city of Vancouver neighbors the Musqueam Indian<sup>6</sup> Band

---

<sup>5</sup> I give a more detailed description of Vancouver, Nanaimo, and the adjacent Indigenous communities in the ‘Methodology and methods’ section of the introduction.

<sup>6</sup> The term “Indian” is a legal (*Indian Act 1867*), colonial, and anachronistic term used to describe the original Indigenous inhabitants of British Columbia (Lawrence 2004). Some Indigenous nations in British Columbia have



reserve<sup>7</sup> community of Musqueam Indian Reserve No. 2 (Burns 2020). The city of Nanaimo neighbors the Snuneymuxw reserve community of Nanaimo Town Indian Reserve 1 (Snuneymuxw 2020a).<sup>8</sup> Given that these two reserve communities neighbor cities, does that make them ‘reserve-based’ or ‘urban’ communities? It seems to me that because Musqueam Indian Reserve No. 2 and Snuneymuxw Reserve No. 1 directly neighbor the cities of Vancouver and Nanaimo, it follows that they are reserve-based urban Indigenous communities. However, the term reserve-based urban Indigenous communities is problematic because it privileges place over people. It is wise to use ‘people first language’<sup>9</sup> when discussing Indigenous communities and persons. Thus, I will be using the phrase Indigenous reserves located in urban settings when generally discussing Indigenous communities such as Musqueam Indian Reserve No. 2 or Nanaimo Indian Town Reserve No. 1. However, whenever possible I will be using the actual name of the communities in question (i.e., Musqueam Indian Reserve No. 2 or Nanaimo Indian Town Reserve No. 1, etc.). Similarly, I will be using the term Indigenous persons who live in reserves located in urban settings to describe individuals who live in such communities. The

---

claimed and use the term in their naming convention (i.e., Musqueam Indian Band). I will not be using this term to describe Indigenous peoples or persons other than those who choose to be identified according to this term.

<sup>7</sup> In Canada, an Indigenous ‘Reserve’ is an area of land set aside by the federal government of Canada to contain Indigenous peoples, legally referred to as ‘Indian’ bands under the federal *Indian Act* (1867). The *Indian Act* defines ‘Indian’ status, meaning Canada legally defines who is an ‘Indian.’ In short, the *Indian Act* transforms distinct Indigenous nations, such as the Ahousaht and Woodland Cree, into racialized ‘Indian’ populations who are wards of the state (Lawrence 2004). Indigenous reserves in British Columbia were designed to break up large Indigenous territories into small tracts of marginally inhabitable land, thus opening up British Columbia for settlement and use by non-Indigenous governments, corporations, and persons, while also weakening the authority of Indigenous nations over their territories (Harris 2004). Right-wing and left-wing liberals have a long history of wanting to abolish Indian reserves to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canada. Reserves are important because they provide Indigenous communities a space *away* from the Canadian state (which has long sought to eradicate Indigenous culture and governing authority), allowing for a space where traditional Indigenous social practices can be performed without fear of reprisal from the state or non-Indigenous persons (Alfred 2009).

<sup>8</sup> I discuss the research context of this dissertation more fully in the ‘Methodology and methods’ section of the introduction.

<sup>9</sup> See Palmer (2018) for a discussion of the utility of ‘people-first language.’

above distinctions are more conceptually useful than understanding them as being solely ‘reserve-based communities/persons’ or ‘urban communities/persons’ because these reserve communities face social, ecological, economic, and political pressures that are deeply driven by the fact that they neighbor the cities of Vancouver and Nanaimo. It is also logical to infer that these pressures differ from those faced by Indigenous reserve communities located in rural settings.

Often when Indigenous scholars (e.g., Lawrence 2004; Richmond et al. 2021) speak of ‘urban Indigenous communities’, they are not speaking of Indigenous reserves located in urban settings, but what other scholars have characterized as off-reserve urban Indigenous communities, peoples, populations, or persons (e.g., McCartney 2016; Al-Zyoud and Leblanc 2018). I agree with these terms, but think it needs to be modified to use people-first language. With that in mind, I modified the terms off-reserve urban Indigenous communities to read Indigenous peoples who live in cities and towns<sup>10</sup> and off-reserve urban Indigenous persons to the term Indigenous persons who live in cities and towns. These terms can (and should) be made geographically specific (i.e., Indigenous peoples/persons who live in Vancouver; Indigenous peoples/persons who live in Nanaimo, etc.) whenever possible. Such language is useful because it is premised on the idea that Indigenous peoples are existentially present in urban communities such as towns or cities (i.e., Indigenous persons who *live* in urban communities).

Finally, there are times when I will be using the term Indigenous peoples/persons who live in urban communities. I use these terms when speaking generally / engaging with literature

---

<sup>10</sup> Though towns can be communities which have less than 30,000 people, for the purposes of this dissertation, towns are understood in the context of urban communities (Canada 2017a) (i.e., as communities which contain 30,000 people or more).

that speaks generally of the shared experiences of Indigenous reserves located in urban settings and Indigenous peoples who live in cities and towns.

Peters and Chris Andersen (2013) argue that a dominant academic and popular conceptualization of Indigenous persons who live in urban communities is that they are physically detached from their reserve communities and as such, alienated from their culture. They argue that this sentiment ignores that there are Indigenous reserves located in urban settings *and* that some Indigenous peoples live in urban communities that are located on the ancestral territories of their Indigenous nations. That being said, one could modify the dominant and popular conceptions of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities to read ‘the experiences of Indigenous peoples/persons who live in cities or towns *that are not within the territories of their ancestral Indigenous nations* are primarily defined by physical detachment from their ancestral communities and cultural alienation.’ This argument seems superficially true but is debatable when subjected to critical scrutiny. For instance, Indigenous studies scholars have noted that Indigenous persons who live in cities or towns often travel to their reserve communities to maintain kinship ties and engage in traditional cultural practices (Corntassel and Bryce 2011; Christensen and Andrews 2016). As well, Indigenous persons who live in reserve communities often travel to cities or towns to reconnect with family members. Further, Indigenous reserve communities often commission community members to distribute resources – such as salmon or Christmas hampers – to members of their Indigenous nations who live in cities or towns, thus strengthening communal kinship ties (Manson 2019). Further complicating matters is that some Indigenous persons who live in cities or towns that are not located within their ancestral territories often cultivate their Indigenous identities by building relationships with the Indigenous lands and peoples located therein, rather than privileging their ancestral territories

as sites of identity construction (Andersen 2013). Thus, in this dissertation, I take seriously the idea that many Indigenous persons who live in cities or towns might not feel uncultured and feel the need to travel to their ancestral territories to be ‘re-cultured.’

There are Indigenous scholars (Lawrence 2004; Coulthard 2014) who argue that Indigenous persons who live in cities or towns should journey back to their reserve communities or at the very least, establish strong connections with reserve communities as a means to cultivate their identities. Whether one agrees with such arguments, such arguments flow from the fact that some Indigenous persons who live in cities or towns feel alienated and think that what it means to be authentically Indigenous is to have an immediate connection to one’s ancestral homeland and kin who reside therein (Lawrence 2004). Thus, I acknowledge that some Indigenous persons who live in cities and towns might feel content, but also journey back to their reserve communities to cultivate their identities; that some Indigenous persons who live in cities or towns might feel content, but also not feel the need to journey to their ancestral territories to cultivate their identities; *and* that some Indigenous persons who live in cities or towns might experience anomie, and feel it is necessary to journey to their reserve communities to feel connected with themselves and their kin.

Finally, we can learn from the Indigenous nations that neighbor Vancouver and Nanaimo. Both the Musqueam Indian Band (Musqueam 2007) and Snuneymuxw First Nation (Snuneymuxw 2020a) say that a primary reason that many of their community members live in cities and towns is that there is not enough land on their reserves to accommodate their community members. Thus, one cannot understand the choices Indigenous persons who live in urban communities make without first understanding colonial processes of dispossession, whereby Canada dispossessed Indigenous nations and persons of their lands and governing

authorities over their communities and lives. One tool that many Indigenous scholars and their allies use to understand these processes of dispossession is political philosophy, to which I will turn next.

## 1.2 Political philosophy and Indigenous peoples

I used political philosophy as it articulates with or can be juxtaposed to Indigenous philosophies to understand the political relationships that exist among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and within Indigenous communities. In particular, I used a foundational insight from the field, which argues that one's political perspectives are often premised on arguments that seek to describe how the world operates causally (i.e., descriptive claims), which often lead to normative<sup>11</sup> arguments about how people ought to govern their communities and individual lives (Shapiro 2003; MacIntyre 2007; Sandel 2009).<sup>12</sup> This model of thinking is useful because it provides a way to conceptualize and understand different political philosophies (such as liberalism, Indigenous relationality, dialectical, etc.) while also allowing us to include the different perspectives of Indigenous persons as political philosophies. In short, anyone can have theories about how the world operates causally and how it ought to be governed, which can be

---

<sup>11</sup> In philosophy, a normative statement is understood as a claim about how things *ought* to be (i.e., they are value claims) (Shapiro 2003). For instance, the assertions that 'Indigenous persons who live in reserves located in rural settings should move to the city to become more Canadian' or 'Indigenous persons who live in cities and towns should move back to their ancestral territories to become authentically Indigenous' are normative statements. Conversely, a descriptive version of the above statements could read 'Some Indigenous persons who live in reserves in rural settings feel pressured by non-Indigenous peoples to move to the city to become more Canadian' or 'some Indigenous persons who live in cities and towns often feel inauthentically Indigenous because they do not live in their ancestral homelands.'

<sup>12</sup> In political philosophy there is a debate about whether *value statements* can be derived from the 'natural facts' (Leff 1979; Shapiro 2003). That being said, there is literature which argues that people often *act as though* they can derive statements about how they *ought* to govern their communities and individual lives from what they perceive to be 'natural facts' of the world (MacIntyre 2007; Sandel 2009). I agree with the latter insight and use it as an analytic frame.

informed by their experiences in the world, lessons they have learned in a variety of settings, etc. I wed this insight to the insights of Indigenous scholars, who argue that Indigenous peoples' narratives and stories are often the sites where our theories about reality are located (Atleo 2011; Million 2014; Eagle Shield, Munson, and San Pedro 2021). I found these combined insights useful in that they allowed me to engage with the stories and perspectives of Indigenous persons as Indigenous theories of how the world is and ought to be.

Indigenous peoples often root their ideas about how the world is and ought to be to Indigenous relationality (often referred to as Indigenous ontologies).<sup>13</sup> Broadly speaking, Indigenous relationality is a discourse on reality (i.e., an Indigenous discourse on reality) that is premised on the idea that the reality humans experience is a manifestation of relationships (Atleo 20004; 2011; Cordova 2007; S. Wilson 2008; Kimmerer 2013). Indigenous relational scholars (scholars whose analytic frameworks and politics are explicitly informed by Indigenous relational discourses on reality) often argue that since people are a manifestation of relationships, they have a responsibility to establish relationships of care and giving with their relatives, which can include nonhuman elements (Nadasdy 2007; S. Wilson 2008; N. Wilson and Inkster 2018). I engage with Indigenous relational scholars to understand how Indigenous relationality is mobilized as a political logic (but not the only political logic) that Indigenous peoples and persons use to govern their communities and lives. Or, in other words, I understand Indigenous relationality as an Indigenous governing logic. Indeed, Indigenous nations such as the Tseshah

---

<sup>13</sup> David Graeber (2015, 15) argues that research on Indigenous ontologies tends to speak of ontologies as “way of being”, when in reality when we speak of the word ontology, it is more proper to think of ontology as “a discourse (logos) about the nature of being ...” Practically, what this means is *any* discourse on reality articulated by an Indigenous person is an Indigenous discourse on reality, which is the position I agree with. That said, I do not use the term Indigenous ontology for reasons I explain in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5. In its place I use the terms Indigenous relationality or Indigenous relational discourse on reality.

First Nation (2020, paragraph 1), Snuneymuxw First Nation (Snuneymuxw 2020b paragraph 1), ʔAq'am First Nation (2020, paragraph 1), explicitly state that their modes of governance are informed by the idea that persons are related and interconnected with all of reality (i.e., their geographically specific relational discourses on reality). Understanding Indigenous relationality as a governing logic is important because non-Indigenous states, corporations, and individuals have appropriated and depoliticized Indigenous relationality in service of practices such as non-Indigenous led scientific surveys (Nadasdy 2003), increasing the productivity of fish farms (Schreiber and Newell 2006), and new-age spiritualism (P. Deloria 1998).

Nishnaabeg scholar Hayden King (2015, 179) argues that it is politically unwise to speak of Indigenous relationality in a broad sense because doing so papers over the fact that Indigenous peoples such as the “Maori, Maasai, Masyarakat Adat (among others) do not share the same ontology or normative hopes.” However, it is reasonable to note that Indigenous relational scholars (Cordova 2007; S. Wilson 2008; Atleo 2011) have observed that Indigenous relational discourses on reality in places like Australia, Peru, or Canada share broad features, such as the notion that people are related to all of creation and because relatives have given us gifts, we have a responsibility to give to relatives. That being said, I do note that these broad commonalities emerge from and are expressed in specific locales. I agree with King’s (2015) insight that between Indigenous nations there is a multitude of Indigenous relational discourses on reality, which produce different political drives. Within Indigenous communities, there are diverse interpretations and practices of Indigenous relational discourses on reality. Indeed, Indigenous relational scholars such as Ahousaht philosopher E. Richard Atleo (2011) and Mississauga Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson (2011) argue that not only are there diverse interpretations of Indigenous relational discourses on reality that exist within Indigenous communities, but also

that Indigenous persons have a right and responsibility to interpret and modify these discourses on reality in ways they see fit. That said, these broad Indigenous relational discourses about how the world is and ought to be circulate within and between Indigenous communities. Further, there is evidence that Indigenous persons inherit and modify these discourses, which they use to shape their understanding of how the world is and ought to be (S. Wilson 2008; Atleo 2011). In particular, there is evidence that Indigenous persons who live in cities use this broad relational discourse to understand and enact social lives in cities and towns (Manson 2019; Morton et al. 2020).

The way I have been discussing Indigenous relational governing logics thus far might make it seem as though these are the only logics which structure and which Indigenous peoples use to structure their communities and lives. I use the field of Indigenous studies, particularly critical Indigenous studies, to situate Indigenous peoples and their respective governing logics within a modern context which is largely governed according to the tenets of liberal capitalism (A. Simpson 2014). Nicole Wilson (2018, 6) understands the field of critical Indigenous studies as being

committed to the politically engaged study of Indigenous peoples being, knowing and governing as well as the legacies of colonialism ... Critical Indigenous scholars argue that contemporary Indigenous-state relationships are shaped by colonial dispossession of Indigenous land for use by settler states, communities, and the capitalist economy.

I agree with this understanding of critical Indigenous studies and situate my work within this field. I would like to add that scholars within critical Indigenous studies tend to be open to



using works produced by non-Indigenous scholars and non-relational paradigms as tools to analyze the contemporary colonial relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous nations.<sup>14</sup> Some critical Indigenous scholars use Indigenous relational discourses on reality and non-relational discourses on reality (such as post-structuralism or Marxism) to analyze the relationship between non-Indigenous states and Indigenous nations.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, some Indigenous relational scholars are highly skeptical of the descriptive and normative utility of non-relational discourses on reality such as Marxism, poststructuralism, etc.<sup>16</sup> I use relationality – the notion that people are manifestations of, embedded in, and participating in *one* relationship at all times – in concert with insights derived by critical Indigenous scholars, to interpret and modify non-relational discourses on reality, namely, the philosophical works of G.W.F. Hegel., particularly his concepts of objectification, alienation, and recognition which flow from his works such as his fragment *Love* (1996 [1798]) and *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977 [1807]). Objectification is the argument that the artifacts we produce are expressions of conflicting ideas that are internal to a given society (Miller 2005). Alienation is the notion that through the process of objectification, the artifacts we create begin to seem as though they are expressions of processes beyond our control, rather than being expressions of our ideas (or in the case of Marx, our labour under capitalism) (Miller 2005). Conversely, Hegel’s notion of recognition is based on the idea that a fundamental characteristic of human psychology is for people to give, receive, and seek esteem from those that they hold in esteem (Shapiro 1990). I discuss these concepts extensively in Chapter 2 and use modified versions of these concepts as analytical frameworks in

---

<sup>14</sup> See Tuck and Yang (2011); Million (2013); Coulthard (2014); A. Simpson (2014) for examples.

<sup>15</sup> See Alfred (2009) and Coulthard (2014) for examples.

<sup>16</sup> See Cordova (2007); L. Simpson (2011) for examples.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 5. The reason I use Hegelian concepts is threefold. Firstly, qualitative researchers have demonstrated the utility of using Hegelian concepts of objectification (Miller 2000) to understand how people conceptualize and engage in material practices. Secondly, Indigenous studies scholars (Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014) have shown the importance of critically engaging with the works of Hegel, particularly his concept of recognition, to understand the political relationships between Indigenous nations and Canada. Finally, I engage with the works of Hegel because various scholars (Cohen 1988; Camara 2005; Villet 2011; Stone 2017; Hogan 2018) have noted how Hegel's conceptualization of freedom – reliant, as it is on the concepts of objectification, alienation, and recognition – creates a hierarchical binary of persons, envisioning people whose actions are seen as resulting from nature/objects / contexts, as unfree relative to people whose actions are presumed to be determined by the self. My contribution to the dialogue around Hegel is to make the connection between objectification, alienation, and recognition explicit and to discuss potential implications of Hegel's view that people are either determined by nature or 'self-determined' for how Indigenous peoples who live in cities and towns recognize themselves, recognize others, and are recognized by others.

As mentioned earlier, I situate my research within contexts that are informally governed by Indigenous relational logics and are formally governed by the tenets of liberal capitalism. While this premise can only be stated here in abstract terms, it does mean that in what follows I mobilize the insights of Indigenous relational scholars and critical Indigenous scholars who argue that liberalism and capitalism are largely structured by the tenets of individualism. I combine these insights with the insights of liberal scholars who argue that liberal individualism is largely premised on a dualist discourse on reality (Shapiro 1986; Jolley 2015). Thus, I engage with the philosophical tradition of dualism, which argues that reality is comprised of physical

reality, subject to the laws of cause and effect, and an immaterial reality, which is located in the human mind and is not subject to the laws of cause and effect (Coleman 2014). I chose to engage with the topic of dualism because Indigenous relational scholars (Cordova 2007; Kimmerer 2013) and critical Indigenous scholars (Hokowhitu 2009; Tuck and McKenzie 2015) are highly critical of the concept of dualism, specifically its notion that the world is defined by material and immaterial reality, which they argue degrades the embodied and relational nature of reality. Thus, engaging with Indigenous relationality and dualism helps me understand how Indigenous peoples and persons (which includes scholars, activists, and Indigenous persons with whom I conducted research) navigate the contradictions of living in a world largely governed according to the seemingly incommensurate discourses on reality of dualism and Indigenous relationality.

I also engage with liberal<sup>17</sup> philosophies because Indigenous peoples who live in cities and towns are formally governed according to the tenets of liberal capitalism and to get a robust understanding of dualism and the political and economic logics which flow from it. I use the insights of Indigenous relational scholars, critical Indigenous scholars, and liberal scholars to interpret and engage with liberal political philosophies. I do this because though I do not agree with liberal assumptions about how the world operates causally or how it ought to be governed, I find myself in agreement with liberal scholars (Caney 1986; Smith 2016) who argue that critics of liberalism often caricature liberalism as wholly individualistic in orientation. I mobilize liberal interpretations of liberal philosophies (Shapiro 1986; Seagrave 2011; Smith 2016) to argue that

---

<sup>17</sup> While liberal political theories are diverse and often come into conflict with one another, political liberalism is largely defined by a reliance on dualist discourses on reality; the construction of states which seek to promote and protect individual autonomy (i.e., liberty) through a doctrine of individual rights; and a commitment to the idea that capitalism is the economic system which can most efficiently distribute economic goods and harms within a given society (Shapiro 1986).

dualism (and the liberal and capitalist logics which flow from it) is comprised of a relational aspect – which recognizes that physical reality emerges from processes – and an individualistic aspect which argues that the mind is immaterial, meaning that people engage in acts of isolated reason to produce, own, and be responsible for their thoughts. My contribution to the above dialogues on dualism is to theorize on the potential implications for Indigenous peoples living in cities and towns which are formally governed according to the tenets of liberal capitalism and which are often informally governed according to the tenets of Indigenous relationality.

### **1.3 Methodology and methods**

I divided this dissertation into four substantive chapters, with two of the chapters being theoretical (Chapter 2 and Chapter 4) and two chapters being empirical (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5), to answer the questions stated below:

1) How have non-Indigenous and Indigenous persons conceptualized “the land” and subjecthood, and what are the potential positive and negative implications of such understandings of land and subjecthood for how Indigenous persons who live in urban communities are recognized by others, how they recognize themselves, and how they recognize others? (Chapter 2).

2) Do Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo *reconcile* two different discourses on reality – dualism and Indigenous relationality? And if so, what implications, if any, do these acts of reconciliation have for the process of reconciliation *writ large* between Canada and Indigenous peoples?

3) What are the implications of liberal and Indigenous relational scholars' conceptualizations of effort, subjecthood, and desert for the process of transforming liberal economic and educational systems into relational social systems? (Chapter 4).

4) How do Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives? (Chapter 5).

I chose to write two theoretical chapters (Chapter 2 and Chapter 4) as a way to engage with arguments that have broad implications for Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities, but which I also think have been undertheorized. The two theoretical chapters were also designed to complement and provide a theoretical base for the empirical chapters (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5). This technique was inspired by the works of English Hegelian anthropologist Daniel Miller (2000), whose empirical research *The Dialectics of Shopping* utilized such a format.

I conducted empirical research for Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada. Vancouver is located in south-west British Columbia, on the traditional and unceded territory of the “the X̱məθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations ...” (Burns 2020, 28). The phrase traditional territory is a reminder that the Musqueam Indian Band, the Squamish Nation, and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation have occupied and used territory appropriated by Vancouver for centuries (Burns 2020). The term uncaded territory is meant to be a reminder that the Musqueam Indian

Band, the Squamish Nation, and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, never formally negotiated a treaty with Canada whereby they agreed to relinquish their governing authority over their territories.

As of the 2016 Canadian Census, the population of Vancouver is approximately 631, 000 (Statistics Canada 2017c). As of 2016, Musqueam Indian Reserve No. 2 has a population of 1,650, of which 800 are Musqueam and 850 are non-Indigenous (City of Vancouver 2017).<sup>18</sup> The City of Vancouver (2) notes that Vancouver has a diverse Indigenous population (who are from many Indigenous nations), with a “population [that] is estimated to number 14 thousand persons, or 2.2% of the population.”

The city of Nanaimo is located on the east-central portion of Vancouver Island, a large island located west of the British Columbia mainland. Nanaimo is located on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation (Snuneymuxw 2020). The Snuneymuxw have occupied and used territory appropriated by Nanaimo for centuries (Carey 2007). The Snuneymuxw community of Nanaimo Town Indian Reserve 1 neighbors the city of Nanaimo. According to the Snuneymuxw First Nation (Snuneymuxw 2020c, paragraph, 2), their population is “1,300 with 65% of our membership living off reserve in the surrounding cities of Nanaimo, Victoria, Vancouver and Seattle.” Unlike the Musqueam Indian Band, the Snuneymuxw First Nation signed a pre-confederation treaty with the British Crown, the Treaty of 1854 (Snuneymuxw 2020a). According to the Snuneymuxw First Nation (Snuneymuxw 2020a, paragraph 4), their community members “live on the smallest reserve land base per capita of any First Nation in British Columbia.” The Snuneymuxw First Nation (Paragraph

---

<sup>18</sup> The Musqueam Indian Band leases their lands to non-Indigenous persons (Pasternak 2015). See Pasternak (2015) for discussion of non-Indigenous persons leasing land on Musqueam Indian Reserve No. 2.

4) says that their lack of land ownership is a result of Canada systematically undermining, ignoring, or dishonouring the treaty of 1854. Further, the lack of land-base on Nanaimo Indian Town Reserve No. 1 means that many Snuneymuxw has no choice but to live in Nanaimo and other cities and towns located in the Pacific Northwest (Snuneymuxw 2020). As of 2016, the population of Nanaimo is approximately 102,000, with approximately eight thousand Indigenous peoples (8% of the population) living in Nanaimo (Canada 2017c).

If we take a look at the above statistics, we can see that Nanaimo has a higher proportion of Indigenous peoples (8.0%) relative to Vancouver (2.0%). This means that Indigenous persons who live in Nanaimo are more visible than Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver. What I mean by this is the likelihood that non-Indigenous persons will encounter (and recognize that they are encountering) Indigenous persons is higher in Nanaimo than in Vancouver. Conversely, Indigenous peoples who live in Vancouver have a visible political presence (Blomley 2004), which makes their visibility seem larger than 2.0% of the population of Vancouver.

### **1.3.1 Analytic paradigm**

I use a modified realist analytic paradigm, which argues that there is one reality that exists beyond our perception, and that this reality itself is definitively a product of processes beyond our immediate perception and control (Shapiro and Wendt 2005). I combine this insight with the insights of Indigenous scholars (Cordova 2007; S. Wilson 2008; Atleo 2011) who argue that reality is relationships. Contemporary realists (Shapiro and Wendt 2005; Maxwell 2012) acknowledge the interpretivist claim that our knowledge about the world is not detached, neutral, and objective, but rather is theory-laden and a manifestation of our interests. However, realists

differ in how they describe the idea that our observations are theory-laden. For instance, Shapiro and Wendt (2005) argue that while it is true that our observations about reality are theory-laden, even our theory-laden observations are caused by social processes beyond our control and not our individual perspectives. Conversely, Maxwell (2012, vii) adds a constructivist approach to realism, arguing that our theory-laden observations are “our own construction, created from a specific vantage point, and [as such] ... there is no possibility of our achieving a purely ‘objective’ account that is independent of all particular perspectives.” First, Maxwell’s statement that our knowledge of reality is “our construction” is a statement that implies a universal, objective truth that is independent of our perspectives. Secondly, Maxwell’s assertions seem to import an unnecessary individualistic conception of knowledge into realism, whereby specific individuals from specific vantage points construct reality. It seems to me the claim that our knowledge is theory-laden is an acknowledgement that knowledge emerges from relationships (with humans and nonhumans), not specific individuals. If we take the realist approach advocated by Shapiro and Wendt (2005), combined with a non-anthropocentric view of social relations (Cordova 2007; S. Wilson 2008; Atleo 2011), it is appropriate to say that knowledge is produced and distributed to people by relationships beyond one’s immediate perception and control and that how individuals acquire and modify the knowledge they have inherited itself is a product of relationships beyond one’s immediate control.

### **1.3.2 Community-based versus engaged research**

A modified realist paradigm necessarily leads one to acknowledge the role community plays in producing the circumstances and knowledge that enable researchers to conduct research. I acknowledge that my capacity to conduct research and the knowledge herein is produced by the



experiences of the Indigenous persons with whom I was conducting research. Further, my research was also informed by their concerns about how they felt they were being represented in broader social discourse. One could posit that my research is community-based research, which traditionally focuses “on issues of real importance to communities, involves community members in all phases of the research process and centers on the goal of social change” (Minkler and Wallerstein, 2008 in N. Wilson 2018, 26). Indeed, my research focuses on and is informed by issues that Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo say are important to them and focuses on social change. However, my research differs from traditional community-based research with Indigenous communities, where a researcher typically approaches an Indigenous nation; asks to conduct research with a particular community within their territory; designs a research question with community members; present the results to community members; modifies the results based on feedback from community members.<sup>19</sup> My research does not fit such a mold because I am conducting research with Indigenous persons who are not formally governed by their Indigenous nations.

For this reason, my research does not fall within the realm of community-based research; however, my research is relational, reflexive, and community-engaged. It is relational because like other Indigenous researchers (S. Wilson 2008; Kovach 2010), I grounded my research in the concept of relationality. I recognized that the people I was conducting research with were in an immediate and broad sense of the word ‘relatives’, meaning that I have a responsibility to engage beneficially reciprocal relationships with them (S. Wilson 2008). Part of this process of beneficial reciprocity flows from understanding the stories of the participants as their theories

---

<sup>19</sup> See N. Wilson (2018) for an example of such style of research.

about how life is and ought to be (Million 2014). My research is reflexive in that I do critically situate myself within the research process, noting the ways academic structures and practices have been mobilized to conceptualize Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities as land-less, culture-less persons who need to be transformed into ‘authentic Indigenous peoples’. Like Hokowhitu (2009), I recognize such perspectives are often rooted in the notion that Indigenous persons should orient their identities and practices towards a pure past we never experienced in service of a pure future we will never experience.<sup>20</sup> I agree with Hokowhitu’s argument that such a perspective has the potential to evacuate the existential presence of Indigenous persons from contemporary life. Of course, this is also true of a perspective that denies the role idealized understandings of history and the future play in shaping how Indigenous persons live their lives right here, right now. Thus, I recognize that my research has the potential to serve the interests of non-Indigenous governments, institutions, and persons rather than those of Indigenous peoples. My research is also community-engaged in the sense that my research engages with the concerns of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo. Many of these Indigenous persons told me that they do not appreciate the way other persons perceive and represent them as inauthentic Indigenous persons. These community members told me that they wanted this image changed and appreciated my efforts in trying to change such a negative image.

The notion that Indigenous persons who live in urban communities constitute an inauthentic form of Indigeneity coexists with an emerging academic discourse that argues that non-Indigenous persons can ‘learn from’ and ‘use’ Indigenous knowledges to ‘Indigenize’ liberal

---

<sup>20</sup> See V. Deloria (2007, 67) for a similar argument, where he argues that Indigenous ethics did and should flow from the ongoing life of community not some “future golden ages toward which the community is moving or from which the community has veered.”

institutions such as universities (which are primarily located in urban communities), and more strikingly, to Indigenize or sensitize non-Indigenous subjectivities.<sup>21</sup> This leads to a scenario where non-Indigenous persons, many of whom live in cities and towns, and who have never had to struggle to maintain an Indigenous sense of self and culture in the face of a society that wishes they would just go away, are imagined as people who can Indigenize. This, in turn, enables a strange form of paternalism, where non-Indigenous persons (who see themselves as ‘Indigenizing’) might also see it as their duty to ‘Indigenize’ Indigenous persons who live in urban communities. All of this leads to a focus on the social practices of Indigenous persons who live in urban communities (i.e., ‘Are they Indigenous or not?’) and less of a focus on including Indigenous persons who live in urban communities in broad conversations about how the world is and ought to be. A way around these conundrums is to recognize that non-Indigenous persons will remain non-Indigenous, regardless of whether their subjectivities are ‘relational’ because being Indigenous is contingent upon intersubjective recognition and life experiences. From this perspective, Indigenous peoples (including scholars who use ‘Western’ ideas to comprehend and apprehend reality) will remain Indigenous regardless of they live their lives or speak in a manner that immediately registers as ‘authentically’ Indigenous. All of this is not to downplay the important role Indigenous relational discourses on reality play within the lives of Indigenous persons, nor downplay the role of ancestral practices that are culturally important to Indigenous persons. I say all this because I am using this dissertation as a means to legitimize Indigenous presence in urban settings and to recognize that the diverse ways Indigenous persons who live in

---

<sup>21</sup> See Heaslip (2017) for examples of non-Indigenous persons who argue that non-Indigenous persons can use Indigenous relational discourses on reality to make their subjectivities more ‘relational’ (i.e., Indigenous).

urban communities conceptualize and enact reality are Indigenous by being practiced by Indigenous persons. Such a view opens the door to include and engage with a variety of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities when discussing issues that pertain to their lives.

On the individual level, I am an engaged researcher because I made participants aware of my perspectives on the topics we were discussing. I am aware of the power disparities that exist between myself and the participants, which could mean that ‘voicing’ my perspectives on a given topic might alienate participants who disagree with me, cause them to refuse to participate in the project, or change their perspectives to match mine. Thus, throughout our conversations, I repeatedly stated that I was not seeking the right answer to my questions, but rather, trying to understand their particular perspectives on a given topic. Indeed, my being upfront about my perspectives on a given topic made participants who disagreed with me react and disclose their perspectives on matters, thus adding to the richness and diversity of perspective found in this dissertation. Further, several participants told me that they appreciated my disclosing my perspective on topics because it demonstrated that I was a person who was more than likely sympathetic to their struggles. In turn, this allowed participants to feel comfortable expressing their views on how the world is and ought to be. This technique was inspired by a similar research process outlined in Lyon-Callo’s (2008) research conducted with persons who are experiencing homelessness.

### **1.3.3 Methods**

I used qualitative research methods to analyze and present interviews I conducted with Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo. I repeat my discussion of these

methods (in more detail) in Chapters 3 and 5. I chose qualitative research methods because I was interested in obtaining a detailed understanding of how Indigenous peoples who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo feel about the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous persons; and how they conceptualize and experience work and their economic lives. The statistical presence of Indigenous peoples in cities and towns is well established in Indigenous studies literature, with repeated references to the fact that over half of Indigenous peoples live in cities.<sup>22</sup> However, the notion that an ‘authentic’ form of Indigeneity is absent in cities remains a dominant academic and popular discourse despite recognition of the statistical presence of Indigenous persons in Canada who live in cities and towns (Peters and Andersen 2013). Or in other words, recognition of statistical facticity of Indigenous presence has not challenged in any way the idea that ‘authentic’ Indigenous peoples are existentially absent in cities and towns. Qualitative methods, specifically, presenting the words and perspectives of individual Indigenous persons who live in urban communities, is a way to establish the diverse ways Indigenous persons are existentially present in cities or towns.

All of the interviews conducted for this research took place in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada. Interviews with 26 Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo were conducted from 2019-2020 and were conducted face-to-face and over the telephone. I drew largely from people linked to my social network, who I know trace their lineage to Indigenous peoples of the world and who claim a connection to and were claimed by Indigenous peoples and persons. I chose my social network as it is comprised of people from a

---

<sup>22</sup> See Peters and Andersen (2013) and Million (2013) for example.

broad socioeconomic spectrum. Each participant was paid \$50 cash for participating in this research.

Before and immediately after interviews were conducted, I discussed with participants the methods and theories that were being used to analyze their words. Immediately after the interviews were conducted, some participants provided me with additional feedback on how they wanted me to interpret their words. After the interviews were transcribed, hand-coded using deductive and inductive coding strategies, and analyzed, I validated the results with participants who had expressed interest in seeing the results.

In this dissertation, I had a choice to represent as many voices of participants as possible or to focus on and highlight a select few voices. A more ‘representative’ style of qualitative research would seek to represent as many voices as possible. This style does include quotes from participants but is also characterized by paraphrasing large amounts of participants’ experiences.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, another style of qualitative research chooses to focus on a few perspectives, giving larger in-text quotations of the participants’ views, followed by an in-depth analysis and engagement with their views. I think a method that provides a ‘thick’ contextualization, block quotations from participants, and a thick analysis of their words is more conducive to the goals of this dissertation, which is to understand the words of participants as theory. Like ethnographers (Miller 2000; Lyon-Callo 2008), I recognize that a qualitative analysis that seeks a ‘thick description’ means that some perspectives will not be covered. That said, in choosing which experiences to highlight, I took into consideration the experiences of Indigenous persons which were not fully explored in this dissertation.

---

<sup>23</sup> See Lawrence (2004) for example.

Though I discussed the concept of relationality earlier, I also think it is important to discuss how I am using it as an analytic tool to understand the words of participants. As noted earlier, Indigenous relational discourses on reality describe a *type* of discourse on reality that finds its expression in specific geographies, social practices, and ideologies (such as Usen for the Jicarilla Apache (Cordova 2007)). Ideally, when discussing Indigenous relational discourses on reality that participants use to describe how the world is and ought to be, one would make specific reference to said ideologies. However, *all* the participants presented herein used general Indigenous relational discourses on reality *without* referencing specific Indigenous relational discourses on reality (such as Usen). Further, I am not arguing that all Indigenous peoples and persons inherently make sense of the world through a relational lens. Rather, I am arguing that there is *evidence* that Indigenous relational discourses on reality circulate within Indigenous communities, and are often used by Indigenous communities and persons as a logic to govern their communities and individual lives.

I am also not claiming that Indigenous relationality is the only discourse on reality that circulates within Indigenous communities and which Indigenous communities use to govern their communities and lives. Indeed, as I note throughout this dissertation, dualist forms of liberalism<sup>24</sup> are a dominant discourse on reality that is used by Indigenous communities and persons to engage with the social world. Again, as with Indigenous relationality, I am not arguing that dualist forms of liberalism are the only discourses on reality that Indigenous persons

---

<sup>24</sup> Here too, I am not claiming that dualist forms of liberalism are the only form of liberalism, as there are other forms liberalism such as those associated with utilitarianism, neoclassical utilitarianism, and libertarianism, to name but a few (Shapiro 1991, 2003). However, it should be pointed out that research by philosophers (Shapiro 1991, 2003; Sandel 2020) has shown that even forms of liberalism which claim to reject dualist precepts often incorporate them into their theories of how the world *ought* to be. I discuss this topic further in Chapter 4.

use to engage with the world. I acknowledge how other discourses on reality (such as cosmopolitanism, universalism, ‘privilege’ theory, among others) are used by Indigenous persons to describe how the world is and ought to be. Finally, I treat *all* discourses on reality – whether they take the form of Indigenous relationality, cosmopolitanism, universalism, etc. – as Indigenous discourses on how the world is and ought to be by being expressed by Indigenous persons. That being said, given that I am using a realist paradigm that acknowledges that we *inherit* and *modify* theories (Shapiro and Wendt 2005), I locate participants’ conceptions of how the world is and ought to be in processes beyond their immediate control. I use abduction, otherwise known as inference to the best explanation (Wendt and Shapiro 2005; Kagan 2012), to assist me in locating which discourses/practices / processes participants inherit and modify to make sense of and create their theories on how the world is and ought to be.

All participants in this dissertation are anonymized by de-identifying information specific to their biographies and by using pseudonyms.

#### **1.3.4 Positionality**

I am an Indigenous man who lives in Vancouver, and who is also a member of the working-class in the Marxian sense, in that to subsist I must sell my productive capacities for income. I also identify as working-class in the cultural sense, in that I enjoy working-class cultural artifacts, preferring them over bourgeoisie and middle-class cultural artifacts.

Though I am working-class, working at a liberal institution has given me access to resources (such as the university and money) and platforms (such as academic conferences and academic journals) that have given me social mobility and social status that many middle-class people enjoy and which most of my Indigenous participants do not enjoy. My status as an



academic enables my ideas to be respected and taken seriously by academics, activists, and artists (even if said groups disagree with my ideas). This is in contradistinction to the words of Indigenous persons who participated in this dissertation, who have told me that they think other people do not take their ideas seriously because they are Indigenous persons who live in urban communities.

I am an Indigenous man living in a colonial-patriarchal society that denigrates and treats Indigenous women as inferior others (even relative to Indigenous men who are also denigrated and treated as inferior others). Further, I am an able-bodied man living in a society that is largely designed to facilitate the actions and desires of able-bodied (Simplican 2017). Much of what counts as being Indigenous in the contemporary imaginary is *physical activities* such as hunting, fishing, gathering, drumming, dancing, etc. When I go for a hike in the backcountry, process a whole 20lb salmon, or engage in vision quests, I get to claim these practices as ‘Indigenous’ social practices. However, several of the participants in this dissertation have medical conditions which preclude them from engaging in such ‘traditional’ activities which are closely linked with Indigenous identity. To be clear, these participants are Indigenous.

Further, several participants have disabilities that precluded them from selling their productive capacities for a wage, meaning that they have to procure their incomes through transfer payments from the Government of British Columbia. Though I am not financially secure, as an academic I have access to social networks which allow me to ask people to quickly give me large amounts of money. As an academic, I am not pathologized as ‘lazy’ or ‘entitled’ or ‘dependent’ for asking people to give me money. Conversely, many of the participants in this dissertation experience extreme poverty and are pathologized as ‘lazy’, ‘entitled’, and

‘dependent’ when they ask governments or individuals for money (even pocket change) or shelter.

#### **1.4 Chapter overviews**

As referenced above, I divided my dissertation into four substantive chapters – two theoretical chapters and two empirical chapters. The two theoretical chapters were formulated to broadly address topics – such as different Indigenous and liberal conceptualizations of ‘the land’, subjecthood, effort, and desert – that I think are pertinent to the lives of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities. The two research chapters were conducted with Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.

Chapter 2, *Indigenous discourses on the land* seeks to answer the question “How have non-Indigenous and Indigenous persons conceptualized ‘the land’ and subjecthood, and what are the potential positive and negative implications of such understandings of land and subjecthood for how Indigenous persons who live in urban communities are recognized by others, how they recognize themselves, and how they recognize others?” To answer this question, I examine and critically engage with dualist, liberal, Indigenous relational, and Indigenous dialectical conceptions of ‘the land’ and subjecthood. My findings suggest that dualist conceptualizations of the land and subjecthood predominate discussions about cities, ‘the land’, and political subjecthood, even in monist dialectical theories (such as Hegelianism and Marxism) which explicitly reject dualism. My findings also suggest that there are *many* Indigenous relational discourses about what constitutes the land and subjecthood, which lead to different normative propositions. I argue that all of the above theories have negative and positive implications for

how Indigenous persons who live in urban communities are recognized by others, how they recognize themselves, and how they recognize others.

Chapter 3, *Cities as sites of reconciliation* seeks to answer the question “Do Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo *reconcile* two different discourses on reality – dualism and Indigenous relationality? And if so, what implications, if any, do these acts of reconciliation have for the process of reconciliation *writ large* between Canada and Indigenous peoples?” I answer this question by highlighting conversations I had with eight Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo (taken from a sample of 26 Indigenous persons). I asked these Indigenous persons questions about the land in the hopes that it would lead to a discussion about their views on the nature of reality, political subjecthood, intersubjective relationships among Indigenous persons, non-Indigenous persons, and the nonhuman world, and fairness. I analyzed these interviews using a modified version of Hegel’s concepts of recognition and objectification. I argue that Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo engage in everyday acts of reconciliation where they learn to respect diversity within their communities; engage in a process of ‘dispossession of the dualist self,’ whereby they partially or fully ‘let go’ of dualist discourses on reality and subjecthood; engage in acts of political empathy with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and the nonhuman world; critique a process which dispossesses Indigenous peoples, working-class people, and nonhumans of resources and power and upwardly distributes them to groups of people (the state and corporations) who already have inordinate amounts of resources and power. I conclude by arguing that the lived experiences of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo provide practical examples of reconciliation that ought to be taken seriously when people theorize about and seek to ‘practice’ reconciliation.

Chapter 4, *Relational governing logics in individualistic contexts* seeks to answer the question “What are the implications of liberal and Indigenous relational scholars’ conceptualizations of effort, subjecthood, and desert for the process of transforming liberal economic and educational systems into relational social systems?” To help me answer this question, I use a modified version of Michael Walzer’s (1987, 36-37) notion of internal critique, which argues that “ruling ideas internalize contradictions, and so criticism always has a starting point inside the dominant culture ...” which means that “new ideologies emerge from old ones by way of interpretation and revision.” I use this notion of internal critique to analyze and critically engage with dualism, liberalism, privilege theory, and Indigenous relationality as they pertain to educational and economic contexts. I argue that dualist discourses on reality (and the liberal logics which flows from them) contain relational and individualistic components. I argue that these components contradict each other, and as such, liberal political theories have internalized a contradiction between a liberal relational discourse on reality which argues that the goods and harms people receive are due to processes beyond one’s control and liberal individualistic discourse on reality which argues that individual people can use reason and work to extricate themselves from the processes which constitute them. I argue that an outcome of this resolution is a meritocratic discourse on reality which says that since individual people are the origin and owners of their actions, they deserve the goods and harms which flow from their exercise. I demonstrate that contemporary liberals and privilege theorists reject individualistic and meritocratic discourses on reality as being a valid way to describe how education and economic systems operate causally, favouring liberal relational descriptions of reality. However, I also demonstrate that these scholars retain meritocratic notions of desert as a normative ideal for educational and economic systems. Similarly, I argue that since liberalism has been imposed

on Indigenous communities (which are largely governed according to Indigenous relational governing logics), Indigenous communal governing logics have internalized a contradiction between liberal individualistic and Indigenous relational discourses on reality. I argue Indigenous peoples resolve this contradiction in service of their Indigenous relational ideals and in some instances in service of liberal individualistic ideals. I conclude by arguing for the importance of recognizing the contradictions inherent in educational and economic systems and the potential reasons why these contradictions are resolved in favour of individualistic governing logic. I also argue that internal critique along with large-scale structural change is required to make liberal educational and economic systems more relational.

Chapter 5, *Indigenous peoples' conceptions and enactments of work and their economic lives in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada*, seeks to answer the question "How do Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives?" I answer this question by analyzing a subset of five interviews taken from a broader sample of 26 interviews. I analyzed these interviews using a modified version of Hegelian concepts of recognition, objectification, and alienation. In so doing, I illuminate how Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives – including their commonalities and differences. Their commonalities were linked to mechanisms of dispossession, misrecognition (sexist, racist, ableist), exploitation, and economic austerity, and that each Indigenous person faced multiple forms of alienation. A further commonality is that each Indigenous person sought to overcome alienation through work and the building of social relationships. What emerges is, for Indigenous persons in this chapter, work and economic practices are a way to cultivate community and a sense of self. Particularly, work for several Indigenous persons in this chapter is a means to the enactment of Indigenous

governing logics (relational and treaty), which frame their acceptance and use of their incomes. I conclude the chapter by advocating for an approach to understanding the economic lives of Indigenous persons who live in urban communities that seeks to not only theorize about the types of economic activities one thinks they ought to engage in, but also the economic activities they are indeed engaged in.

## **1.5 Dissertation summary**

Broadly stated, I see this work as engaging with theories generated in academic institutions and by Indigenous persons who are situated outside academic contexts. Its empirical purpose is to understand how a diverse group of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize or enact their lives as these intersect with the meaning of land, reconciliation, relations, and economic practices. I show that social structures informed by dualism (which I argue have both relational and individualistic components) and Indigenous relational discourses on reality shape how Indigenous peoples and the cities they live in are recognized and engaged with, and how Indigenous persons recognize and engage with themselves and others. I demonstrate how dualist discourse and practices come into contradiction with Indigenous relational understandings of how the world is and ought to be, highlighting the potential implications for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons. Indigenous persons engaged here reconcile these contradictions in a variety of fashions, generating new discourses about how the world is and ought to be, which can be used to challenge or entrench individualistic understandings of the world. I conclude by arguing for the importance of recognizing and engaging with Indigenous diversity; the relational nature of urban communities; and the notion that life has been given to us by our relatives. Combined, these insights lead to a

novel understanding of urban communities as zones of Indigenous presence, which involve experiences both under-recognized, under-theorized, and largely misunderstood.

## Chapter 2: Discourses on the land and Indigeneity in urban settings

### 2.1 Introduction

In Canada, as of the 2016 census, approximately 51.8% of Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) lived in urban areas with a population of 30,000 or more (Canada, 2017, 9). These statistics themselves are complicated by the fact that Indigenous peoples often move back and forth between cities and reservations (Corntassel and Bryce 2011; Christensen and Andrew 2016). Despite these facts, historical and contemporary discourse by researchers, politicians, and non-Indigenous peoples have tended to describe urban areas as places devoid of Indigenous presence (Lawrence 2004; Raibmon 2005; Peters and Andersen 2013). Peters and Andersen (2013, 3) argue that dominant discourse about Indigenous peoples maintains “a stubborn association of “authentic” Indigenous identities with non-urban spaces, far from the metropolitan centres of society in distance and /or history.” Further, as Simpson and Smith (2014, 12) argue, an outgrowth of associating authentic Indigeneity with ruralness is that the “movement of Native peoples from reservations to urban areas is seen as a one-way journey to assimilation and despair, if not disappearance from meaningful life and political community.” Peters and Andersen (2013) argue that the idea that urbanity and Indigeneity are incompatible is an outgrowth of dualist discourses on reality (premised on the notion that human communities and ‘nature’ are distinct from each other) and so locates Indigeneity in natural spaces. Here, I note how a descriptive account of reality<sup>25</sup> – dualism – produces a normative discourse on reality<sup>26</sup> (i.e., that Indigenous peoples *ought not* to live in urban spaces). Indeed, in regards to the

---

<sup>25</sup> A descriptive discourse on reality, used here, means a discourse which *describes* how the world is constituted (Shapiro 2003; Sandel 2009).

<sup>26</sup> A normative discourse on reality is one which discusses how the world *ought* to be (i.e., is a value statement) (Shapiro 2003; Sandel 2009).



formation and promulgation of political discourses, political philosophers (Shapiro 2003; MacIntyre 2007) have noted how political theorists often formulate normative discourses on reality that flow from descriptive discourses on reality.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, a normative discourse on reality can also inform how one formulates a descriptive discourse on reality (Shapiro and Wendt 2005; Maxwell 2012).

What then to make of research that has demonstrated that Indigenous peoples themselves have used discourses which describe urban areas as places lacking authentic Indigenous presence (Coombes 2013; Hokowhitu 2013)? One could argue that such claims might find their source in a dualist descriptive discourse on reality. However, broadly speaking, Indigenous (Atleo 2004; Alfred 2009) and non-Indigenous (McCaslin 2005; Whiteman 2009) scholars have shown how Indigenous normative practices are often deeply informed by their understanding of what constitutes ‘the land’ or ‘the earth’.<sup>28</sup> Such understandings of ‘the land’ often flow from a relational discourse on reality, which frequently describes reality as emerging from and being inhabited by relations to whom one has a responsibility to engage in relationships rooted in reciprocal obligations (S. Wilson 2008; Kimmerer 2013).<sup>29</sup> Indeed, research has demonstrated

---

<sup>27</sup>David Graeber (2015, 15) argues that research on Indigenous ontologies tends to speak of ontologies as “way of being”, when in reality when we speak of the word ontology, it is more proper to think of ontology as “a discourse (logos) about the nature of being ...” Practically, what this means is *any* discourse on reality articulated by an Indigenous person is an Indigenous discourse on reality, which is the position this chapter takes. However, it should also be noted that an Indigenous discourse on reality often shapes how people conceptualize and engage with the world, hence, a discourse on reality can *also* shape how one goes about *being* in the world (S. Wilson 2008). I would like to add that I don’t think that an Indigenous person *using* a discourse on reality (such as Marxism) *necessarily* shapes how they engage with the world.

<sup>28</sup>For the purposes of this chapter, when I speak of ‘the land’, I will also be speaking of ‘the earth’ and ‘nature’, as it seems to me that Indigenous scholars (see Kimmerer 2013 for example) use these terms interchangeably.

<sup>29</sup>I am not arguing that Indigenous relational discourses on reality represent an ‘authentic’ way for Indigenous persons to comprehend and apprehend reality. Rather, I am merely arguing that there is evidence that suggests that Indigenous relational discourses on reality are a *dominant* discourse on reality that circulate within Indigenous communities and are used by Indigenous communities and persons (along with other discourses on reality such as liberalism, postmodernism, etc.) to govern their communities and lives.

that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities use relational discourses on reality as a mechanism for understanding their place within urban environs (Manson 2019). Thus, the normative idea that Indigeneity and urbanity are incompatible could also flow from different descriptive Indigenous relational discourses on reality rooted in different understandings of what constitutes ‘the land.’

Further complicating matters is the fact that Indigenous peoples in rural and urban communities have used non-relational descriptive and normative discourses on reality to understand and comprehend the social world (Hokowhitu 2013; Coulthard 2014); whereas much anti-colonial activism is associated with a dialectical understanding of reality (Hokowhitu 2009; Borrows and Tully 2018), which imagines reality as a struggle of binary opposites (colonizer and colonized) within an organic whole (colonial society). These descriptive discourses on reality are linked to and produce different understandings of what constitutes ‘the land’.

With the above thoughts in mind, this chapter is concerned with the different descriptive and normative discourses on reality used by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and how such discourses shape how Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities conceptualize their communities and themselves and are conceptualized and engaged with by others. These descriptive and normative theories need not be limited to discourse articulated by political theorists. As Million (2013, 121) notes, Indigenous peoples use various mediums to “culturally participate.” Further, Indigenous scholars themselves are not hermetically sealed: they are people whose ideas on how the world is and ought to be often emerge from cultural conversations in which they are embedded. Indeed, non-academic ideas (such as those articulated by elders) often

inform the works of Indigenous scholars.<sup>30</sup> As such, in this chapter, along with engaging with Indigenous descriptive and normative discourses on reality that are articulated and circulate within academic mediums (such as peer-reviewed books and journal articles), I will also engage with Indigenous descriptive and normative discourses that have been articulated in newspapers, literature, and YouTube videos.

Thus, I will analyze three distinct descriptive discourses on reality and the normative discourses which flow from / inform them: dualism (descriptive) and liberalism (normative); relationality (which I argue itself contains diverse descriptive and normative discourses); and dialectics (descriptive) and anti-colonialism (normative). I choose these three sets of descriptive and normative discourses because they are the dominant logics that structure and are structured by Indigenous lives. With that in mind, I argue that the Indigenous descriptive discourses on reality analyzed in this chapter deeply inform Indigenous normative discourses on reality. In turn, these diverse Indigenous descriptive and normative discourses on reality, including discourses I use as analytic tools, have implications for how Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities conceptualize reality and enact their lives and for how *others* conceptualize and engage with them. With that in mind, let us turn to dualism and liberalism.

## **2.2 Dualism and liberalism**

Before I discuss dualism and its connection to liberalism, it is important to recognize that liberalism is not merely associated with the dualism I will be outlining, as other descriptive

---

<sup>30</sup> For examples of how the ideas of Indigenous community members, particularly elders, shapes the works of Indigenous scholars see L. Simpson (2011); Kimmerer (2013); and Coulthard (2014).

discourses on reality (such as post-modernism and dialectics) have informed contemporary liberalism (Smith 2016). Further, liberalism which is based on dualist precepts is not the only type of liberalism (i.e., there are other types of liberalism such as utilitarianism and neoclassical utilitarianism which I will not be analyzing).<sup>31</sup> Finally, dualism is not *only* used by liberals or non-Indigenous persons, as there is evidence that Indigenous persons use dualist discourses on reality to understand how the world is and ought to be (Manson 2019).<sup>32</sup> That said, research has demonstrated that dualist precepts have been institutionalized at multiple levels of society (Shapiro 2003), and as such are worthy of analysis. So, what is dualism? According to the sociologist Jerry Williams (2007, 132), “Dualism is the common-sense notion that one’s self-conception has two aspects—the thing perceived and the thing that is doing the perceiving.” This common-sense notion is premised on a distinction between the immaterial mind (which is imagined as not being beholden to the laws of physics) and objective reality (which is beholden to the laws of physics) (Bloom 2007; Williams 2007).<sup>33</sup> Within the realm of cognitive science, dualism has largely been rejected in favour of physicalism, a monist theory of mind which claims mental life is the product of physical processes (Bloom 2007; Williams 2007; Mehta 2011). Regardless, as Williams (2007) notes, dualist explanations for human agency are still used widely by scholars and in popular discourse more broadly. The most famous example of dualism is that of the French philosopher Rene Descartes. Rene Descartes’ dualism centers around a two-

---

<sup>31</sup> Though, as Shapiro (1991) notes, these forms of liberalism also incorporate dualist precepts, particularly as they relate to subjecthood, effort, and desert.

<sup>32</sup> In the above cited article, I demonstrate that some Indigenous persons use dualist discourses (such as the concept of self-ownership) to describe how their economic world is and ought to be.

<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that from a dualist perspective, the human body (including the brain which is imagined as being different from the immaterial ‘mind’) is also seen as an ‘object’ which, like all other objects, is beholden to the laws of physics.

step process: establishing with certainty that ‘I’ exist (Shapiro 2003) and understanding the scientific composition of this ‘I’ (Kagan 2012). In *The Discourse on Method* (1999 [1637], 25) Descartes uses the *cogito* “I think, therefore I am” to establish, *with certainty*, that he exists. As Shapiro (2003, 8) notes “The very act of trying to doubt [the *cogito*] seems necessarily to affirm it.” From here, Descartes argues for a dualist conception of reality, divided into a material and immaterial realm, on the simple premise that since one can imagine the mind existing without the body, they must be two separate things (Kagan 2012). As Smart (1959) notes, just because one can imagine an element (such as lightning) existing without another element (such as electrical discharge) does not mean they are two separate elements. Indeed, as Smart notes, lightning *is* an electrical discharge. Kagan (2012) notes that arguments that are similarly structured to Descartes’ arguments fail, meaning that Descartes’ argument for the separation of immaterial and material realms is faulty.

Dunlop (2001, 43 in Williams 2007, 131) argues that people who utilize dualist discourses on reality tend to say that human use of “language, technology, science, and culture more generally ... made industrialized societies ‘exempt from the constraints of nature.’” As Williams (2007, 131) notes, while people “often reject the idea that human systems are exempt from nature” we have come to “accept (at least implicitly) that consciousness and its products are exempt” from naturalistic processes (Williams 131). Such a distinction ignores the fact that human consciousness and ‘its products’ cities, like all elements on earth, are emergent properties of ecological processes (Vogel 2003).

This is important because a dominant discourse on what constitutes an authentic Indigenous person (and subsequently how they ought to comport themselves) is premised on the idea that Indigenous peoples are more ‘natural’, ‘less rational’, and more ‘embodied’ people who

either belong in nature (Lawrence 2004; Hokowhitu 2009) or ought to be extricated from the clutches of nature and made into ‘civilized’ peoples (Harris 2002; Milloy 2017).

It should be noted that a major implication of dualism is that since it is premised on the idea that *only humans* can reason and be aware that they are reasoning (and since nonhuman elements either are inanimate or dominated by their instincts), it follows that *only humans* are considered beings whose actions are imbued with moral worth (Harrison 1992). Of course, this is not to say that people who use dualist discourses on reality are incapable of thinking of nonhuman elements such as animals as elements who should be treated morally, but rather that nonhuman elements are seen as being unable to engage in reciprocal acts of morality with humans. Further, as animal studies scholars (Jerolmack 2008; Luther 2013) have demonstrated, some people in urban communities apply dualist logic to the realm of nonhuman life, creating a binary between life imagined as objects and life imagined as animals. Here, certain nonhuman elements are imagined as objects which can be killed (i.e., ‘vermin’ such as rats) or harvested, which is in contradistinction to nonhuman elements imagined as animals. From this perspective, both ‘objects’ and ‘animals’ are imagined as elements that are beholden to ecological processes, and as such, are in no way subjects on the same level as humans.

Dualist theories of human agency run counter to caricatures of dualist theories of human agency, which we are told are premised on the idea that human subjects are completely closed off from physical processes (Smith 2016). Indeed, scholars have shown that dualist theories of human agency, such as those found in Rene Descartes, acknowledge that human subjecthood partially finds its source in and is conditioned by processes beyond one’s control, while also arguing that since people have an immaterial mind which is not subject to the laws of physics, a free human subject can and ought to alienate themselves from physical reality to cultivate their

sense of self (Coleman 2014; Smith 2016).<sup>34</sup> Such insights find their expression in Descartes' (1999 [1637], 12) discussion of the role nature and society play in the formation of ideas:

I have also thought that, since we were all infants before we became adults, and since we were necessarily governed for a long time by our appetites and our teachers, which were often at odds with each other and of which, perhaps, neither always gave us the best advice, it is almost impossible for our judgements to be as clear and as well-founded as they might have been had we had the full use of our reason from the day we were born and had we never been guided by anything else.

Note how Descartes acknowledges that *his life is governed* by processes beyond his immediate control (such as biological necessity and social relations). For Descartes, such processes *impede* his ability to exercise judgement which is informed by *reason* alone (i.e., his immaterial mind). Thus, Descartes is not only *describing how the world is* (i.e., that it is divided into material and immaterial realms) but also how the world *ought* to be (i.e., people should be free to exercise reason in a manner unencumbered by physical reality). Descartes' resolves this conflict between the physical and immaterial world (both of which he treats as descriptive facts) by arguing for a form of isolated intellectual reflection, which for Descartes (22) occurred in a 'stove-heated room ...'. However, Descartes (22) is not arguing for an egoistic conception of knowledge production, noting that his task of ridding himself of "all my other views" could be

---

<sup>34</sup> This form of dualism runs counter to theological forms of dualism which are determinist in nature (Coleman 2014; Sandel 2020). Here, humans are imagined as being comprised of a physical body and an immaterial soul. However, unlike Cartesian dualism, this deterministic dualism argues that one cannot use reason and work to own moral goods and harms, as moral goods and harms are made by God, not people.

accomplished “better in discussions with other people” which induced him to “set off again to travel before winter was completely over.” Here, we see a process whereby Descartes alienates himself from the world, producing thoughts he can call his own, and re-enters the world to engage in intersubjective relations.

A dualist discourse on human agency runs afoul if one takes seriously the idea that humans are emergent properties of physical processes beyond their control (Williams 2007). From this perspective, the endowments (social and biological) people inherit are a function of the work of others (human and nonhuman) and luck *at all times* (Sandel 2020). However, such deterministic understandings of social life are unpopular in the political realm. This is because liberal doctrines of individual rights and capitalist economies (the dominant forms of politics and economics in urban environments) rely upon the dualist concept of self-ownership – the claim that people own their bodies or beings because they make them (Shapiro 2001; Smith 2016).

At the theoretical level, the Lockean (1988 [1689]) theory of self-ownership, which finds its expression in *The Second Treatise of Government* flows from the dualist claim that we can, in some manner, alienate ourselves from the processes which constitute us and become the source of our actions (Shapiro 1986; Seagrave 2011; Coleman 2014; Graeber 2014; Smith 2016). For Locke, people come to own themselves when they transform themselves from “substance-man” (which is owned by God) to “person-self” by “virtue of the activity of her consciousness.” (Seagrave 2011, 720). Self-ownership is foundational for liberal doctrines of individual rights and is premised on the idea that people have *a right* over their property (their bodies) because they worked on and alienated them from the common processes which constitute them (Shapiro 1986; Shapiro 2003; Seagrave 2011; Smith 2016; Coleman 2014; Graeber 2014). In short, the concept of self-ownership has built-in logic which denies the idea that other people can own us



because no one can own us but ourselves (Shapiro 2001). Isaiah Berlin (2002, 170) argues that this form of liberty (“negative liberty” as he terms it)<sup>35</sup> means “not being interfered with by others. The wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom.” Berlin reasons that this form of negative freedom is preferable to forms of freedom that focus on the ability to cultivate an authentic sense of self (i.e., self-determination). Yet Berlin’s focus on self-ownership as a form of negative liberty overlooks how self-ownership is also concerned with the freedom to *own* things and not just the freedom from constraint. And it is this owning of things – property in the self (Richardson 2010) and property external to the self (Shapiro 1991) – that can be used to create distance between oneself and others. Indeed, as the historian Charly Coleman (2014, 46) notes, self-ownership implies that since people are “authors of all their conscious thoughts and actions,” then it follows that the “self-owning subject stands as the rightful proprietor of both the material and moral goods [he/she/they] produces.” Such a notion of freedom can be beneficial, as it instills in people the idea that the goods and harms one receives in life are reducible to their effort, which allows them to feel as though they have control over themselves and their life circumstances (Manson 2019).

However, the concept of self-ownership also has negative aspects which need to be explored. For instance, using Berlin’s (2002) logic, we can see how the concept of self-ownership creates a hierarchy of subjects – those who are being interfered with (by nature, custom, others) and those who are free from interference. The concept of self-ownership can also be used to coerce others who appear to be ‘mired in context’ into becoming ‘free’ subjects.

---

<sup>35</sup> Berlin (2002) argues that John Locke’s theory of liberty, rooted in self-ownership, is a prime example of negative liberty.

Indeed, this logic was combined with an argument that Indigenous peoples did not use their labour to transform their land into productive private property, letting their land ‘waste’ (i.e., they did not alienate portions of the earth from the commons), and as such, their land was common land that settlers could appropriate, cultivate, improve, and own (Tully 1993; Kolers 2000; Atleo 2011). Such logic finds its exemplary expression in an 1876 speech delivered by Archibald McKinlay (in Harris 2002, 108), a member of the Joint Indian Reserve Commission, a commission designed to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their land, to a crowd of Snuneymuxw persons:

Many years ago, you were in darkness killing each other and making slaves was your trade. The Land was of no value to you. The trees were of no value to you. The Coal was of no value to you. The white man came he improved the land you can follow his example—he cuts the trees and pays you to help him. He takes the coal out of the ground and he pays you to help him—you are improving fast. The Government protects you, you are rich—You live in peace and have everything you want.

Here, we see how a common-sense understanding of self-ownership informed and justified the Joint Indian Reserve Commission’s dispossession of Indigenous lands on Vancouver Island. Here, McKinlay says that before non-Indigenous peoples settled Vancouver Island, the Snuneymuxw were mired in a state of ‘darkness’, where murder was a common occurrence, Indigenous lands were ‘unproductive’ (i.e., it was ‘wasted’) and valueless. With the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples, the land and Indigenous peoples were made productive and improved. Atleo (2011, 115) argues that traditional Nuuchah-nulth peoples of Vancouver Island *did* value

the land, but not in the Lockean sense which saw some land that wasn't "worked" as "waste" and also, unowned. Of course, Indigenous persons cultivated the land (i.e., by farming, gardening, etc.), but such cultivation was viewed through a Eurocentric lens (LaRocque 2015). Atleo (2011, 115) continues his critique of Locke, arguing that for many Nuu-chah-nulth peoples land "is considered a living entity known to the ancient Nuu-chah-nulth as Haw'itume, or Wealthy Mother Earth, and, consequently, no part of this land could possibly be *waste*." Thus, many of the misunderstandings that occur between European colonizers and Indigenous peoples are problems of recognition and misrecognition: simply put, the land is a living relative, whereas, under dualist liberal notions of subjecthood, nonhuman elements are 'nature' or 'waste' which needs to be 'improved' upon and transformed into commodities. As I'll argue in the following section, this process of de-subjectification of nonhuman life has deep consequences for how Indigenous communities and Indigenous subjecthood are understood.

### **2.2.1 Implications of dualism and liberalism for Indigenous persons who live in urban communities**

The notion that Indigeneity and urbanity are incompatible persists into the modern-day, with the dominant discourse on Indigeneity and urbanity arguing that 'authentic' Indigenous peoples are those who are connected to their 'land-based' cultures (Peters and Andersen 2013). As noted earlier, dualist discourses on reality evacuate nature (i.e., the 'land') from urban communities, imagining it as a "human system" which is "exempt" from ecological processes (Williams 2007). Thus, one implication of dualist discourses on reality for Indigenous persons who live in urban communities is that nonhuman elements (which some Indigenous persons see as relatives (Atleo 2004; 2011; Cruikshank 2005; Nadasdy 2007; Kimmerer 2013) are seen as either as elements

which are not subjects or human artifacts as opposed to relatives to whom one has responsibilities. In turn, this conceptual evacuation of land from urban communities fosters a general discourse that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities are beset by problems by virtue of not being ‘connected to the land.’ Indeed, Metis scholar Tracy Friedel (2011) argues that ‘land-based’ education programs (which are often led by non-Indigenous persons) that are delivered to Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities are often premised on dualism. Friedel (535) argues that such programs reinscribe stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as primitive people who, as one Indigenous youth participating in such programs noted, “belong more in the wild” than in urban communities. I would argue that non-Indigenous persons use of dualist discourses on reality in this context creates a hierarchical conception of Indigenous subjecthood premised on how connected to or alienated from ‘nature’ Indigenous persons are. Those who are more ‘connected to nature’ are authentic Indigenous peoples; those ‘alienated’ from nature are inauthentically Indigenous.

Further, this dualist discourse on reality (centered as it is around nature/society, primitive/modern binaries) is linked to dualist notions of self-ownership. This is because, as Friedel (2011) notes, non-Indigenous peoples often conceptualize Indigenous persons who live in urban communities as placeless and identity-less persons who need to be compelled into ‘connecting with nature’ to formulate their ‘authentic’ identities. From this perspective, those Indigenous persons who work to ‘connect with nature’ are seen as authentically Indigenous, while those who can’t or don’t work to ‘connect with nature’ are abandoned as inauthentically Indigenous. Such logic implies that the goods (such as being seen as ‘authentically Indigenous’) or harms (such as being seen as ‘inauthentically Indigenous’) that Indigenous persons who live in

urban communities receive are reducible to their individual actions (how hard they work to ‘connect with nature’) – the logic of self-ownership *par excellence*.

Tracy Friedel’s (2011, 535) research demonstrates that Indigenous youths who participate in non-Indigenous led place-based learning programs are aware of the implications of such programs for how they are viewed by others, with one participant declaring her desire “to learn to be Aboriginal without being in the woods.” Friedel (537) further notes that Cree and Metis persons who participated in the above land-based education programs were aware that racist stereotypes about Indigenous peoples deeply informed the program, but still chose to use the program to

embark on the demanding journey of fostering a relationship to place and identity in close keeping with notions of Cree (and Cree-Métis and Métis-Cree) consciousness. By usurping the romanticist tradition of savage nobility, young Native people seek not quick, modernist solutions to perceived psychic and physical displacement (for example, an imperialist, nostalgic sense of nature); rather, it is substantive, Indigenist processes they embrace in their traditional territories to help them find their way home.

I agree with this and would like to add that I think the above Cree and Metis persons are not only refusing to be governed by dualist logics<sup>36</sup> but also are engaging in acts of internal critique,<sup>37</sup> whereby they interpret and modify the dualist discourses and practices they have

---

<sup>36</sup> See A. Simpson (2014) for a discussion of the politics of refusal.

<sup>37</sup> See Walzer (1987) for a discussion of the politics of internal critique.

inherited in service of their ideas about how the world is and ought to be. The following sections will focus on other discourses on reality – relationality and dialectical – that Indigenous peoples and persons (such as myself) use to help them re-establish their relationships with their human and nonhuman kin.

### 2.3 Relationality and its variants

In this section, I will discuss different Indigenous relational descriptive and normative discourse on reality that circulate within Indigenous communities, which are often referred to as relationality. I will be focusing on Indigenous relational discourses on reality that argue that all elements emerge from relationships, meaning that all elements are kin; and that all elements emerge from relationships, but some elements (such as commodities) are not kin.<sup>38</sup> In this section, I take seriously the idea that these Indigenous peoples want others *outside* their communities to engage with their ideas on how the world is and ought to be, which means I will critically engage with these discourses on reality.

Before moving forward, I want to stress that, like the previous section which analyzed dualism, I am not analyzing such Indigenous relational discourses on reality to make broad claims about who Indigenous persons are as people. For instance, it is quite common for scholars to claim that Indigenous peoples *are* ‘relational thinkers.’<sup>39</sup> Rather, I am claiming that there is evidence that relational discourses on reality are a dominant discourse that circulates within Indigenous communities and is *used* by Indigenous communities and persons to govern their

---

<sup>38</sup> However, in my own personal experience, I have seen Indigenous persons who use Indigenous discourses on reality who do not think that nonhuman elements are kin.

<sup>39</sup> See Wilson (2008) for examples of this.

communities and lives. Indeed, research has demonstrated that there are discourses that circulate within Indigenous communities which describe elements, such as animals (Nadasdy 2007), plants (Kimmerer 2013), and inanimate elements (Cruikshank 2005; N. Wilson and Inkster 2018) as though they are relatives (i.e., subjects). Some Indigenous scholars (Atleo 2004; Cordova 2007; S. Wilson 2008) argue that the idea that nonhuman elements are subjects to whom we have responsibilities arises from a monist discourse on reality which argues that reality is *one thing*. For instance, Jicarilla Apache philosopher Viola Cordova (2007, 146) argues that “In a Native American worldview there is no divinity that exists outside the universe – primarily because there is no “outside.” Whatever *is*, is an indivisible, infinite, and divine *something*.” [emphasis in the original]. Ahousaht philosopher E. Richard Atleo (2011, ix) understands that *one thing* as relationships, arguing that a Nuu-chah-nulth “view of reality” is “described as *tsawalk* (one),” and that this view of reality assumes “an interrelationship between all life forms – humans, plants, and animals. *Relationships are*.” [emphasis in the original].

Cordova (2007, 146) argues that from a Jicarilla Apache perspective, “All things are perceived as either *participating* in this one thing or being *manifestations* of the one thing” [emphasis in the original]. Or, as Lakota Sioux anthropologist Ella Deloria notes for the Lakota Sioux, (in Rifkin 2011, 3), “By kinship all Dakota people were held together in a great relationship that was theoretically all-inclusive and co-extensive with the Dakota domain. . .” I interpret these relational monist discourses on reality as implying that all things which are created by relationships are kin.

Cordova (2007, 147) argues that for Native Americans, “Consciousness, awareness, is assumed to be a characteristic of the universe ... There can be no doubt that even stones, water molecules, trees, and other animals have some kind of consciousness.” Glen Coulthard (2014)

argues that from a Yellowknives Dene perspective, nonhuman elements are presumed to have a consciousness that facilitates their *conscious* agency. Conversely, some Indigenous relational scholars do not speak of consciousness or agency when discussing whether an element is a kin. For instance, Cree scholar Lewis Cardinal (in S. Wilson 2008, 90) argues that technology, such as the tape recorder recording his words, is “made from mother earth. It has a spirit of its own. The spirit probably hasn’t been recognized, and given the right respect that it should. When we work in a world of automated things, we forget that ... everything is sacred, and that includes what we make.” Here, what is important for Cardinal is the notion that the tape recorder is imbued with the *spirit* of the relationships which gave rise to it.

While such conversations around consciousness and agency of nonhuman elements are important to Indigenous scholars, I am wary of discussing these concepts as they relate to nonhuman elements. Such discussions seem to implicitly or explicitly *import* dualist descriptive and normative discourses on what constitutes subjecthood, which I do not agree with. Recall that for a Cartesian dualist, subjecthood is linked to the ability of an element to use reason to extract themselves from physical processes (i.e., relationships), critically self-reflect, be aware that they are critically self-reflecting, and then act with conscious intent. To me, dualist discourse seems to oppose the descriptive claims made by Indigenous scholars who use relational discourses, namely, that elements are always emerging from, embedded in, and participating in relationships (most of which we cannot see). My perspective on the above discussions is that terms like consciousness, self-consciousness, or agency are moot when discussing the relational nature of existence – an element is a kin regardless if it has consciousness or acts with conscious intent.

Relatedly, Indigenous relational scholars (Atleo 2004; Cordova 2007; S. Wilson 2008) argue that since people are constituted by mysterious relationships beyond our immediate



perception, people must be careful with how they act because we will never know the full extent of our actions. As such, we must act with care to facilitate reciprocal relationships with *all our* relations. Thus, an ethic of care emerges as a consequence of living in a world dominated by mystery. Yet as I observed in my research (Manson 2019), Indigenous relational perspectives are also based on rules which are to be internalized and enacted regardless of the consequences. Indeed, Ella Deloria (in Rifkin 2011, 3) interprets a Sioux relational discourse on reality as being premised on the idea that “the ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative.” Thus, Indigenous relational discourses on reality can be consequentialist *and* rule-based (Kuokkanen 2011). The implication of Indigenous relational discourses on reality for how subjects ought to behave, then, is since the world is mysterious, and since one does not know which relationships give rise to which relationships, one must be humble, break down the hierarchy between things, and engage in relationships of care with other relatives.

### **2.3.1 Automated relationality**

As noted above, some Indigenous scholars argue that nonhuman elements that are commodities are kin (Cardinal in S. Wilson 2008). However, I have found that this position is rarely articulated within the academic literature on Indigenous relationality. As such, I engage with the words of Yuin elder Max Harrison, who articulates such a perspective in a YouTube video (Global Oneness Project 2009a). Harrison says (Global Oneness Project 2009a 2:32-2:57) while pointing to the land around him, “We have that sacredness, that’s just like this here [touches land]. To see [sacredness] and to feel it is two different things. There was singing on that land. And it holds that energy, still today. After 80,000 years and upward. It’s still there

today in the land.” For Harrison, the land is sacred because it holds the energy which comes from his and his ancestors’ voices. Harrison continues (Global Oneness Project 2009a 13:00-14:25)

If I buy tin peas or beans and I open that up, the first thing I would say is ‘Thank you mother for birthing it. For birthing both. The peas and the tin.’ The tin comes from the land as much as the peas. These are things that need to be told across the board. How much respect do we have for the mother? How much? Very little. We got to really understand that every time those kids jump onto the school bus, you know, how did it get there? First thing you say to them is how did that bus get there? They’ll say ‘The driver drove it there, you fool!’ You see, this is the kind of answer you get. It’s incredible. Then you think, oh, that bus was created from somewhere. Nobody is talking about creation. Nobody is talking about the creation of Mother Earth; nobody is talking about the creation that the land can do.

Here, Harrison argues that all elements emerge from their relationship with the earth (which is our mother). Harrison’s interpretations of a Yuin relational descriptive discourse on reality produce a normative discourse that argues that people have a responsibility to recognize and engage in respectful relationships with the Creator of reality (the land / the earth) *and* the commodities it produces. However, Harrison argues that people often fail to recognize that everything (including commodities) is created by relational processes that emerge from the land. Thus, Harrison argues that people ought to be taught to recognize that all elements are created by the land. Here, Harrison is not explicitly arguing that commodities are kin. However, given that Harrison uses the language of kinship to describe the land (calling it a mother who births

commodities), I think that Harrison is also saying that commodities are imbued with relationality because it was birthed by the earth. Indeed, Harrison's discourse about the importance of 'thanking the Mother' for birthing both the *peas* and *the tin* in which the peas are stored demonstrates that he thinks that both peas and tins are gifts that are given to him by the Mother. Also, recall that Harrison says the earth is sacred because it holds his and his ancestors' voices. What logically follows from such a statement is that tins, which are produced by the earth, hold his utterances of gratitude, thus making them sacred.

Cheyenne and Arapaho author Tommy Orange (2018, 11) uses a similar relational descriptive discourse on reality, arguing that an

[U]rban Indian belongs to the city, and cities belong to the earth. Everything is formed in relation to every other living and nonliving thing from the earth. All our relations. The process that brings anything to its current form—chemical, synthetic, technological, or otherwise—doesn't make the product not a product of the living earth. Buildings, freeways, cars—are these not of the earth? ... Being Indian has never been about returning to the land. The land is everywhere or nowhere.

Here Orange (2018) argues that the things 'we make' are gifted to us by the living earth. Further, like Harrison (Global Oneness Project 2009a), Orange (2018) notes that when we employ technology to make commodities, we forget that both technology and commodities are produced by the earth. Regardless, for both Harrison and Orange, all elements (even commodities) are imbued with relational energy because they are produced by relationships. From this descriptive relational discourse on reality, Orange formulates a relational normative

discourse that argues that Indigenous peoples ought to recognize that since the land is everywhere, the idea that Indigenous peoples need to ‘return to the land’ is paradoxical. Orange’s perspective is powerful because it roots Indigenous peoples and their identity to where they live instead of in spaces outside cities and towns. Like Harrison (Global Oneness Project 2009a) and Orange (2018), I think that all elements, including the elements produced by automated technology, emerge from, are embedded in, and are participating in relationships, which means they *are* relatives.

The relational perspective outlined by Harrison (Global Oneness Project 2009a) and Orange (2018) challenge the notion that Indigenous discourses on reality are only useful if they are in an imaginary primordial context, outside of contemporary society. Here, Indigenous relational discourses on the land become adaptable and flexible discourses that are shaped by and shape the context in which Indigenous peoples find themselves. That being said, as Maori cultural studies scholar, Brendan Hokowhitu (2016, 162) argues, there is a danger in even articulating an Indigenous relational discourse on reality because they can be used by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples “to vilify Indigenous communities (principally via veiled and not so veiled discourses of pathology) or romanticize Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. The latter can be the most violent because it simultaneously excludes alternative ways of being Indigenous.” However, this problem can be kept in check if we recognize and respect the fact that Indigenous persons *use* a multitude of discourses on reality to comprehend and apprehend reality and to treat these discourses on reality *as Indigenous* by being expressed by Indigenous peoples and persons.

That said, not all Indigenous persons find the idea that commodities and urban communities are ‘the land’ an attractive proposition. For instance, in her review of Tommy

Orange's (2018) *There, There*, Tuscarora writer Alicia Elliot (2018, paragraph 6) finds his argument that "Being Indian has never been about returning to the land. The land is everywhere or nowhere" to be "rather suspect ..." The reason Elliot finds Orange's argument suspect is because she thinks non-Indigenous peoples will use the idea that 'everything is the land' against Indigenous peoples to argue "if the land is, indeed, everywhere, why does it matter if pipelines are built through them? Why does Indigenous title matter? The land is everywhere regardless." Here, Elliot is worried that non-Indigenous peoples will use Indigenous relational discourses that legitimize 'everything as land' to delegitimize Indigenous occupation and protection of non-urban spaces more commonly understood as 'the land.' I agree with Elliot's concerns but would add that historically and contemporarily, non-Indigenous states, corporations, and persons have used the idea that the land (and subsequently, Indigenous peoples) exists outside urban communities as a means to evacuate Indigenous governing authority and presence from urban communities (Lawrence 2004; Raibmon 2005). Thus, non-Indigenous peoples can use both the idea that 'the land is out there' and 'the land is everywhere' to dispossess Indigenous peoples of territory and governing authority.

Another negative implication of recognizing the fact that urban communities are expressions of ecological/relational processes (i.e., the land) is that it might elevate practices – such as me writing this dissertation – to the level of 'land-based practice', thus, denigrating other land-based practices such as hunting, fishing, and gathering. While I do think that all social practices are relational / land-based practices, that does not mean that they are all of equal importance to me, nor would I claim that they are. I acknowledge that hunting, fishing, gathering, and other social practices which occur away from urban communities are important to the maintenance and survival of Indigenous nations worldwide. However, none of this negates

the fact that practices that occur on land are necessarily land-based. It's just that some Indigenous persons find some land-based practices more sacred and important than others.

### **2.3.2 Dead(ly) commodities**

Elliot's (2018) resistance to Tommy Orange's relational discourse (a discourse which I find more than compelling) demonstrates that some Indigenous persons do not agree with the idea that all elements can be called 'the land' and to a relational discourse on reality that circulates within Indigenous communities that makes a distinction between 'land-based' and 'non-land-based' elements. For instance, Indigenous scholars such as Potawatomi scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) or Nuuchahnulth scholar Charlotte Cote (2016) argue that more 'naturalistic' elements are imbued with relationality, and elements such as commodities are objects. At first blush, such a distinction would seem like classic dualism, which sees the human realm and its associated artifacts as wholly distinct from the natural realm. However, Kimmerer (2013) and Cote (2016) do describe nonhuman elements – such as plants or the earth – as relations, i.e., as subjects that emerge from relationships. This differs from dualist discourses on reality, which see 'physical' elements (including our brains) as mere matter and locate subjecthood within immaterial human reason (Bloom 2007; Williams 2007). Thus, Kimmerer's (2013) and Cote's (2016) descriptive discourse on reality is *relational*, it's just that they see certain elements as being imbued with relationality (and hence being kin) and other elements as mere objects.

The question is why do Kimmerer (2013) and Cote (2016) make a distinction between nonhuman elements which are relatives and others that are mere objects? Kimmerer (2013, 55-

56) argues that her distinction between elements that are imbued with relational spirit and elements that are mere objects arises from her interpretation of the Potawatomi language:

Beings that are imbued with spirit, our sacred medicines, our songs, drums, and even stories, are all animate. The list of the inanimate seems to be smaller, filled with objects that are made by people. Of an inanimate being, like a table, we say, “*What* is it?” And we answer *Dopwen yewe*. Table it is. But of apple, we must say, “*Who* is that being?” And reply *Mshimin yawe*. Apple that being is [emphasis in the original].

What to make of the idea that drums, elements normally conceptualized as being made by people, are considered animate? It seems for Kimmerer, the difference between animate elements (such as drums) and inanimate elements (such as tables) is not that they are made by people, but who or how they are made.

Charlotte Cote (2016, 12), combines Kimmerer’s (2013) insights (born as they are from Kimmerer’s interpretation of Potawatomi language) about commodities not being imbued with relational spirit with her interpretation of a Nuu-chah-nulth relational discourse on reality, arguing that

Hishuk’ish tsawalk represents the unity of the physical and metaphysical in a relationship embodied in the principle of iisaak. This philosophy connects people, animals, plants, and the natural and the supernatural (spiritual) realms in a seamless and interconnected web of life where all life forms are revered and worthy of mutual respect. The land, water,

animals and plants are regarded as your kinfolk, not as a commodity that can be exploited.

Here, we see Cote make a distinction between nonhuman elements which are kin and commodities. Cote further argues that capitalism “commodifies and de-sanctifies the earth” which means that commodities are not sacred. Kimmerer (2013, 198) similarly argues that the process of turning earth into commodities removes the animacy from objects, meaning that “Everything for sale [in malls] is dead.” Thus, for both Kimmerer (2013) and Cote (2016), the process of making, selling, and buying commodities alienates people from the earth, making them forget their obligations towards their human and nonhuman relatives. Thus, it seems for Kimmerer and Cote it is how elements are produced by humans and the outcome of that production that determines whether elements are imbued with relational spirit (i.e., are kin) or are mere objects. This is different from the arguments forwarded by Max Harrison (Global Oneness Project 2009a) and Tommy Orange (2018), both of whom argue that commodities are imbued with relational spirit because they are made by the earth. From Kimmerer (2013) and Cote’s (2016) relational descriptive discourses on reality flow an Indigenous relational normative discourse on reality which argue that Indigenous peoples ought to engage in activities – such as farming, hunting, fishing, or gathering – which reconnect them with their human and the earth.

One implication of Kimmerer (2013) and Cote’s (2016) Indigenous relational discourses on reality for Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities is that it locates the land – and Indigenous subjecthood – away from urban communities towards spaces less impacted by human development. This can be benign enough. Indeed, research has demonstrated that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities who ‘reconnect’ with ‘the land’ do feel a sense of



cultural and individual pride (K. Wilson and Peters 2005; Cornthassel and Bryce 2011). However, recall that a dominant non-Indigenous narrative is that Indigenous peoples belong ‘in nature’ and not urban communities. Thus, one potential negative implication of Kimmerer and Cote’s discourse on reality is that non-Indigenous peoples could use a dualist discourse on reality to interpret their words, allowing them to conceptually or literally evacuate Indigenous peoples from urban communities to more ‘natural’ spaces. Again, this may seem benign enough, but as Friedel’s (2011) research has shown, some Indigenous peoples do not want to find their sense of self away from the city and ‘out on the land.’ Further, some Indigenous peoples – for socioeconomic or health reasons – can’t engage in activities that register as ‘land-based’ activities, such as hunting, fishing, gathering, etc. (Manson 2019). Finally, it is crucially important that Indigenous peoples *occupy* urban communities to normalize Indigenous presence and to disrupt the colonial narrative that urban spaces are meant for non-Indigenous peoples.

With this in mind, I want to bring you back to the beginning of this chapter, where I argued that much Indigenous anti-colonial thinking (including my own) is informed by non-relational discourses on reality, particularly dialectics. These dialectical discourses on reality have their descriptive understanding of reality, which, in turn, is associated with normative propositions on how the world ought to be. It is to these discourses, which differ dramatically from Indigenous relational discourses on reality, to which I will turn next.

## **2.4 Dialectical discourse on reality and Indigenous peoples**

Brendan Hokowhitu (2009, 111) argues that “Hegel’s dialectic of self and other has informed and underpins so much of the analyses of colonisation (for example, Frantz Fanon’s

colonizer/colonized, Paulo Freire's oppressor/oppressed"<sup>40</sup> Hokowhitu (111) argues that this dialectic of self and other has "consecrated Indigenous studies" and that the "analyses of the Indigenous condition constantly reverts back to this dialectic to gain the moral high-ground." I don't agree with Hokowhitu's assertion that Indigenous studies scholars use the colonizer / colonized binary to 'gain the moral high ground' (it seems to me that the colonizer / colonized binary is a useful distinction that can reveal tensions between these groups of people). That said, I agree with Hokowhitu's assertion that Hegel's dialectic of self and other (reformulated as the colonizer and colonized binary) is a discourse on reality that has purchase within the field of Indigenous studies. Indeed, Dene political scientist Glen Coulthard (2014, 48)<sup>41</sup>, whose ideas I will be focusing on in this section, argues that Fanon's analyses of the colonial condition "remain insightful" because although Fanon was critical of Hegel's master-slave dialectic,<sup>42</sup> Fanon also thought that "Hegel provided a partial answer" to the problem of colonization, which is "that those struggling against colonialism must "turn away" from the colonial state and society and instead find in their *decolonial praxis* the source of their liberation." In short, Coulthard finds Fanon's appropriation of Hegel's dialectical notions of freedom and unfreedom compelling enough to argue that it can be used as a tool (among many) for Indigenous liberation. It is for this

---

<sup>40</sup> Here, in two footnotes, Hokowhitu (2009) cites Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967b) and Paulo Friere's (1973) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as examples of decolonization scholars who deploy modified versions of Hegel's self / other dialectic to analyze colonial relationships.

<sup>41</sup> I am elaborating here somewhat on Coulthard's explanations of the master-slave dialectic in part because it's here that he engages most fully with the connection between Hegel and Fanon, in terms of the dialectic as a tool for that can be used for Indigenous liberation. I also want to credit M. Rifkin for getting me to spell out and expand my train of thought in this section in a prior review of this thesis.

<sup>42</sup> The master-slave dialectic is a dialectical movement found in a section of Hegel's (1977 [1807]) *The Phenomenology of Spirit* titled *A. Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage*. From here on, when I speak of *The Phenomenology*, I am speaking of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. When I speak of the master-slave dialectic, I am speaking of the section of *The Phenomenology* titled *A. Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage*.

reason, along with the fact that I use Hegel's theories of recognition, misrecognition, alienation, and objectification in Chapters 3 and 5, that I analyze an Indigenous dialectical discourse on reality and its implications for how Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities are conceptualized and engaged with. In short, like Coulthard, I think modified forms of dialectical thinking can be useful in understanding the colonial moment in which Indigenous peoples find themselves.

Before moving forward, it is wise to outline what constitutes a dialectical movement. The philosopher Peter Singer (2001) argues that Hegel's *The Philosophy of History* remains the most accessible entry point to Hegel's dialectical method, given that it is focused on concrete historical phenomena. Conversely, Michael Inwood (1983) uses the master-slave dialectic as an entry point into Hegel's dialectical thinking. Finally, the Marxist philosopher G.A. Cohen (1988) argues that Hegel's (1996 [1798]) fragment *Love*<sup>43</sup> is a suitable entry into Hegel's dialectical method. I agree with Cohen that Hegel's fragment *Love* provides a suitable entry-point into Hegel's dialectical method, and for our purposes, provides a suitable entry point into the master-slave dialectic.

In *Love*, Hegel (1996 [1798], 308) describes the process of love between a man and a woman as "unity, separated opposites, and reunion." Cohen (1988, 184) provides an insightful interpretation of this fragment, noting that during the early stages of the process of love

a person may feel [their/hers/his] interests and purposes to be identical with those of [their/her/his] spouse. Both may feel that way, and thus combine their lives to an extent

---

<sup>43</sup> From here on in, when I refer to *Love*, I am speaking of Hegel's (1996 [1798]) fragment *Love*.

which from the outside looks artificial ... But then one or both may revolt against fusion, and become hostile to continued connection. Finally, a new harmony may supervene, not through relapse into complete mutual absorption, but by discovery of a unity which is not antagonistic to the individuality of each.

Cohen (1985, 185), argues that for Hegel, “a subject undergoes a dialectical process if it passes from a stage where it is undivided from some object, through a stage where it divides itself from it in a manner which creates disunity, to a stage where distinction persists but unity is restored.” Both Inwood (1983) and Cohen (1988) jettison language that is usually used to describe the dialectic (i.e., synthesis, antithesis, and synthesis) which is found in other interpretations of Hegel’s works.<sup>44</sup> Instead, both Inwood (1983) and Cohen (1988), employ language which describes different stages of *unity*. Both interpretations of Hegel’s works are very similar, however, I will be using Cohen’s (1988, 185) terms, “undifferentiated unity”, “differentiated disunity”, and “differentiated unity” to describe the movement that takes place in Hegel’s master-slave dialectic and Fanon’s (1967) interpretation of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, as it is close to the language Hegel (1996 [1798]) used in *Love* to describe the dialectic.

For Hegel, objects include elements fashioned by people, nature, and even other people (Inwood 1983; Cohen 1988). As Cohen notes (2014, 191), for Hegel people, are at once subjects (i.e., persons) and objects, with the implication of such an insight being “A person can be fully conscious of [themselves/herself/himself], can be in full and secure possession of [themselves/herself/himself], only by virtue of being recognized by another person: I become an

---

<sup>44</sup> See Singer (2001).

object for myself through being an object for the other person.” This leads us to Hegel’s (1977 [1807, 111] famous claim in the master-slave dialectic, that, “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.” Coulthard (2014, 28) argues that the main thrust of Hegel’s master and slave dialectic is that “the realization of oneself as an essential, self-determining agent requires that one not only be recognized as self-determining, but that one be recognized by another self-consciousness that is also recognized as self-determining.” Further, Coulthard (48) recognizes the role working on objects, which he calls “*decolonial praxis*”, plays in whether people are self-determined or not. I agree with these insights but would add the caveat that Hegel notion of self-determination saw people who were ‘sunk’ in the objective world (i.e., nature, custom, tradition, other people, etc.) as unfree (Inwood 1983; Cohen 1988; Singer 2001). Thus, to better understand the positive and negative implications dialectical thinking has for Indigenous persons who live in urban communities, it is wise to unpack Hegel’s (1977 [1807]) master-slave dialectic and Fanon’s (1967a) interpretation of the master-slave dialectic.

Hegel’s master-slave dialectic begins with two self-consciousnesses who are in a state of undifferentiated unity with the objective world, i.e., nature, where their main objective is to consume other objects (Inwood 1983). Thus, in this stage of undifferentiated unity, “Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for-self, self-equal through exclusion from itself of everything else. For it, its essence and absolute object is ‘I’; and in this immediacy, or in this [mere] being, of its being-for-self, it is an individual” (Hegel 1977 [1807], 113).

However, in the master-slave dialectic, the two self-consciousnesses encounter an *other*, with Hegel (1977 [1807], 113) saying ‘What is ‘other’ for it is an unessential, negatively characterized object. But the ‘other’ is also a self-consciousness; one individual is confronted by

another individual.” It is in this process of recognition that the two self-consciousnesses enter into stages of differentiated disunity, whereby they are placed into opposition to the objective world defined by the consumption of objects (Inwood 1983). However, since the *recognition* each self-consciousnesses give each other proves that they and the world are real and that each individual self-consciousnesses is real, they enter back into a stage of differentiated unity with the world from which they were alienated. The recognition of and by the *other* proves that the world and indeed, the very identity of each self-consciousness, is not the product of individual reason alone, meaning that each self-consciousness is “indeed certain of its self, but not of the other, and therefore, its self-certainty still has no truth.” (Hegel 1977 [1807], 113). The *recognition* of others, while affirming one’s self also negates it as inconsequential, thus alienating us from our subjective sense of self (Inwood 1983).

Thus, both self-consciousnesses engage in a life-or-death struggle for recognition (Hegel 1977 [1807]). This life and death struggle occurs because each self-consciousness wants to prove that not only are they subjects distinct from (i.e., in opposition to) the objective / natural world, but also to affirm that their conceptualization and practice of subjectivity as the correct one (Inwood 1983). In this life-or-death struggle, one self-consciousness recognizes that being alive is more important than imposing their conceptualization of subjectivity onto another self-consciousness (Coulthard 2014). So, this self-consciousness submits to the will of the other self-consciousness, becoming a slave, while the other self-consciousness becomes a master. From here, the slave only exists to serve the needs and desires of the master, thus, in essence becoming an objective extension of the master’s will. In turn, the master receives fawning and servile recognition from the slave, creating the certainty that his conceptualization of self (as dominant) is correct. Here, the two self-consciousnesses enter into a stage of differentiated disunity, where

the slave has been reduced to an object and the master has become a slave to their desires “and the two do not reciprocally give and receive one another back from each other consciously, but leave each other free only indifferently, like things” (Hegel 1977 [1807], 115).

However, over time the lord’s certainty begins to be shaken (Hegel 1977 [1807]). As noted earlier, receiving recognition from other *subjects* gave both master and slave certainty that the world existed and that they existed (Inwood 1983). However, since the slave has been reduced to an objective extension of the will of the master, their recognition *is not* recognition from a self-determining subject, but rather is merely a reflection of the master’s dominance (Coulthard 2014). Further, since the master no longer produces the objects that they consume, they “take to [themselves/herselves/himself] only the dependent aspect of the thing and has pure enjoyment of it. The aspect of its independence [they/she/he] leaves to the bondsman, who works on it” (Hegel, 1977 [1807], 116). In short, the master has become dependent upon the work of the slave, reducing themselves to objects dominated by the world (i.e., stuck in a state of differentiated disunity), as opposed to subjects creating themselves through their labor.

Conversely, Hegel says “Through work, however, the bondsman begins to be conscious of what [they/she/he] truly is. As Hegel further notes, the slave elevates themselves from the realm of desire (i.e., the objective world) because work “is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing.” And it is through the labour process that “consciousness, *qua* worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its independence” (Hegel 1977 [1807], 118). Herbert Marcuse (1986, 117) refers to this process as objectification, whereby the “object, shaped and cultivated by human labor, is in reality the objectification of a self-conscious subject” (Marcuse 1986, 117). Combining this with Inwood’s (1983) and Cohen’s (1988) understanding of the dialectic, it is through the process of

objectification that the slave *reunifies* with their subjective sense of self and the objective world (i.e., enters into a stage of differentiated unity).

The liberal political philosopher Ian Shapiro (2016, 108) interprets the master-slave dialectic as describing “the instability of asymmetrical forms of recognition” which produce a relationship between master and slave that is unstable “not just because the slave will rebel, but also because it will not satisfy the master, who needs recognition from an equal. The slave’s fearful fawning will not do.” Glen Coulthard (2014, 28) similarly argues that the main thrust of Hegel’s lord and bondsmen parable is that “the realization of oneself as an essential, self-determining agent requires that one not only be recognized as self-determining, but that one be recognized by another self-consciousness that is also recognized as self-determining.” Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson (2014, 23) interprets Hegel’s master-slave dialect as arguing that “it is impossible to be free from an authorizing context, which means one is a slave, in some readings of Friedrich Hegel, and remains so until recognized in a system of mutuality (“I see you; you see me; this is reciprocal; this reciprocity signals justice”).” I agree with all three interpretations but would add that Hegel’s dialectical conception of freedom and *unfreedom* (as expressed in the master-slave dialect) is fundamentally premised on the idea that people who are ‘sunk’ in objects (nature, custom, desire) are unfree relative to ‘free’ subjects who use reason and work to transcend and unify with objects (Inwood 1983; Marcuse 1986; Cohen 1988).<sup>45</sup>

Hegel’s dialectical process/notion of freedom as a process of being unified with, detaching from, and reuniting with objective reality (Hegel 1996 [1798]) might seem dualist

---

<sup>45</sup> Though Hegel and critical scholars use the language of subject and object, their thinking is *monist* not dualist, as I will articulate further in this chapter.



because of its use of the terms subject and object. However, Hegelian dialectics differs from dualist discourses on reality in that opposing binaries (subject and object) are reconciled through the practical activity – reasoning and labor – which gave rise to their alienation (Miller 2005). Further, Hegel’s dialectics (and his theory of recognition) presents a teleological account of the world where objects and processes (including recognition) are an expression of “internal unity and rationality” (Kolb 2008, 17). As Cohen (1983, 233) notes, this leads to “an extravagant representation of all reality as ultimately an expression of self” [and only the self]. Thus, Hegel’s theory of reality is monist, teleological, and idealist.

Hegel’s teleological view of the world is controversial because it appears that forms are not the outcome of unified and rational movement, but rather “were assembled from earlier [processes] that may originally have been selected for quite different purposes.” (Kolb 2008, 17). This alternate interpretation means that people’s ability to engage in acts of objectification and processes of recognition arises not only from people’s purposeful actions but mainly from a multitude of irrational and undirected causal forces (from human and nonhuman elements) and contingency.

Hegel’s insights are meant to point to what he thinks are *universal* aspects of human self-actualization (Miller 2005). Some of the more cogent insights derived from the concepts of objectification and recognition are the idea that people see themselves in the artifacts they create; that the process of creating artifacts alienates us from or obscures some fundamental truths of reality (i.e., that the divide between subjects and objects is false); and that artifacts in some sense create us (Miller 2005). Further, Hegel’s theory of freedom points to the dangers of people being ‘sunk’ in objects (i.e., nature, custom, intersubjective relationships, etc.) and the danger of being too alienated from objects. For Hegel, being too sunk in objective reality – such as asymmetrical

intersubjective relationships – means that our decisions are no longer expressions of our will but rather are objective extensions of the will of others (Inwood 1983; Cohen 1988). Conversely, for Hegel people cannot become too alienated from objective reality because objective reality enables people the freedom to cultivate their sense of self, meaning that “there can be no fundamental separation between materiality and humanity ... everything that we are and do arise out of the reflection upon ourselves given by the mirror image of the process by which we create form and are created by this same process” (Miller 2005, 8).

However, it is worth remembering that Hegel’s theory of freedom is also a theory of unfreedom whereby those who are not engaged in the process of objectification are unfree subjects (Cohen 1988). Indeed, Allison Stone’s (2017) analysis of Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* demonstrates that Hegel assumed that Indigenous peoples of North America existed outside of history because he thought they did not engage in the practical activity – reasoning and labour – needed to transcend and ultimately reconcile with nature. As Stone notes, the ‘evidence’ Hegel used to justify his claim that Indigenous peoples did not have history was his observation that they did not own private property. For Hegel, private property is a material expression of one’s intellectual freedom from the clutches of nature. Further, private property was a material expression of a society’s freedom in that private property was secured through an institutionalized doctrine of individual rights. Thus, for Hegel, while Indigenous peoples were peoples since they were dominated by nature, they were *unfree* subjects. Hegel used similar arguments to claim that Africans had no history (Camara 2005). Of course, all of this is based on a category error – all people at all times are emergent properties of natural processes (i.e., we are always stuck in a stage of undifferentiated unity with nature). Regardless, it is quite surprising that anti-colonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon (1967a) adopted Hegel’s idea of freedom. As

such, I will turn to Fanon's (1967a) interpretation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, which itself has been appropriated by Indigenous scholars such as Glen Coulthard (2014).

#### **2.4.1 The anti-colonial appropriation of Hegel**

Fanon reconceptualizes Hegel's dialectic from a struggle between equal yet opposite subjects to a struggle that starts from a place of *inequality*, where the colonized are conceptualized as objects, and the colonizers are understood as subjects (Coulthard 2014). Thus, Fanon (1967a) modifies Hegel's theory of freedom to argue that in colonial contexts, the relationship between the master (the colonizer) and the slave (the colonized) differs from Hegel's master/slave dialectic because there is no reciprocity between master and slave. Fanon (206) notes that in colonial contexts "the master scorns the consciousness of the slave. What [they/she/he] wants from the slave is not recognition but work." Fanon (206) further argues that the slave in colonial contexts

can in no way be equated with the slave who loses [themselves/herself/himself] in the object and finds the source of his liberation in [their/hers/his] work. The black slave wants to be like [their/her/his master]. Therefore [they/she/he] is less independent than the Hegelian slave. For Hegel, the slave turns away from the master and turns toward the object. Here the slave turns toward the master and abandons the object.

Here, Fanon is *using* Hegel's master-slave dialectic to criticize not only the colonizer for treating the colonized as a mere extension of their will but also the colonized for not engaging in labour (i.e., processes of objectification) which will enable their freedom (Coulthard 2014;

Hogan 2018). Fanon is also criticizing the colonized for finding their sense of self in the approval of the colonizer instead of their capacities for reason and labour (Villet 2011; Coulthard 2014; Hogan 2018). Again, like the master, because the colonized is a slave to their passions (i.e., their *desire* for recognition from the colonizer), the colonized (like the colonizer) is an unfree subject. Or in other words, both master and slave in Fanon's interpretation of Hegel, are stuck in a state of differentiated disunity. Thus, we can see how Fanon's appropriation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic modifies Hegel's theory of freedom while leaving *unmodified* Hegel's theory of unfreedom, which argues that people who are 'sunk' in objects are not free.

## **2.5 Indigenous dialectical discourse on reality**

Glen Coulthard (2014) uses a modified form of dialectical reasoning, informed by Marx and Fanon, to understand the relationship between the colonizer and colonized in colonial contexts. Coulthard (2014, 13) modifies Marx by arguing that "the history and experience of *dispossession*, not proletarianization, has been the dominant background structure shaping the character of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state." [emphasis in the original]. Thus, Coulthard's dialectical conceptual apparatus is that colonial society is typified by a struggle between the colonizer and colonized *over land*. Coulthard (13) further modifies Marx, arguing that the struggle between Canada and Indigenous peoples is not only a struggle over access to an instrumental form of land (as in Marx) but also, for Indigenous peoples is "deeply informed by what the land as system of reciprocal relationships and obligations can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms ..." Coulthard (61) elucidates on this notion of land as relation by noting

In the Weledeh dialect of Dogrib (which is my community's language), for example, "land" (or *dè*) is translated in relational terms as that which encompasses not only the land (understood here as material), but also people and animals, rocks and trees, lakes and rivers, and so on. Seen in this light, we are as much a part of the land as any other element. Furthermore, within this system of relations, human beings are not the only constituent believed to embody spirit or agency. Ethically, this meant that humans held certain obligations to the land, animals, plants, and lakes in much the same way that we hold obligations to other people. And if these obligations were met, then the land, animals, plants, and lakes would reciprocate and meet their obligations to humans, thus ensuring the survival and well-being of all over time.

Coulthard (64) argues that it is this understanding of the nonhuman world – as a system of relationships attached to obligations – which some Dene used to critique the "dual imperatives of colonial sovereignty and capitalist accumulation that came to dictate the course of northern development in the postwar period."

Coulthard (2014) argues that relations between Indigenous peoples and Canada have shifted over time from a politics whereby Canada sought to violently dispossess Indigenous peoples of their land and assimilate them into Canada to a politics whereby Canada seeks to recognize Indigenous peoples as political entities and accommodate their demands for political autonomy. Thus, Coulthard (15) argues that Fanon can help us understand the persistence of colonial hierarchies and dispossession of Indigenous lands in an era of recognition and accommodation, where "state violence no longer constitutes the regulative norm ..." Coulthard

(33) makes this move because he agrees with Fanon's argument that "a colonial configuration of power could be transformed only if attacked at both levels of operation: objective and subjective."

Coulthard (2014) mobilizes Fanon's interpretation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic to argue that Indigenous peoples in Canada have not worked to attain subjecthood *on their terms*, but rather, Canada has granted Indigenous peoples subjecthood. Further, the subjecthood Canada has granted Indigenous nations is tied to capitalist understandings of land and liberal understandings of subjecthood, not relational understandings of land and subjecthood. What this means in dialectical terms is that the decisions made by Indigenous peoples are not determined by the self, but rather, are material expressions of the will of the colonizers. As such, Coulthard (43) agrees with Fanon's argument that the colonized must engage in a "self-initiated process" whereby they "turn away" from the gaze of the colonizers to "struggle for freedom on their own terms and in accordance with their own values." Later, Coulthard (48) explicitly links Fanon's notion of freedom (and I would argue unfreedom) to Hegel, arguing that Fanon demonstrated that Hegel provides a partial solution to the colonial condition in "that those struggling against colonialism must "turn away" from the colonial state and society and instead find in their own *decolonial praxis* the source of their liberation." [emphasis in the original].

Thus, Coulthard partially retains the dialectical notion that people whose actions are not self-determined are unfree relative to people who have engaged in acts of struggle (i.e., objectification). Indeed, Coulthard (2014, 78) mobilizes Fanon's insights on "the ways in which the field of recognition politics can modify the subject positions of Indigenous people and communities over time" to understand how "the lands claim process [between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments] has also served to shape how Indigenous peoples now think and

act in relation to the land.” Coulthard further argues that many Denedeh who opposed resource extraction projects in the 1970s are now active supporters of such projects. For Coulthard (78), this shift from resistance to support of resource extraction projects signals a broader conceptual shift within the Dene nation, from a struggle that was “deeply informed by the land as reciprocal relations and obligations (grounded normativity) ... to a struggle that is now increasingly for land, understood now as material resource to be exploited in the capitalist accumulation process.” Here, I am not debating the empirical veracity of Coulthard’s claim, but rather, am only showing how his use of Fanon’s notion of freedom and unfreedom shapes his analysis of Dene descriptive and normative discourses on reality. While Coulthard does not claim that Fanon’s insights which inform his above analysis are dialectical, Coulthard’s reasoning seems to be dialectical in that it implies that Indigenous peoples’ conception of land is determined from without (i.e., by the land-claims and resource extraction processes) as opposed to being self-determined (i.e., informed by relationality).

However, Coulthard (2014, 148) partially rejects the dialectical notion of unfreedom, because it is used to equate the cultural revitalization of the colonized as a “plunge into the chasm of the past” that would impede their teleological movement towards freedom. Instead, Coulthard (149) argues that for Indigenous peoples, an authentic expression of freedom is one that “builds on the value and insights of our past in our efforts to secure a non-colonial present and future”. Thus, Coulthard argues for a form of freedom linked to relationality, which seeks to engage in relationships with human and nonhuman kin which establish mutual obligations. What Coulthard doesn’t address in his theory of freedom is exactly *how* one is supposed to resolve the tension between an idea of freedom that sees context as enslaving (dialectical) and one which sees context as a relative to whom one has obligations (relationality). As someone who uses both

Indigenous relationality and dialectics as analytic tools to understand how the world is and ought to be, this is a tension I too have and continue to struggle with, and which I tried to resolve throughout this dissertation. As we shall see, this tension between a relational and dialectical discourse on reality also informs Coulthard's (2014) conceptualization and engagement with Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities.

### **2.5.1 Relationality, dialectics, and Indigeneity in urban settings**

Coulthard (2014, 176) makes a distinction between 'land-based' and urban communities, though he does not justify this binary. However, remember that Coulthard (2014, 61) argues that a Dene relational discourse on reality argues that the land is not just viewed in an instrumental sense, but can also "embody spirit or agency." It is logical to infer from this statement that for Coulthard 'land-based' communities are communities that are imbued with relational spirit. If we follow the logic laid out by Coulthard, since the land is anything imbued with relational spirit, and since Coulthard does not designate urban communities as 'land-based' communities, it follows that urban communities are not imbued with relational spirit. It should be noted that Coulthard's binary runs into problems out of the gate as there are Indigenous reserves – such as those of the Snuneymuxw First Nation or Musqueam Indian Band – which are located in urban settings. Are these communities land-based communities or urban communities? In my view, they are Indigenous reserves located in urban settings. Regardless, Coulthard appears to be using a relational discourse on reality, whereby some elements are relatives (those found in 'land-based' communities) and other elements (such as those found in urban communities) are mere objects.



However, Coulthard's view on Indigeneity in urban communities also seems to be informed by a dialectical discourse on reality, which makes a distinction between people sunk in context and people who have used reason and work to extract themselves from and reunify with context. For instance, in his section on Indigeneity in urban settings, Coulthard (2014, 177) approvingly cites Mi'kmaq sociologist Bonita Lawrence's (2004) research with Indigenous peoples in Toronto, which he argues demonstrated that "Native individuals, families, and communities are able to creatively retain and reproduce Indigenous traditions in urban settings." This would seem to imply a positive view of Indigenous persons who live in urban communities as subjects in their own right. However, Coulthard (176) also agrees with Lawrence's assertion that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities must reconnect with "land-based communities" to gain "some form of mutually agreed upon, structured access to the land." Coulthard (176) concludes with his assertion that "access to land is essential." Here, Coulthard constructs a binary of partially constituted Indigenous persons who live in urban communities who "creatively" engage in cultural practices and actualizing/actualized Indigenous persons who have access to their "communities and homelands which ground such identities" (176).

The implication of Coulthard's (2014) relational and dialectical view of what constitutes the land and what constitutes subjecthood for Indigenous persons who live in urban communities is both positive and negative. As noted earlier, research has demonstrated that Indigenous persons who live in urban communities do derive tangible cultural and individual benefits from engagement with elements traditionally thought of as 'the land,' such as trees, lakes, etc. (K. Wilson and Peters 2005; Friedel 2011; Corntassel and Bryce 2011). However, Indigenous peoples operationalize their values in complex ways that are not reducible to activities that immediately register as 'land-based', such as hunting, fishing, or gathering (Manson 2019).

Further, the dialectical view of reality which Coulthard (2014) and myself use to understand the actions of Indigenous persons (whether Denedeh or those who live in urban communities) has positive and negative aspects. Dialectics is useful for reminding us that the decisions of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities are often an expression of the colonial relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples and not their desires or ambitions. For instance, the fact that many Indigenous persons who live in cities and towns do not engage in practices such as hunting, fishing, and gathering is as much a function of colonial dispossession of Indigenous lands as it is the conscious choices of Indigenous persons. Further, I agree with Coulthard that the objectification process – what he calls decolonial praxis – is an important tool (among many) that can be used by Indigenous peoples in their struggle against colonialism. However, the dialectical paradigm Coulthard and I use is fundamentally premised on a category error that imagines that there is a distinction between ‘natural’ processes and ‘human’ processes (everything emerges from and is embedded in ‘natural processes’) (Kolb 2018). As noted earlier, Hegel used this dialectical category error to vilify Indigenous peoples and Africans as peoples so ‘sunk in nature’ that they don’t have a history (Camara 2005; Stone 2017). It’s not hard to imagine people using such a discourse on reality to argue that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities and don’t wish to engage in social practices such as hunting, gathering, gardening, hiking, etc., are Indigenous peoples who are ‘sunk in a colonial context’ and need to be transformed into their true ‘natural’ Indigenous selves or save that, be abandoned as place-less and history-less peoples.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that there is not *one* Indigenous discourse on the land, but many. All of these discourses on the land, including Indigenous discourses on reality I find compelling and use in this dissertation (such as Indigenous relationality and dialectics), have positive and negative implications for how non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples conceptualized Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities and subjecthood writ large. With that in mind, I hope that this chapter can help move conversations about how Indigenous people understand reality and enact their lives towards acknowledging what Athabaskan scholar Dian Million (2013, 165) calls “the actual multiplicity that is” where “other powerful discourses, religions, and healing practices continuously intersect and transform [Indigenous] cultures.” Recognizing diverse Indigenous discourses on the nature of reality is important because discussions centered on the notion that Indigenous peoples have one ‘worldview’ or ontology inevitably produce unfruitful conversations like ‘what is the true origin’ of Indigenous peoples ‘ontologies’?

Indeed, in this chapter, I consciously avoided using the terms ontology or epistemology, instead choosing to use the phrase “Indigenous discourse on reality”. In my experience, the terms “Indigenous ontology” and “Indigenous epistemology” tend to evoke in people the idea that there is *one* right Indigenous discourse on reality, and hence, one right way to be Indigenous. Yet this chapter demonstrated that even Indigenous scholars who use relational discourses on reality do not always answer the question of “what is a subject?” in similar manners. Further, as this chapter demonstrated when Indigenous scholars like Glen Coulthard use non-relational discourses on reality, it is not in an all-encompassing ‘worldview’ sense (though this is not to deny that these discourses on reality might shape how one goes about being in the world).

Rather, Coulthard used dialectical notions of freedom and unfreedom to explain certain phenomena and rejected dialectical concepts when they no longer had explanatory power. It is with these insights in mind that I hope to move away from discussing the Indigenous ontologies that Indigenous peoples 'have' to discussing the discourses on reality that circulate within Indigenous communities and that Indigenous peoples use to govern their communities and lives.

## Chapter 3: Cities as sites of Indigenous reconciliation

### 3.1 Introduction

Within Canada, a process of reconciliation is underway between Canadian and Indigenous peoples.<sup>46</sup> This process of reconciliation, which seeks to improve governmental and interpersonal relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canada, is occurring because of Canadian acts of genocide against Indigenous peoples (Million 2013), Canadian theft of Indigenous lands (Low 2018), and Canadian attempts to forcibly assimilate Indigenous peoples into the Canadian state through mechanisms such as residential schools (Daigle 2019a). A flurry of scholarly activity on the topic of reconciliation in Canada has followed. However, most of the focus has been on reconciliation as a process that occurs between Indigenous nations located in reserves and Canada. Such work, while valuable, disregards the concerns of Indigenous peoples who live in cities and towns as it relates to the reconciliation process. This omission is hardly insignificant because in Canada, “over half of aboriginal peoples live in cities” (Norris, Clatworthy, & Peters 2013, 29).

Some critical Indigenous scholars (Coulthard 2014; Daigle 2019a) are skeptical of the process of reconciliation, noting that it is overly focused on progressing *towards* reconciliation while ignoring the *ongoing* processes of colonial violence and dispossession which continue to harm Indigenous peoples. Conversely, it seems to the Indigenous lead author, that many Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo who are within the main author’s social circle are unaware of or indifferent to the process of reconciliation. We do not think that our

---

<sup>46</sup> We understand Indigenous to mean “the people and peoples who identify their ancestry with the original inhabitants of ... Canada and other countries worldwide” (S. Wilson 2008, 34). Building off this, we understand an Indigenous person as a person who traces their lineage to the original peoples of the world and claim and are claimed by other Indigenous peoples and persons *as* Indigenous.

Indigenous friends and relatives who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo being unaware or indifferent to the reconciliation process mean that they lack ideas on how to improve the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. Rather, it means that our job as researchers interested in the perspectives of Indigenous peoples who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo, particularly as it relates to the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples, is to engage in conversations that facilitate dialogue about reconciliation, or related topics such as justice and fairness.

Research on Indigenous perceptions of justice has demonstrated that one entry-point (though not the only one) for discussions about topics such as justice, fairness, and reconciliation is to center such discussions around nature or ‘the land’ (McCaslin 2005; Whiteman 2009). Indeed, for many Indigenous people, moral and ethical imperatives spring forth from their conceptualizations and engagements with the land (Atleo 2004; Coulthard 2014). Further, there is evidence that these Indigenous persons often use relational discourse as a way of discussing these moral and ethical imperatives (S. Wilson 2008). Indigenous relationality is the idea that all beings (human and nonhuman) are related because they share a common source in creation (Atleo 2004). For many Indigenous peoples, the concept of respect is meant to induce people to *recognize* that people share a common origin in creation with each other and the world, and have responsibilities to be good relatives to all their relations (S. Wilson 2008; Atleo 2011). For this reason, many Indigenous relational discourses on reality, sometimes understood as ontologies, or

Indigenous relationality<sup>47</sup> stress the importance of using respect as a means to *recognize* to whom one is related, producing relationships that reflect reciprocal obligations (S. Wilson 2008).

However, if many Indigenous moral and ethical imperatives spring forth from their conceptualizations of and engagements with the land, what of Indigenous peoples who use non-relational ontologies to conceptualize and engage with the land? For instance, Indigenous scholars have argued that a dominant discourse that structures how cities and ‘nature’ are conceptualized and engaged with is dualism (Raibmon 2005; Friedel 2011). So, what is dualism? Dualist discourses on reality claim that the immaterial mind and material body are distinct phenomena (Williams 2007).<sup>48</sup> Here, the mind is understood as the seat of the immaterial consciousness (Harrison 1992), a space where people come to affirm, understand, and create their existence through cognition (Coleman 2014). The sociologist Jerry Williams (2007) argues that from a dualist perspective, identity is rooted in cognition and the body is the thing that allows us to enact our lives. This perspective produces a world divided into immaterial ‘subjects’ capable of critical self-reflection and physical ‘objects’ beholden to the laws of physics. In turn, such logic allows people to create a hard distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘society’, which obscures the fact that cities emerge from and are embedded in ecological processes.

While there is research that analyzes how Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities use Indigenous relationality to conceptualize reality and enact their lives (Lawrence

---

<sup>47</sup> We understand ontology as “a discourse (logos) about the nature of being” (Graeber 2015, 15). However, given the negative connotation of the word, which we discussed earlier, we will not be using this term, instead using the phrase discourse on reality (which is ontology). We use this term, which admittedly is more cumbersome, because it provides a path to making the idea that Indigenous peoples *use* multiple ‘ontologies’ more palatable.

<sup>48</sup> We are not arguing that relationality and dualism are the only discourses on reality that are used by Indigenous peoples and persons to describe how the world is and ought to be. Rather, we are suggesting that there is evidence that dualist and relational discourses on what counts as land and subjects are *dominant* discourses on reality that circulate within Indigenous communities, and are used by Indigenous peoples and persons to describe how the world is and ought to be.

2004; Manson 2019), there is none that seeks to understand how Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities engage with dualist discourses on reality. With this in mind, we are interested in understanding how and if Indigenous peoples who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo *reconcile* two different discourses on reality – dualism and relationality – and what implications, if any, these acts of reconciliation have for the process of reconciliation *writ large* between Canada and Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities. To do this, we will use Hegel’s theory of objectification<sup>49</sup> and recognition<sup>50</sup> to understand how Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo recognize themselves, others, and how others recognize them. We argue that Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo engage in everyday acts of reconciliation (because these acts occur daily) where they learn to respect diversity within their communities. We also note how the everyday acts of reconciliation of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo allow them to engage in a process of ‘dispossession of the dualist self’, whereby they partially or fully ‘let go’ of dualist discourses on reality which shape their understanding of subjecthood. We further note how these everyday acts of reconciliation enable Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo to practice political empathy with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and the nonhuman world. Finally, we note how the everyday acts of reconciliation that Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo give them the tools to critique social processes which dispossess Indigenous peoples, working-class people non-Indigenous peoples, and nonhumans of resources and power, which is upwardly distributed to groups of people (the state and corporations) who already have inordinate amounts

---

<sup>49</sup> Hegel’s theory of objectification is the idea that the things we create are expressions of our ideals, and that the things we create in a sense create our sense of self (Miller 2005).

<sup>50</sup> Thus, Hegel’s theory of recognition argues that people seek and give recognition to people they hold in esteem (Shapiro 1990).



of resources and power. We conclude by arguing that the lived experiences of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo outlined here provide practical examples of reconciliation that ought to be taken seriously when people theorize about and seek to ‘practice’ reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous peoples.

### **3.1.1 Hegelian objectification and recognition**

Hegel’s thinking (with some modification), particularly his theories of objectification and recognition, can help clarify how Indigenous peoples who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and engage with things understood as objects or subjects and how this process impacts their sense of self. Hegel’s theory of recognition is generally theorized as flowing from his work *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977 [1807]). Here, Hegel (111) argues that “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.” Scholars have largely interpreted Hegel’s concept of recognition as describing political engagement between dissimilarly situated groups of people which are typified by dramatic power inequities (Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014; Shapiro 2016). However, Hegel’s theory of recognition is also meant to describe aspects of human nature that occur at the individual, interpersonal, and quotidian levels (Inwood 1983; Cohen 1988; Miller 2005). As such, we will be using both objectification and recognition to understand how elements nominally thought of as objects, such as commodities, trees, oceans, etc., are entangled with Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo own sense of self.

Philosophers (Marcuse 1986) and anthropologists (Miller 2000, 2005) have illuminated a movement that occurs across Hegel’s work, called objectification, which they argue is intimately tied to processes of recognition. We agree with their insights and situate our work in

approximation to theirs.<sup>51</sup> As Marcuse (1986, 117) observes, objectification is tied to a process of self-actualization in that the “object, shaped and cultivated by human labor, is in reality the objectification of a self-conscious subject.” In its bluntest form, Hegel’s theory of objectification is the idea that “there can be no fundamental separation between humanity and materiality – that everything we are and do arises out of the reflection upon ourselves given by the mirror image of the process by which we create form and are created by the same process” (Miller 2005, 8). Broadly, Hegel’s thinking is teleological, meaning that processes are not the result of external determinism, but rather, are an expression of “internal unity and rationality” (Kolb 2008, 17). From this perspective, the process of objectification is teleological because the things we make are expressions of an individual’s and given society’s attempt to realize purposes that arise from within individuals or society (Kolb 2008).

Hegel’s process of recognition is an intersubjective and progressive theory of human nature that revolves around a binary movement between self and other, and the movement through different forms of unity. We think this dialectical process finds its simplest expression in Hegel’s (1996 [1798], 308) fragment *Love*, where he describes the dialectical process of love as taking the form of “unity, separated opposites, and reunion.” Here, we use Cohen’s (1988, 185) interpretation of Hegel’s dialectic, which describes a dialectical movement as “undifferentiated unity”, “differentiated disunity”, and “differentiated unity.” According to Cohen (1988), Hegel’s dialectical movement starts from two selves who are completely absorbed in their natural

---

<sup>51</sup> This process is found in Hegel’s (1996 [1798]) other works, such as the fragment *Love*. However, we think it finds its most cogent expression in the closing sections of Hegel’s famous master-slave dialectic (1977 [1807], 118), where the slave engages in “formative *activity* [which] is at the same time the individuality or pure being-for-self of consciousness which now, in the work outside of it, acquires an element of permanence. It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness *qua* worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independence.”

environment, and as such, mistake their sense of self as the only sense of selves that exists in the world (undifferentiated unity). It then moves toward selves who encounter each other, and who refuse to recognize each other as subjects, with each seeking to treat each other as mere objective extensions of their own needs and desires (differentiated disunity). Finally, this movement ends with two selves, who through the individual application of reason and labour, learn to subordinate themselves to the needs and desires of others, without negating their own needs and desires, thus incorporating difference into a unified whole ('differentiated unity'). Hegel's theory of recognition is teleological because it argues that instances of misrecognition – whereby one person recognizes other people as mere objective extensions of their own needs and desires as opposed to subjects in their own right – will ultimately be resolved, producing an ideal state of differentiated unity. This is because people fundamentally need recognition from other people, not objects, to know that the world is real (Inwood 1983) and to understand and practice meaningful freedom (Hogan 2018).

Hegel's teleological view of the world is controversial because it ignores the fact that forms which appear to be the product of unified and rational activity "were assembled from earlier [processes] that may originally have been selected for quite different purposes." (Kolb 2008, 17). This alternate interpretation means that people's ability to engage in acts of objectification and processes of recognition arise from a multitude of irrational and undirected causal forces and contingency, not teleological forces within people. Despite these contrasting interpretations, we think objectification is a useful concept because people often conceptualize their collective and individual identities as arising from goal oriented practical activity (Rowlands 2005). In regards to recognition, context and contingency and purposeful human activity shape whether people view other people as subjects in their own right, as benign

objective extensions of themselves, or as objects which thwart their efforts to self-actualize (Shapiro 2016). As such, people will often give and seek recognition from people who are similarly situated and who they hold in esteem (Shapiro 1990). Further, while we do not think that Hegel's dialectical process of recognition fully describes the development of people, like Cohen (1988, 184), we do think that "the progress exhibited above sometimes occurs in a person's development."

Finally, Hegel held the racist view that Indigenous peoples and Africans were people who were beholden to nature (i.e., stuck in a state of undifferentiated unity) and as such, were not fully developed people (Camara 2005; Stone 2017). In our view, such arguments evade the fact that all people are embedded in and emerge from naturalistic processes. This means, according to Hegel's logic, *all* people are stuck in a stage of undifferentiated unity. While Hegel's view of African and Indigenous subjecthood is repugnant, they are also pregnant with insights into how many European political theories view subjecthood. Hegel's theory of subjecthood is akin to dualist European political theories, which link "freedom to ability" and are rooted in a logic which "see [the physical] at odds with reason, and thereby, at odds with freedom" (Arneil and Hirschmann 2016, 10). Thus, many European theories of subjecthood flourish by excluding those who cannot or are seen as unwilling to "improve their cognitive capacity" (Simplican 2017, 15). Thus, Hegel's theory of recognition is part of a larger European intellectual trend that restricts subjecthood to people or beings who demonstrate that they can use reason and work to transcend nature. And for better or for worse, Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo have inherited a world governed by such logic.

It's important to recall that some Indigenous relational scholars (Atleo 2004; S. Wilson 2008) pose a different argument regarding subjecthood, namely that people ought to *recognize* to

whom one is related and consequently, what responsibilities flow from the facticity of relationality. Such a perspective, then, works to extend the concept of who counts as a *subject* to nonhuman animals (Nadasdy 2007), and even elements that are understood as inanimate such as glaciers (Cruikshank 2005). Yet we do not think that Indigenous peoples *only* use relational discourses on reality to comprehend reality and enact their lives. As Dian Million (2013, 165) observes, while it is important to discuss the ongoing vitality of Indigenous relational discourses on reality within Indigenous communities, it is also important to engage with the “multiplicity that is” within Indigenous communities, because “[o]ther powerful discourses, religions, and healing practices continuously intersect and transform our cultures.” For these reasons, let us turn to the Indigenous persons of this study, to understand how they comprehend reality and enact their lives.

### **3.1.2 Methods: attending to Indigenous life in the city**

All of the interviews conducted for this research were completed by the lead author, were conducted from 2019 to 2020, and took place in Vancouver and Nanaimo, two cities located in coastal British Columbia. Interviews with 26 Indigenous persons were conducted face-to-face and over the telephone. For this chapter, we drew largely from people we knew who traced their lineage to Indigenous peoples and claimed and were claimed by Indigenous peoples or persons as Indigenous. We chose the lead author’s social network as we think it is comprised of Indigenous persons from a broad socioeconomic spectrum. In this chapter, we chose to focus on the perspectives of Indigenous persons who do not identify as academics, activists, artists, or community leaders. We recognize that Indigenous academics, activists, artists, and community leaders have indeed made important contributions to understanding the promises and pitfalls

associated with the process of reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous nations. However, we think scholars tend to discuss and treat Indigenous peoples who are not community leaders, activists, academics, or artists as people who are governed but not as people who have ideas about the appropriate way to govern. In addition, we think non-elite Indigenous voices can also make important contributions to understanding the process of reconciliation.

Interview conversations lasted 45 minutes to two hours. Immediately after the interviews were conducted, the lead author discussed with participants the methods and theories that would be used to analyze their words, with some participants providing us with additional feedback on how they wanted us to interpret their words. After the interviews were transcribed, hand-coded using deductive and inductive coding strategies, and analyzed, we validated the results with participants who had expressed interest in seeing the results. All participants in this study were protected by de-identifying information specific to their biographies and by using pseudonyms.

We organized conversations around a broad set of questions that focused on the participants' conceptualizations of nature. These questions themselves were a subset of other questions which sought to understand participants' views on 'nature' and 'community', and 'work and their economic lives.' As it pertains to the topic of 'nature', we chose this line of questioning to understand how participants understood and engaged with nonhuman elements, but also because we thought asking questions about 'nature' or 'the land' might obliquely induce conversations about reconciliation, justice, fairness, redistribution of resources and power, etc. Such questions included, but were not limited to: What do the words 'nature' and 'natural' mean to you?; What do the words urban and city mean to you?; Do you think that nature and the city are the same thing?; And do you think Indigeneity and the city are compatible? Though we asked formal questions, we also let the line of questioning take on a more conversational tone.

Taking our cue from Indigenous researchers (S. Wilson 2008; Kovach 2010), we grounded our research in the concept of Indigenous relationality. We recognized that the Indigenous persons we conducted research with were in an immediate and broad sense ‘relatives’, meaning we have a responsibility to engage in mutually beneficial relationships (Atleo 2004; S. Wilson 2008). We recognize that participants’ stories aren’t data, but rather are their theories about how life is and ought to be (Million 2014). Our general analytic paradigm modifies Wendt and Shapiro’s (2005) realist approach. This approach recognizes that people inherit endowments (genetic, social, political, economic, familial, etc. as well as participants’ discourses about how the world is and ought to be) that they continually modify in context. Thus, we reject the notion that these endowments are the product of individual choices which exist outside the causal order. Such a perspective recognizes that how people modify these endowments is not reducible to individual agency but rather is a function of luck and the work of others. We use abduction, or inference to the best explanation (Shapiro and Wendt 2005; Kagan 2012), to locate the discourses, practices, and processes Indigenous persons inherit and modify in context, which shapes their discourses on how the world is and ought to be. Finally, we make no claims about what counts as ‘authentic’ Indigenous discourses on reality. This is because we recognize all discourses expressed by Indigenous persons *as Indigenous* by being expressed by Indigenous persons.

### **3.2 Indigenous recognition and reconciliation in Vancouver and Nanaimo**

#### **3.2.1 Indigenous dualism, Indigenous relationality, Indigenous pluralism**

From the outset, and as above, we assumed that participants might use dualist discourse to understand the land, which, in turn, would shape their understanding of themselves and how

the world ought to be. However, no participants strictly used dualist discourses on reality to understand reality and to enact their lives. The closest any participant got to using strictly dualist discourses on reality was Taylor, a 30-40-year-old Indigenous man who has lived in Nanaimo his whole life.<sup>52</sup>

Taylor: “People [from the Snuneymuxw First Nation] hunt a lot. I go out with them sometimes to go hunting ... You go out camping with family. No internet or anything like that, just being with family. Just being with nature ... I think everyone needs nature in their life. You have to see a river or creek or some animals.”

Interviewer: “Why do you think we need that?”

Taylor: “In a way it humbles a lot of us.”

Note in this quotation that nature is something you can *be* with, which itself seems to imply that Taylor is subjectifying nature. Yet, this is not a strong subjectification in that Taylor is not saying that nature is a being to whom he is related. Further, Taylor does not talk about being with nature in any other part of the interview, nor does he implicitly or explicitly say that elements such as rivers or animals are subjects. Indeed, after the interview, we explained to Taylor that we interpreted his words as saying that humans had conscious experience but nature did not, which he confirmed as an accurate understanding of his views on nature. As such, it appears that Taylor is using a *dualist* discourse on reality to understand what nature is and the

---

<sup>52</sup> Taylor (male, age 30-40), in interview with the author, October 2019. All conversations and quotations referring to Taylor are from this interview.



appropriate way to engage with it. That being said, Taylor also uses an anthropocentric variation of Indigenous relational discourse on reality to understand what nature is and the appropriate way to engage with it. As such, for Taylor, nature is an object which he can use to facilitate relationships between Indigenous relatives and friends.

Yet note in the above paragraph we did not use the word ‘natural’ to describe nature or social practices associated with nature. This is because Taylor does not think that the words nature and natural equate to the same thing.

Interviewer: “You said [earlier in the interview] that nature and natural are two different things?”

Taylor: “Yeah, when I hear the word ‘natural’ I just think of the phrase ‘act natural.’”

Later in the interview, when discussing his views on modern amenities, Taylor explicates the word natural.

Interviewer: “OK, what do you think of things like grocery stores, building, cars?”

Taylor: “I would say that’s natural. Growing up in the city that’s what you know. You don’t really find people [in the city] who live off hunting and stuff. It’s almost like they don’t exist. It’s normal to go to the grocery store. It’s normal to grab a drink at the corner store. Maybe I would look at it different if I grew up [on my home reservation].”

Interviewer: “Do you see a difference between nature and the city?”

Taylor: “Yeah definitely. Well, I guess there is nature in the city. I don’t know, like parks and trees. I would consider them different though. Because when I think of nature, I think

of going out up a mountain, driving an hour and a half to get there ... it's like being away."

As we can see, Taylor does recognize a difference between nature and the city, with nature being 'out there', far from the city. However, Taylor does not equate the word 'natural' with 'nature.' For Taylor, 'natural' is what is common or normal within a given community. Thus, from this perspective, both nature and cities have objects associated with them that are natural. Further, Taylor is noting how elements that are 'natural' to a given community – such as animals that are hunted or commodities that are bought – shape what is considered a normal or not-normal way of being for Indigenous peoples. Taylor's use of a perspectivist discourse on reality, where different ideas of what counts as natural or not, means that there is no contradiction to be reconciled between what is 'natural' for urban communities and what is 'natural' for reserve communities; thus, there is no contradiction to reconcile between what is natural for Indigenous peoples who live in rural reserves and what is natural for Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities. Unlike Hegel's teleological accounting of recognition, Taylor's discourse on what is 'natural' for Indigenous communities and people does not seek to subsume difference into an idealized whole. Rather, Taylor's perspectivist discourse on the word 'natural' demonstrates how he has reconciled himself with the fact that different ways of being Indigenous exist within different communities.

### **3.2.2 Commodities, Indigenous relationality, and dispossession of the dualist-self**

While Taylor might see Nanaimo and his social practices as benign expressions of Indigeneity, some participants expressed concerns about how cities pave over their Indigenous

values and the implications this has for their sense of who they are as Indigenous persons.

Markus is a 30-40-year-old Indigenous man who lived in Nanaimo for the early portion of his life, spent approximately the last decade or so living in an Indigenous reserve-based community, and recently moved to Nanaimo in search of work.<sup>53</sup> Markus spends considerable time travelling to his reserve community where he is learning his Indigenous language and engages in traditional ceremonies and activities.

Markus does not believe that cities are compatible with Indigeneity. As such, he and his wife Emma (who was also interviewed for this study), and their children spend a significant amount of their time and resources travelling to and from their reserve community. For Markus, travelling back to his home reserve reminds him that nature is “our land. Nature gives us everything that we need.” Indeed, Markus told us that he feels the city alienates him from his relationship with nature, and that’s why he travels back to his home reserve so frequently.

Later in the interview, Markus says that modern amenities are not Indigenous “There’s times where I’ve said [to my children] *this isn’t our way of life* ... Our people were busy around the clock every single day. They were out hunting ... harvesting, they were out to get things that they needed and they didn’t have grocery stores or buses” [emphasis in original].

Conversely, when Emma<sup>54</sup> hears the word nature it “makes me think of like, what [an] elder taught us... she taught me a lot about respecting the trees ... and said to pray to the trees outside and ... give thanks to the universe ... for giving us what we have right now.”

Like Markus, Emma sees nature and the city as being distinct entities.

---

<sup>53</sup> Markus (male, age 30-40), in interview with the author, March 2019. All conversations and quotations referring to Markus are from this interview.

<sup>54</sup> Emma (female, age 30-40), in interview with the author, March 2019. All conversations and quotations referring to Emma are from this interview.

Interviewer: “Do you see a difference between nature and the city?”

Emma: “I do but I still find a way to pray. I pray, like when I’m sitting out here, I pray, like to the trees and stuff.”

Note how Emma and Markus equate seemingly non-modern elements, such as the earth and game which is harvested, with nature while also stating that modern elements, such as cities and buses, are not nature. Thus, it appears that Markus and Emma are using dualist discourse to describe what constitutes nature. However, recall that both Emma and Markus use relational language to discuss nature, speaking of nature as *a being* who gives things to Indigenous peoples, and as such, needs to be recognized and thanked for the gifts it provides. Markus and Emma’s discourse which subjectifies some elements as relations and other elements as mere objects is quite prevalent (but not all-encompassing) within Indigenous studies scholarship.<sup>55</sup> However, I also think Hegel’s concept of objectification can help us understand why Markus and Emma say that some nonhuman elements are subjects and other nonhuman elements are objects. Markus and Emma’s understanding that some elements are relatives shapes how they engage in acts of objectification, with practices such as praying to trees, hunting, and harvesting being discussed as an ideal material expression of nature and their ancestors’ ideas about the appropriate way to be Indigenous. Conversely, for Emma and Markus, cities, grocery stores and buses are material expressions of *Canadian* ideals about the appropriate way to be a person.

---

<sup>55</sup> See Kimmerer (2013); Coulthard (2014) for examples, but also see Chapter 2 where I discuss this phenomenon at length.

Thus, Markus and Emma do not subjectify elements such as grocery stores or buses, holding them in disesteem relative to relations such as animals who are hunted, plants who are gathered, and nature who provides them both. Markus and Emma are not using a dualist discourse because they do subjectify elements other than humans. Further, the reasons Markus and Emma give for not subjectifying commodities is related to who made them and how they were made and not the ability of commodities to approximate human social practices. Thus, Markus and Emma use a discourse on reality that is not dualist, but rather, a form of Indigenous relationality which sees some elements (including unconscious nonhuman elements) as relatives and other elements (commodities) as mere objects. Markus and Emma use this distinction to facilitate relationships between *relatives* (which includes nature, ancestors, and their children) they hold in esteem, which in turn, produces a sense of self that they think approximates their ancestors' ideals. Further, Markus and Emma's understanding that some nonhuman elements are relatives and some nonhuman elements are objects pushes them away from Nanaimo towards their home reserve, where they participate in traditional ceremonies and activities. These activities not only strengthen the relationships they have with other Indigenous peoples but also, make them feel good about themselves, allowing them to hold *themselves* in high esteem.

It's important to note that Emma and Markus' discourses on what counts as a subject and what counts as an object occurs within a context that is largely governed according to the logic that only humans are subjects and all nonhuman elements are objects. Thus, Emma and Markus' discourse on reality also represents a conceptual movement *away* from dualism *toward* Indigenous relationality. This movement contradicts in large part the central justification for the liberal-dualist ideal that the self is the product of individual human labour. Whereas Emma and Markus understand the self as a product of a myriad of relationships which includes the spirit of

ancestors and nonhuman elements. Such a movement, from dualism to relationality, requires recognizing that we have always been dispossessed of a dualist notion of self (Butler and Athanasiou 2013; Coleman 2014). This process of dispossession of the dualist self also requires ‘letting go’ of dualist understandings of the world and self, which allows for the expansion of what counts as ‘subjects.’ This is why it is important to acknowledge that Indigenous peoples in Canada are embedded in social systems which are largely governed according to relational *and* dualist conceptualization of the land, nature, and urbanity. Such recognition allows us to see that when Indigenous peoples subjectify nonhuman elements – whether those elements are buildings or trees – they are engaging in a process of dispossession of the dualist self and reaffirming Indigenous relational discourses on reality. This means their conceptualizations of nature and the self can be viewed as an immanent critique that arises from and at the same time critiques the historical context in which they find themselves.<sup>56</sup>

### **3.2.3 Indigenous relationality, misrecognition, recognition, and self-recognition**

While Taylor might make dualist discourse about the nature of reality seem benign, and Emma and Markus might use relational discourse in service of Indigenous self-determination, other Indigenous persons in this chapter were exposed to Indigenous discourses which made them feel marginalized. Take Daniel, a 30-40-year-old Indigenous man who has lived in Nanaimo his whole life, and who works as a day labourer.<sup>57</sup> Daniel has frequent contact with his Indigenous relations in Nanaimo and semi-frequent contact with his Indigenous relatives in

---

<sup>56</sup> See Walzer (1987) for the notion of internal critique, which describe the processes where people interpret and modify dominant governing logics, creating new governing logics.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel (male, age 30-40), in interview with the author, October 2019. All conversations and quotations referring to Daniel are from this interview.

reserve communities. Daniel thinks family is very important. Indeed, the idea of family is so important to Daniel that he has been letting a distantly related relative, who moved from their reserve community to Nanaimo, live in his house for four months without paying rent. Daniel is doing this because his mother taught him the importance of sharing what one has with family. For Daniel, family is important because they are “a reason to smile. A reason to want to go somewhere in life. To feel like I belong. To feel loved and to want to give love.” Yet Daniel thinks that some people from his home reserve don’t see him as Indigenous because “I’m not a traditional Native or I’m a city Native ... I barely know my language. I’m not ‘up’ on my culture. I don’t understand any of the music. I don’t like traditional foods. I’d rather a cheeseburger over a plate of fish any day.”

Interviewer: “But what about the people [from your home reserve] who do recognize you as family? How come they recognize you as family?”

Daniel: “Because I made it known to them that I am family. I tell them.”

Interviewer: “What do you think makes them make an effort to keep in touch with you?”

Daniel: “My sense of humor. Some people click, some people don’t ...I’ve got a few aunties, uncles, and cousins who are happy to see me. And that counts for it all. Not everyone has to like you. To the ones that do, I say thank you.”

Note the complex processes of objectification and recognition at play. Here, Daniel understands that his relatives recognize certain elements – such as rural communities and fish – as authentic expressions of their Indigenous nations and other objects – such as cities and hamburgers – as expressions of another way of being. Indeed, as Peters and Andersen (2013)

note, there is a pervasive social discourse that equates ‘the land’, and therefore authentic Indigenous subjecthood, as being outside the city. For the Indigenous author Tommy Orange (2018 11), the idea that the land – and therefore Indigenous identity – exists outside cities is paradoxical because “[t]he land is everywhere or nowhere.” However, what Orange is missing is that Indigenous and non-Indigenous claims about what constitutes ‘the land’ are moral as much as they are descriptive. From a liberal dualist perspective, cities are places where Indigenous people *ought not to be* because they are material expressions of liberal progress (Raibmon 2005). Or, as we have seen in this chapter, cities could be seen as a material expression of colonial-capitalism from an Indigenous relational perspective. Such either-or logic leaves very little room for Indigenous persons who live in urban communities, such as Daniel, to materially express their Indigeneity. Thus, it should be no surprise that Daniel *does not appeal to dualist or relational notions of the land* to describe how the world is and ought to be and to secure his sense of self. Rather, Daniel uses perspectivist and kinship discourses on reality to describe how the world is and ought to be. In turn, Daniel uses these perspectivist and kinship discourses to reinforce his conceptualization of self by seeking and giving esteem to *family* who holds him in esteem.

Anna is a 60–70-year-old Indigenous woman who has lived in Nanaimo most of her adult life and considers herself a traditionalist who takes the teachings of her elders (including her parents) seriously.<sup>58</sup> Anna takes pride in raising her sons to recognize their relatives *as* brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers, because “My parents brought me up like that and ... I taught my

---

<sup>58</sup> Anna (female, age 60-70), in interview with the author, September 2019. All conversations and quotations referring to Anna are from this interview.



boys ... to ask [Indigenous people] where they're from, so they could decide whether they're [related] or not." Furthermore, Anna plays a leading role in keeping the bonds between family members from her Indigenous nation who live in Nanaimo alive by organizing get-togethers centered around the cooking and eating of traditional foods. Anna also takes a leading role in keeping the lines of communication between her Indigenous nation and family members who live in Nanaimo open.

Yet despite Anna's efforts to remain a part of the fabric of her Indigenous nation, when she visits her reserve community, she says that she and her children "always feel like the outsider, because we don't live at home ..."

Interviewer: "Yeah, why's that? What makes you think that?"

Anna: "They don't talk to us, only walk away when they see us walking to them. I mean that's happened to me a few times ... I'm a city girl now."

Despite this, Anna still feels like she is accountable to her Indigenous nation.

Anna: "I'm 100% responsible for anybody that's here ... every time any member from [my Indigenous nation] is in the hospital I'm up there right away."

Interviewer: "Why do you think that [your relatives from your home Indigenous nation] reach out to you?"

Anna: "It's a strong bond we all have."

Interviewer: "They recognize you as family?"

Anna: "Yeah, I think we all have our strong bond with each other."

Anna's processes of objectification and recognition differ from Daniel's in that she views certain elements – such as traditional foods – as legitimate expressions of her parents' ideas on the proper way to be Indigenous. Anna uses traditional food as a mechanism to express her and her parents' notions of kinship, which move beyond the nuclear family and encompass relatives who live in Nanaimo and her reserve communities. Thus, Anna and her family's consumption of traditional foods make her recognize herself as a traditionalist. However, Anna also recognizes that her relatives who live on reserve also associate particular objects – such as the city – as being expressions of non-Indigenous ideals. Like Daniel, Anna does not engage in struggles for recognition with members of her Indigenous nation who do not recognize her as Indigenous. Rather, Anna recognizes that she has responsibilities to members of Indigenous communities to treat them as relatives regardless of how they recognize her. As such, Anna modified her parents' conceptions on how the world is and ought to be to reconcile the contradiction between how she sees herself and how her relatives who live on reserve see her. Thus, Anna uses a kinship discourse on reality to reconcile the contradiction between how others view her and how she views. Here, Anna turns away from those who misrecognize her and giving and receiving esteem from people she holds in esteem.

Daniel's and Anna's processes of objectification and recognition both affirm and challenge some of the assumptions presented by Indigenous theorists of recognition, such as Glen Coulthard (2014). Coulthard (48) argues that Indigenous peoples ought to engage in “critical individual and collective *self*-recognition ... with the understanding that our cultural practices have much to offer regarding the establishment of relationships within and between peoples and the natural world built on principles of reciprocity and respectful coexistence”

[emphasis in the original]. Indeed, Daniel and Anna seem to be engaging in the types of self-recognition that Coulthard calls for because they both recognize the value of cultural teachings as legitimate, to the point where they both enact these practices in their day-to-day lives. In turn, Daniel and Anna see their material expression of their culture as legitimate, which allows them to hold themselves in high esteem. Yet still, their material expressions of their culture are seen as illegitimate by some of their relatives, who equate certain objects (such as hamburgers or cities) as being material expressions of a non-Indigenous way of being. Thus, it would appear that Daniel, Anna, and their relatives' material expressions of communal ideals are irreconcilable. In his critique of Hegel's theory of recognition, Coulthard argued that Indigenous people can and ought to turn away from the gaze of the state and seek recognition from like-minded allies. However, what Coulthard's theory of self-recognition does not explicitly account for is that people can and do turn away from the gaze of people *within* their communities and seek out recognition from others to whom they are or wish to be similarly situated. Under such a scenario, people might not ask others to engage in collective self-recognition, but instead, might seek out recognition from similarly situated others within their respective communities. Indeed, Daniel and Anna deal with the contradiction of recognizing themselves as Indigenous and their Indigenous relatives misrecognizing them as not Indigenous by *seeking and giving* esteem to relatives who hold them in esteem.

### 3.2.4 Indigenous relationality and nature in the city

Roberta is a 60-70-year-old Indigenous woman who spent 20 years living in a reserve community and the last three to four decades living in Nanaimo.<sup>59</sup> Roberta is a person with a permanent disability that requires constant visits to the hospital. This is the main reason she lives in Nanaimo. As Durst and Coburn (2015, 99) note “[m]any First nations peoples with disabilities move to urban areas to obtain treatment or be closer to services.” However, the lack of health service providers on reserves is not reducible to the isolation of Indigenous communities, as most of the ill health effects Indigenous peoples with disabilities suffer are from “poor economic political and social conditions” (RCAP 1996 in Durst and Coburn 2015, 99). Further, like many Indigenous persons who live in cities or towns, Roberta moved from her home reserve to Nanaimo for the simple reason there wasn’t a place for her to live on her reserve. Thus, ongoing colonial dispossession has increased the likelihood that Indigenous people like Roberta will suffer from ill health effects while also pushing them to live in the city. However, Roberta made sure that we understood that she loves living in Nanaimo. She loves the modern conveniences of Nanaimo, which she thinks makes living with her disabilities easier than if she lived on reserve.

Roberta also loves living in Nanaimo because “you can go anywhere and see [nature]. Like I can go for a walk, whether it just to be to the store, or just going out back [to the parking lot]. I love listening to the birds. And believe it or not, I think of [all my relatives] when I hear the flickers.”

---

<sup>59</sup> Roberta (female, age 60-70), in interview with the author, March 2019. All conversations and quotations referring to Roberta are from this interview.

Note that Roberta uses relational discourse to describe nature, imprinting certain animals, such as flickers, with relational significance. Also, note her nuanced view on what counts as nature, noting that one does not need to venture away from the city to see nature because nature is in the city. Later in the interview, Roberta clarified that she sees no difference between the city and nature. Yet Roberta's enjoyment of Nanaimo contradicts her view that the city is harmful to animals. For Roberta, urbanization means animals have "nowhere to go" creating "dangers of [animals] going into [urban] communities and being killed." Roberta notes with indignation "You wouldn't like it if you'd have to wander around and try to find a new home!" Here we see Roberta using a relational discourse that subjectifies nature (animals are losing *their homes*). Roberta's story made us ask her "What makes you talk about animals that way, about their homes?" Before we get to Roberta's answer, a little context.

Roberta told us that she receives economic benefits from the British Columbia Employment and Assistance<sup>60</sup> (BCEA) Disability Assistance (DA) program. The little amount of money Roberta receives from BCEA DA means she can never save money for a rainy day. Thus, when a sewer line burst and flooded her basement apartment, she was left homeless because she had no money for a hotel room or family to look after her. Thus, Roberta told us the reason she speaks of animals having 'homes' which are being taken away by people is "Because of what has happened to me in the past [losing my own home] ... I always say that every living thing has a purpose in life to live their life out. And they're invading [animals'] territory too much [by

---

<sup>60</sup> The BCEA is a benefits program that provides financial assistance to people who are unable to work (Pulkingham 2015). The BCEA provides assistance on the basis of two categories: temporary assistance for those who are physically able to work but are not employed and disability assistance to people whose disabilities prevent them from working.

expanding the city] while thinking they have the right to shoot them. [Animals] are hungry and their land is being taken. Just sad.”

Here, we see Roberta moving beyond a process of objectification, whereby elements come to represent a person’s ideals, to empathizing with animals on their terms. And by empathy, we mean a type of political empathy which is the ability to put one’s self into the perspective of other beings and recognize what they need to survive (Shapiro 2016). Roberta notes that the process of urbanization severely threatens the ability of animals to survive, which she thinks is unfair. And while such acts of political empathy might be inspiring, it should be noted that Roberta explicitly stated that she can empathize with the plight of nonhuman beings because she’s been dispossessed by a system that upwardly distributes resources and power away from people like her and her nonhuman relatives to people who already have resources and power.

### **3.2.5 Indigenous relationality and nature as the city**

Finally, some participants said that all elements emerge from the earth, and as such, there is no distinction between nature and the city. Consider Roderick, a 30-40-year-old Indigenous man who has lived in Nanaimo his whole life:

Interviewer: “What do the words nature and natural mean to you?”

Roderick: “Nature is beautiful and natural is created.”

Interviewer: “How is natural created?”

Roderick: “Natural is an opinion. It’s just like common sense. Common sense is non-existent because people are brought up and taught differently ... There’s a sense about

things, but you don't have a 'common-sense.' ... Nobody has a common sense on reality that they can use to be vigilant against others.

After the interview, we asked Roderick if I was correct in noting that he saw no difference between nature and the city, to which he responded "Pavement is just earth mixed together." Further, during the interview process, Roderick told me that "urban and city just means life. It's here now."

Note how Roderick, like Taylor earlier in the chapter, does not conflate the words 'nature' with 'natural.' For Roderick, nature is the totality of existence, whereas the word 'natural' is a word used by people to posit that there is a 'common sense' view of reality to which everyone should adhere. Like Taylor, Roderick uses a perspectivist discourse on reality, which recognizes that what is considered 'natural' is bound by context, and as such, multiple. Further, for Roderick, the city is alive, which hearkens to Tommy Orange's (2018) claim that the city is as alive as anything else on earth.

Despite Roderick's commitment to a relational accounting of reality, he sometimes uses a dualist discourse to describe aspects of reality, namely, animals.

Interviewer: What kind of animals do you see around here [in the city]?

Roderick: Just rats with wings, seagulls, crows, pigeons. Where's all the eagles man?

Note that Roderick's language is similar to the language deployed by people who equate animals such as pigeons with vermin (Jerolmack 2008; Luther 2013). Such dualist language de-subjectifies animals while also stripping them of their status as living beings, placing them in the

realm of mere objects. Further, note the disesteem with which Roderick holds seagulls relative to eagles. This made us curious if he thought animals in nature were superior to animals in the city.

Interviewer: “So you obviously see a difference between animals found in the city and animals found at home?”<sup>61</sup>

Roderick: “Yeah.”

Interviewer: “What’s the difference to you?”

Roderick: “When you go home and you see an animal you see history ... [W]e have songs and dances to bless these animals. When you are in the city you don’t see anyone blessing or praying upon any animals to be successful. Whether it be an animal, that seagull cawing away over there, anything. Everyone says don’t feed them. Why not? They’re starving. You took away their fucking home! Their ancestors probably lived over there where that concrete jungle is built ... People don’t realize it’s the same for people. You strip away and strip away and strip away until everyone has nothing. The mighty look down upon us with a smile, they sleep like babies. If I ever won the lottery I would be broke in a year. Because I would share so Goddamn much with my whole family, with everyone.”

Note how Roderick’s narrative about seagulls shifts once he begins talking about how his culture recognizes and honors the histories of animals. Seagulls are transformed from ‘rats with wings’ who are thwarting Roderick’s connection to eagles, to moral beings with their history.

---

<sup>61</sup> By home, Roderick means the reserve-based rural communities of his Indigenous nation.



Further, Roderick is clear in his pronouncement that urban development has taken away the histories and homes of seagulls, which he thinks is unfair. Roderick connects this dispossession seagulls and their ancestors face with the dispossession people without power face on a day-to-day basis. Roderick is aware that this dispossession results from people knowingly stripping away resources and power from humans and nonhumans and distributing it upward to ‘the mighty.’ Thus, Roderick reconciles the contradiction between his desire to live his life according to his Indigenous values with living in a city that is actively dispossessing him of the resources, capacities, and relationships he needs to express those values by engaging in acts of cross-species political empathy.

Roderick’s acts of political empathy with seagulls induce him to declare that if he ever won a lot of money, he would give it all away. As Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen (2011) argues, non-Indigenous scholars (such as Mauss 2002) often interpret such Indigenous expressions of giving solely through a consequentialist lens (i.e., Indigenous peoples give because they are expecting something in return). We think such interpretations of Indigenous gifting practices, while important, obscure how practices of Indigenous peoples, like any other people, can be rule-based (i.e., deontological) and consequentialist at the same time. Viewed from this perspective, Roderick’s claim that he would give money away is a declaration of how people *ought* to behave regardless of the consequences. In other words, relatives who have a lot of resources should share them because sharing is what good relatives do. This means that Roderick views those who don’t share their resources and power with others as behaving in a non-relational, and unfair manner.

Finally, Stanley is a 40-50-year-old Indigenous man who spent most of his life living on a reserve of his Indigenous nation.<sup>62</sup> He moved to Nanaimo searching for employment and has held numerous jobs in the city, from manual labour positions to positions in the service economy. Yet Stanley does not feel like a fish out of water in the city. He enjoys the conveniences and employment opportunities found in the city, which he says allow him to take care of his immediate family.

Stanley considers himself a traditionalist. He speaks his Indigenous languages, practices spiritual ceremonies, and hunts, and gathers traditional foods. We asked Stanley if he saw a difference between nature and the city. He answered

Well, I can't exactly identify any differences ... All those powers that we utilize or harvest ... [A]ll the things that we've taken ... was already provided to us from the forces that be. The oil, the gases, everything is already provided for us.

For Stanley, like Tommy Orange (2018) and Lewis Cardinal (in S. Wilson 2008), it is an *illusion* to think that we discover and make things. Rather, the things we make were already provided to us by forces beyond our perception, and as such, are gifts from the Creator. Stanley argues that one reason people fail to recognize this fact is that the city makes natural processes “abstract ... Because the city is made of rock, stone, or metal or something fabricated from ... matter that didn't come from the city ...”

---

<sup>62</sup> Stanley (male, age 40-50), in interview with the author, July 2019. All conversations and quotations referring to Stanley are from this interview.

However, just because Stanley recognizes cities as the land does not mean he thinks urban development is benign. Indeed, for Stanley, urban intrusion into nonhuman spaces reminds him of the dispossession he experiences at the hands of the Canadian Government.

[It reminds me] of not having the right to be able to cut down a tree in my yard because it's on Indian reservation number 'whatever' that 'belongs' to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC]. And both [animals and myself] not having that power or ability to utilize those resources that are available to us.

Further, he recognizes that humans and nonhumans, much like Indigenous peoples and INAC, conflict with each other, even when people are "going about our daily business not even thinking about how the impact of like accidentally [running] over that poor raccoon or something, you know? And it is very saddening in my own personal spirit. It brings me down to a level of empathy."

Again, like other participants in this chapter, Stanley can express empathy towards nonhuman beings nominally thought of in instrumental terms because he recognizes nonhuman elements as *relations* with their own moral lives. This allows Stanley to recognize the dispossession nature suffers at the hands of humans, which in turn makes Stanley reflect upon the dispossession he has suffered at the hands of the Canadian Government. Remember, Stanley does not think that humans discover or create the means of our subsistence, but rather, that the earth gives them to us. As such, it is not hard to see why Stanley is embittered by the fact that those with significant resources and power, such as people who develop cities and INAC, deny nature and Indigenous peoples' access to resources he thinks should be available to all. Instead,

these organizations choose to upwardly distribute resources and power away from Indigenous peoples and the nonhuman world, a process that Stanley thinks is unfair.

### **3.3 Implications for reconciliation and conclusion**

We sought to understand how Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo reconciled the differences between dualist and Indigenous relational discourses on reality and what implications these acts of reconciliation had for the process of reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous nations writ large. To do this, we used modified versions of Hegel's theories of objectification and recognition to understand what Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo saw as material expressions of a given set of ideals. Using Hegel's theories of objectification and recognition, we saw how the routines, habits, and conscious practices of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo also functioned as everyday acts of reconciliation which sought to improve the relationship between those people and other beings they hold in esteem. As such, much of what we've said thus far addresses what and how Indigenous people recognize themselves, what different individuals see as natural or not, and what the work that dispossessing themselves of dualist thinking does for both their sense of self and their relations (human and nonhuman).

What kind of lessons can we then draw from the everyday acts of reconciliation of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo? Recall that several participants used perspectivist discourses on reality to *reconcile* themselves with the fact that *diverse* ways of understanding and enacting one's Indigeneity can and does exist in Indigenous communities. This is different from the liberal process of reconciliation, where differences across Indigenous nations and between Indigenous nations and Canada are reconciled into an organic whole. Thus,

one way that the reconciliation process in Canada can learn from Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo is to move from a process of reconciliation that seeks to incorporate difference into an organic whole into one that is rooted in and learns from the multiple unique and interconnected experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Participants also expressed and used a wide variety of discourses about nature. Several participants used dualist conceptualizations of nature to further their expressions of sovereignty and self-determination. By contrast, other participants used the process of dispossession of the dualist self, which allowed them to use Indigenous relational discourses on reality to transform elements thought of as objects into subjects with their own moral lives. Further, several participants spoke of the ways other Indigenous peoples used dualist discourse about the land to pathologize them as other. Finally, participants also demonstrated the importance of using Indigenous relational discourses on reality to recognize that urban communities emerge from and are embedded in the land. Conversely, other Indigenous persons in this chapter thought the land existed outside cities, locating it in geographical spaces within and adjacent to their ancestral territories which are located away from Vancouver and Nanaimo. Thus, while it is true that Indigenous peoples in this chapter used dualist discourses on reality that made a distinction between subjects and objects, it is also true that dualist discourses on reality were not overly important to most participants. This is because even the participants who made a distinction between subject and object engaged in processes of dispossession of the dualist self and subjectified elements nominally considered objects. This points to the need for reconciliation processes to engage in acts of dispossession of the dualist self by *recognizing* the fact that urban communities are the land as much as mountains are.

For the participants, seeing the nonhuman world as a place filled with morality also allowed them to engage in acts of political empathy which cross the human-nonhuman threshold. Such acts of empathy allowed participants to reconcile their desire to live their lives according to their values with living in cities that constantly dispossess them of the resources, capacities, and relationships needed to express those values. While this empathy was a product of Indigenous governing logics that circulate within off-reserve Indigenous communities, it was also a product of the participants' own experiences of dispossession. This points to the need of non-Indigenous peoples who wish to engage in acts of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples to practice political empathy, whereby they put themselves in the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and the nonhuman world, and truly recognize what Indigenous peoples and nonhumans need to survive.

Finally, for several participants' the issues of fairness, power, and dispossession by colonial-capitalism were discussed. Several participants recognized the reason why Vancouver and Nanaimo are evacuated of 'nature' and Indigenous presence is because people with resources and power (such as developers and municipal governments) control the existence of nature and Indigenous peoples. In turn, participants recognized that these resources and capacities were being taken from nature and Indigenous peoples and upwardly distributed to those who already have resources and power. Overall, participants found this process of dispossession deeply unfair. This points to the need to move the reconciliation process toward a more substantive concept of reconciliation which begins discussing the role resources and power play in the relationship between Canada, Indigenous peoples, and the nonhuman world. Building on this, Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities need resources (land, money, status as Indigenous subjects in their own right) to enact their ambitions, whatever they may be. Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo need specific resources to achieve their

ambitions in life. Indigenous scholars often chafe at the notion of discussing the importance of redistribution of economic resources from the Canadian state to Indigenous peoples and persons<sup>63</sup>, arguing that such discussions inevitably obscure the fact that Indigenous peoples need to occupy and repossess their territories to cultivate authentic Indigenous communities and identities. However, it should be noted that Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo discussed the importance of both occupying and repossessing Indigenous lands *and* the state redistributing money from elites to the dispossessed. We think much of the aversion to the idea of Indigenous persons receiving resources from the state flows from the anti-colonial thinking of Fanon (i.e., Alfred and Cornthassel 2005; Tuck and Yang 2011; Coulthard 2014), whose thinking was deeply indebted to the dialectical idealism of Hegel. Such thinking overly focuses on the importance of *working* or *struggling* to be free and ignores, or in the case of Coulthard (2014), is contemptuous of the idea of Indigenous peoples in Canada receiving *gifts* of resources and status from the Canadian state.<sup>64</sup> Yet as Audra Simpson (2014) notes, Indigenous nations receive ‘gifts’ from the Canadian state (such as money or recognition) and turn away from the Canadian state, using these gifts in service of the maintenance and promotion of Indigenous sovereignty. Further, Indigenous scholars themselves receive ‘gifts’ from Canada, such as money from Canadian scholarships and grants, along with recognition as experts in their chosen field. Here too, some Indigenous scholars ‘turn away’ from the state, and use these resources to maintain and promote Indigenous lifeways. One could argue that Indigenous persons who live in urban communities might use such gifts in a way that promotes Indigenous

---

<sup>63</sup> See Alfred (2009) and Coulthard (2014) for example.

<sup>64</sup> Indeed, Fanon (1967b) is contemptuous of the process whereby the colonizers give the colonized gifts of recognition, noting that such gifts are an expression of the will of the colonizer and not the colonized.

ways of being. However, we think that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities should be given resources regardless of such concerns because we are of the mind that good relatives give to other relatives regardless of the consequences.

In closing, if we are going to talk about improving the relationships between Indigenous peoples in cities and towns and Canada, we cannot only focus on struggle as the site of change. For reconciliation to be a reality, Indigenous peoples and their nonhuman relatives who live in urban communities need to be *given* a significant number of resources (land, status as subjects in their own right, and in the case of Indigenous persons who live in urban communities, money) to survive.



## Chapter 4: Relational governing logics in individualistic contexts

### 4.1 Introduction

*See my people see land ownership as being totally different to the English way of ownership ... ours used to be the land owns us. And it still is that to us. – Bob Randall, Yankunytjatjara elder (Global Oneness Project 2009b, 2:31-2:244).*

*For men being all the Workmanship of one Omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker; All the Servants of one Sovereign Master, sent into the World by his order and about his business, they are his Property, whose Workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's Pleasure. – John Locke, Second Treatise on Government, (1988 [1689], 271).*

Recently, there has been an upsurge of literature written by Indigenous (Atleo 2004; 2011; S. Wilson 2008; Kimmerer 2013) and non-Indigenous scholars (Freeman 2014; Tully 2018; Gagnon-Bouchard and Ranger 2020) which argues that non-Indigenous peoples can and should use Indigenous ontologies<sup>65</sup> or Indigenous relational discourses on reality<sup>66</sup> to challenge

---

<sup>65</sup> David Graeber (2015, 15) argues that research on Indigenous ontologies tends to speak of ontologies as “way of being”, when in reality when we speak of the word ontology, it is more proper to think of ontology as “a discourse (logos) about the nature of being ...”. I agree with this argument, but would add that Indigenous peoples do use relational discourses on reality as logics to govern their communities and lives (i.e., how they go about *being* in the world). As such, I understand ontology as constituting a discourse on reality which informs how people go about *being* in the world.

<sup>66</sup> I will be using the terms Indigenous relational discourse on reality, relationality, and relational governing logics in lieu of the phrase “Indigenous ontology” for reasons I will discuss in Part IV. I understand Indigenous relational discourses on reality as arguing that “that Indigenous peoples are members of a broad community of beings to whom they are related, through common origin, and connected through a web of complex reciprocal relationships that are attached to responsibilities.” I will discuss this concept in Part IV.

the liberal status quo.<sup>67</sup> As an Indigenous person, I am surprised at this development because I know that Indigenous peoples are aware that liberals have and continue to hold Indigenous relational governing logics in contempt, seeking to eradicate and replace them with governing logics premised on the principles of liberal individualism (Rifkin 2011) and private property (Coulthard 2014). Indeed, the relationship between liberal governments and Indigenous governments has been defined by a political conflict that as Blaser (2009, 877) argues, ensues “as different worlds or ontologies strive to sustain their own existence as they interact and mingle with each other.” Further, Indigenous peoples are well aware of how *liberal critics of liberalism* have historically and contemporarily used Indigenous peoples *as ideologies* to beat back what they consider the cold, competitive, hyperrational logics of modernity in service of an emotional and cooperative utopia (V. Deloria 1992; Lawrence 2004; Million 2013).

Further, it seems that scholars who wish to use Indigenous relationality to transform liberal institutions have divergent goals. For some scholars (Schmidt 2019; Leung and Min 2020), liberal institutions should be ‘Indigenized’, by which they mean the insertion of Indigenous perspectives into dominant institutions, such as the academy, in the hopes that such insertion will lead to broad-scale structural change. These arguments differ from those of Indigenous relational scholars (Atleo 2004; 2011; S. Wilson 2008; Kimmerer 2013) who advocate for *large-scale* transformation of liberal structures, such as education or the economy, from individualistic to relational social structures. In this chapter, I will be focusing on the latter arguments of Indigenous relational scholars.

---

<sup>67</sup> I am not claiming that all Indigenous peoples have the same relational governing logic, nor that Indigenous relational governing logics are the only governing logics used by Indigenous nations and people. Rather, the above definition is built upon S. Wilson’s (2008) observation that different Indigenous nations share broad commonalities in regards to Indigenous relational governing logics. I discuss this further in Part IV.

And while there are many reasons that Indigenous relational scholars think that liberal institutions should be transformed into relational institutions, I am going to focus on an overriding concern of Indigenous relational scholars, namely that liberal governing logics are premised on a faulty individualistic discourse on reality that argues that people can detach themselves from the processes which constitute them (i.e., their relationship with the human and nonhuman world). For Indigenous relational scholars (Atleo 2004, 2011; Cordova 2007; S. Wilson 2008; Kimmerer 2013), people are always constituted by and participating in relationships, a fact they argue needs to be recognized to produce an ethic of care towards one's relations.

The above Indigenous critiques of liberalism are similar to those made by communitarian philosophers, who argue that liberalism is built on a theoretical premise that ignores how individuals are embedded in, are manifestations of, and participate in social relationships at all times (Christman 2004). In response to criticisms that liberal political theories are too individualistic, the liberal philosopher Simon Caney (1986) argues that many liberal political theories recognize the social preconditions of individual autonomy and that social institutions are expressions of and the context from which individual rights arise. Or put another way, it seems that liberal political theories also contain a presumption that people are embedded in, manifestations of, and participating in processes beyond their immediate perception and control (which I will be calling liberal relational discourses on reality).<sup>68</sup> However, other *liberal* political theorists (Shapiro 2003; Smith 2016) have noted that many liberal political theories are critically

---

<sup>68</sup> A process implies a relationship between elements, as such, I feel comfortable calling liberal arguments which recognize that people are constituted by processes beyond their immediate perception and control a form of liberal relationality.

reliant upon an individualistic discourse on reality that argues that the goods and harms people receive in life are reducible to *individual* effort (which I will be calling a liberal individualistic discourse on reality).

Building upon the above conversations, I argue that not only is there a conflict within liberalism between theorists who argue for *liberal* relational discourses on reality and liberal individualistic discourses on reality, but that this conflict – between relational and individualistic discourses on reality – is found *within* classical European philosophical (such as those of Rene Descartes) and liberal political theories (such as those of John Locke). In short, I argue that liberal political theories internalize a contradiction between the idea that we are constituted by relationships and that we are constituted solely by our individual actions. I further argue that Indigenous peoples in Canada who are governed according to both liberal individualistic and Indigenous relational governing logics are forced to navigate and resolve contradictions between relational and individualistic discourses on reality.

With the above conversations in mind, this chapter is not concerned with answering the question “Should Indigenous peoples be sharing relational governing logics with non-Indigenous peoples?” or “Should non-Indigenous peoples use Indigenous relational governing logics”? The fact is, Indigenous peoples share their interpretations of Indigenous relational governing logics with non-Indigenous peoples in the hopes that non-Indigenous peoples will use such logics to change social structures (such as education and the economy) and their individual practices. Instead, I will be reading liberal (relational and individualistic) and Indigenous relational discourses on reality for tension, conflict, and resolution. To illuminate sources of tension within liberalism and between liberalism and Indigenous relational governing logics, I analyze liberal (relational and individualistic) and Indigenous relational theories of effort, selfhood, and desert,

paying particular attention to how they are operationalized in economic and educational contexts (as Indigenous relational scholars often focus their attention on these structures as pathways for social change). I further focus on education and the economy because, as it relates to this thesis, Indigenous persons who live in urban communities will engage with these structures throughout their lives. To help me accomplish my tasks, I use a modified version of Michael Walzer's (1987, 36) theory of internal critique (which I outline in Part I), which argues that dominant ideologies (such as individualistic liberalism) always "internalize contradictions" meaning that "criticism always has a starting point within dominant culture."

In Part II, I argue that classical philosophical and foundational liberal political theories – such as those of Rene Descartes and John Locke – internalized a contradiction between relational and individualistic discourses on reality. I argue that these liberal theorists resolved this contradiction by treating both relational and individualistic conceptions of reality as scientific facts. I argue that such reasoning produced a hegemonic individualistic and meritocratic<sup>69</sup> governing logic that structures liberal doctrines of individual rights, capitalism, and liberal educational systems. I further argue that this liberal individualistic governing logic was not only imposed upon Indigenous peoples but was also used as a logic to justify dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land and governing authority over their communities and individual lives. In Part III, I analyze liberal theories which explicitly reject liberal individualistic discourses on reality (such as those of welfare theorists, free-market liberals, and privilege

---

<sup>69</sup> My understanding of meritocracy builds off the works of Ian Shapiro (1991) and research on the negative implications of the idea of self-ownership (Lyon-Callo 2008; Manson 2019; Sandel 2020). Ian Shapiro argues that liberal political theories are centered around the idea of self-ownership ('I make myself, therefore I own myself'), and workmanship ('I own the external goods I make'). Thus, a meritocratic governing logic, which flows from the concept of self-ownership and workmanship, can be defined as the idea that people have individually *earned* and therefore *deserve* the goods (such as employment) and harms (such as unemployment) they receive in life.

theorists). I note that while these liberals might have rejected the causal claims that underwrite meritocratic governing logics, they have *not* rejected meritocracy as a governing *ideal*. As such, these liberals use relational discourses on reality to *place limits* on meritocracy, not jettison it. In Part IV, I argue that many Indigenous peoples engage in acts of internal critique, whereby they reinterpret and modify liberal individualistic governing logics in service of the maintenance and promotion of Indigenous relational governing logics. However, I also note that liberal educational and economic systems incentivize and normalize dualist understandings of effort, subjecthood, and desert, which means that Indigenous peoples themselves sometimes resolve the contradiction between Indigenous relationality and liberal individualism in favour of the latter. I conclude this chapter by briefly discussing the implications of these findings for the task of transforming liberal institutions and social practices into relational institutions and social practices.

#### **4.2 Part I: Ontological conflict and internal critique**

The communitarian philosopher Michael Walzer's (1987, 36) theory of internal critique argues that dominant ideologies (such as individualistic liberalism) always "internalize contradictions" meaning that "criticism always has a starting point within dominant culture." As such when people engage in acts of criticism of hegemonic ideologies "new ideologies emerge from old ones by way of interpretation and revision" (Walzer 37). Walzer's theory of criticism focuses on explicit revision and reinterpretation of hegemonic discourses. Yet as MacIntyre (2007) notes, political philosophers have long argued that the function of government is to induce people to *internalize* governing logics, particularly conceptions of the good. As such, it is appropriate to modify Walzer's theory of internal criticism to allow for *implicit* interpretation

and modification of hegemonic discourses. Further, discourses on reality are informed by and inform non-discursive social practices. As such, I modify Walzer's theory of internal criticism to acknowledge how people reinterpret and revise hegemonic non-discursive social practices, particularly as it relates to education and the economy.

Walzer (1987, 36) argues, via Gramsci, that "Every hegemonic culture ... is a complex political construction. The intellectuals who put it together are armed with pens, not swords; they have to make a case for the ideas they are defending among men and women who have ideas of their own." Such insights might be valid in communities dominated solely by a liberal governing logic. However, in Canada, Indigenous peoples are governed by *competing* governing logics, one rooted in individualistic liberalism, and the other rooted in Indigenous relational governing logics (Coulthard 2014). These competing governing logics are not discrete, but rather are entangled and sit in tension with each other (Simpson 2014; Manson 2019). This entanglement is not because Canada has convinced Indigenous peoples of the superiority of liberal-capitalism, but rather, because historically and contemporarily Canada has used force to 'make their case' for the inevitable triumph of liberal-capitalism within Indigenous communities (Alfred 2009). As such, Canada's imposition of liberal-capitalism upon Indigenous nations and peoples means that Indigenous nations and peoples' conceptualizations about the nature of reality have internalized contradictions, namely between liberal individualistic and Indigenous relational governing logics. Indigenous persons seek to resolve this contradiction through outright rejection of liberal governing logics, by reinterpretation and modification of liberal governing logics, or by acceptance of liberal governing logics.

### **4.3 Part II: Liberalism, relationality, and meritocracy**

#### **4.3.1 Relationality and individualism in Cartesian dualism**

For Walzer (1987), the process of internal critique is distinguishable from other forms of critique where the social critic imagines that they stand “outside, in some privileged place, where [they/she/he] has access to “advanced” or universal principles; and [they/she/he] applies these principles with an impersonal (intellectual) rigor.” This model of inquiry, where people are thought to be capable of using reason and work to sit outside the relationships which constitute them and know the truth of things, is Cartesian dualist logic and is a dominant ethic within science and the social sciences (Shapiro 1986; Habermas 1987; Walzer 1987). While it is debatable whether one can call Descartes a liberal, philosophers (Shapiro 1986; Habermas 1987; Smith 2016) and historians (Coleman 2014) argue that liberal political philosophy is indebted to the works of Rene Descartes, particularly the notion that the self is a manifestation of immaterial reason, and that people can sit outside the relationships which constitute them to be producers and owners of their thoughts. Both Descartes’ scientific and political ethic flows from a dualist logic which argues that the immaterial mind is distinct from physical reality and that people can know with certainty what is real through the individual application of reason, as it is expressed in the *cogito*, “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes 1999 [1637], 25). For Descartes, it is through the individual act of thinking – including the act of doubting – that people come to know with certainty that “I” exist.

Descartes justified his dualism by arguing that since one can imagine the mind and body as distinct entities which can exist without each other, then it follows that the mind and body are two distinct entities (Kagan 2012). Thornton (2004, paragraph 7) demonstrates that Descartes’ method runs the risk of solipsism (the idea that the self is all that can be known to exist), and that



Descartes evades the solipsistic consequences of his method of doubt by the desperate expedient of appealing to the benevolence of God. Since God is no deceiver, he argues, and since He has created man with an innate disposition to assume the existence of an external, public world corresponding to the private world of the “ideas” that are the only immediate objects of consciousness, it follows that such a public world actually exists.

Thus, for Descartes, it is a descriptive fact that the physical world (including people’s material bodies and immaterial minds) is an expression of God’s will (i.e., people’s relationship to God). Further, as the liberal political philosopher Steven B. Smith (2016) observes, in the realm of ethics, Descartes acknowledged that his ideas were shaped by social institutions and the social relationships he had with others and that his ideas could shape the social practices of others. As Collins (2013) notes, some scholars argue that Descartes believed that human will was completely free of deterministic forces, including God’s will. However, I agree with Thornton's (2004) and Smith’s (2016) interpretations of Descartes’ works which highlight how Descartes acknowledged that processes beyond one’s immediate control (God’s will and society) shaped how people understood reality and lived their lives. Such insights find their expression in Descartes’ (1999 [1637], 12) discussion in *Discourse on Method* on the role nature and society play in the formation of ideas:

I have also thought that, since we were all infants before we became adults, and since we were necessarily governed for a long time by our appetites and our teachers, which were often at odds with each other and of which, perhaps, neither always gave us the best

advice, it is almost impossible for our judgements to be as clear and as well-founded as they might have been had we had the full use of our reason from the day we were born and had we never been guided by anything else.

Here, Descartes recognizes that *his life is governed* by relational processes (such as biological necessity and social relations). For Descartes, these relational processes thwart his ability to produce thoughts that he can call his alone. Further, Descartes (1999 [1637], 20) recognizes that he *cannot* control these processes, an insight which informs his third maxim in *Discourse on Method*, which “was to try to overcome myself rather than fortune, to change my desires rather than the structure of the world and, in general, to get used to believing that there is nothing completely within our control apart from our thoughts.” Thus, it is through the act of isolated reasoning that people can alienate themselves from the circumstances which constitute them, allowing them to produce thoughts one could own and be responsible for (Coleman 2014; Smith 2016). However, Descartes (22) is not arguing *only* for an individualistic conception of knowledge production, noting that his task of ridding himself of “all my other views” could be accomplished “better in discussions with other people” which induced him to “set off again to travel before winter was completely over.” Here, Descartes treats as uncontroversial the relational idea that his ideas can shape the ideas of others and that the ideas of others can shape his. Thus, for Descartes, the contradiction between the idea that people are constituted by relationships (with God, nature, and other people) and that people are also constituted by their own will is resolved by treating both relational and individualistic discourses on reality as descriptive facts.

It should be noted that dualism is controversial within philosophy and has been rejected within cognitive science, with Bloom (2007, 149) noting “It is assumed by virtually all scientists that mental life is the product of physical brains (though there is little consensus as to how this all works).” Philosophically, Cartesian dualism is based on the faulty premise that one’s ability to imagine the mind existing without the body means that the mind and body are two separate phenomena. This is a faulty premise because people often describe a single phenomenon as though it is two distinct phenomena that can exist without each other (such as lightning and electrical discharges) when in reality the ‘two’ phenomena of which people are speaking is a *single phenomenon* (lightning *is* an electrical discharge) (Smart 1959). Thus, the mere fact that we can imagine the mind existing without the body does not mean that they are two separate things (Kagan 2012).

Unlike Bloom (2007), however, I am not suggesting that people are in essence “dualist” thinkers. Rather, I am suggesting that there is evidence that dualist discourses about reality are a dominant discourse that people use to understand and practice politics across a range of political ideologies (Shapiro 1986; Habermas 1987). With these thoughts in mind, I want to suggest that the contradiction that exists within Cartesian dualism – between the idea that people are constituted by forces beyond our control (i.e., a relational discourse on reality) and the idea that we can use reason to alienate ourselves from the physical realm (i.e., an individualistic discourse on reality) – are representative of broader a broader intellectual trend which facilitates struggles that not only play out within liberalism but also between liberalism and Indigenous peoples. With that in mind, let us turn to one liberal form of agency, self-ownership, that is deeply informed by dualist precepts (Shapiro 1986; Coleman 2014; Jolley 2015) to understand how its

theory of effort and desert continues to play an important role in the liberal economic and educational order in which Indigenous peoples find themselves.

#### **4.3.2 Liberal relationality and individualism in the concept of self-ownership**

In this section I will engage with the works of John Locke – a figure whose work is exceedingly important to modern conceptions of individualism and economic desert (Shapiro 2003) – to demonstrate how he inherited and modified the dualist idea that people can use reason to alienate themselves from processes which constitute them. Before moving forward, it's important to note that though Locke was a dualist, he saw the mind as a thing that was not thinking all the time (i.e., like Descartes), but rather, as thinking matter (Jolley 2015). As Shapiro (1986, 144) notes, while Locke might have disagreed with large parts of Descartes' philosophy, his account of individuality is "Cartesian in the commitment to the beliefs that the individual's will is the cause of [their/her/his] actions, and that every individual has decisive authority over [their/her/his] will because [they/she/he] has privileged access to the contents of [their/her/his] own mind." Further, as Charly Coleman (2014, 23) notes, Locke shares with Descartes the desire "to liberate the human person from a preordained order and enshrine it as an acquisitive, possessive subject."

In the *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke (1988 [1689], 287) argues that "Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his." [emphasis in the original]. This logic is considered to be a prime example of self-ownership, or the idea that people make themselves, and therefore, own themselves (Shapiro 2003). Like Descartes, Locke's theory of individuality runs the danger of

solipsism (Thornton 2004), which Locke (1988 [1689], 271) evades by establishing that, though people make and own themselves, they are also “the Workmanship of one Omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker; All the Servants of one Sovereign Master, sent into the World by his order and about his business, they are his Property, whose Workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another’s Pleasure.” Thus, like Descartes, Locke’s theory of how the world operates causally internalizes a contradiction between a relational conception of reality (i.e., the idea that people are products of and owned by processes beyond their control, i.e., God’s will) *and* an individualistic conception of reality (i.e., the idea that people can and do make and own themselves). Laslett (1988, 101) asserts that Locke’s claims about divine ownership and self-ownership “almost contradict” each other. Laslett gives no argument for why Locke does not contradict himself in regards to his claims that God makes and owns us and we make and own ourselves. Similarly, Shapiro (1986, 96) argues that for Locke, there is no contradiction to resolve between divine and self-ownership, because Locke recognizes that people “are autonomous agents and may do as they like, within the limits imposed by the law of nature. Among other things, this means that they must respect one another’s autonomy qua rational intentional agents ...” Shapiro (1991) argues that the contradiction between communal ownership of reality and self-ownership only arose once Locke’s ideas were secularized and detached from their theological moorings. However, Locke also argued that his theories of property and politics could be justified by appeal to theology *and* secularized notions of reason (Smith 2012). And it is from the secularized perspective that Locke’s theories of divine ownership and self-ownership come into contradiction. Seagrave (2011), argues that Locke resolved the contradiction between divine and self-ownership by arguing that God gave people reason in common and that God endowed people with the capacity to *individually* apply reason

to *common reason*, which allows one to own and be responsible for one's self. In short, Locke treated the ideas of divine ownership and self-ownership as descriptive facts.

Locke's theory of self-ownership is a foundational theory of freedom – freedom from interference from society and other people (Berlin 2002) – that liberals have used to establish doctrines of individual rights (Shapiro 2003; Smith 2016). The liberal philosopher Isaiah Berlin (2002) argues that this form of freedom is a relatively benign concept. I too think the right to be free from others and live one's life without being unduly interfered with is an important freedom. However, what Berlin does not examine is the dualist premise from which liberal theories of self-ownership arise. Indeed, as David Graeber (2014, 207) argues “to say we own ourselves is, oddly enough, to cast ourselves as both master and slave simultaneously. “We” are both owners (exerting absolute power over our property), and yet somehow, at the same time, the things being owned (being the object of absolute power).” Further, as Graeber (207) notes, this type of logic only works if people possess “something called a “mind” which is “completely separate from something else, which we can call “the body,” and that the first thing holds natural dominion over the second.” Graeber (207) argues that such logic “flies in the face of just about everything we now know about cognitive science.” Building from Graeber's criticism, we can also argue that the concept of self-ownership can be used to create a hierarchy between ‘natural’ people who are seen as being ‘owned by nature’ and ‘self-owning’ people who are seen as people who have individually used reason and work to control nature. Such hierarchical logic allows self-owning people to interfere with the lives of people who are ‘owned by nature.’ In terms of education, an illustration of such a hierarchical process is found in the following statement by Thomas J. Morgan, the US Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the late 1800s, who said that “No pains should be spared to teach [Indigenous peoples] that their future must depend chiefly on

their own exertions, character, and endeavors. They will be entitled to what they earn . . . They must stand or fall as men and women, not as Indians” (in Rifkin 2011, 151). Note how the language of hierarchy (men and women versus Indians) is linked to the language of self-ownership: Indigenous peoples ought to use *individual* effort to transform themselves from ‘Indians’ (presumably engulfed by context) to men and women. As we see in the previous example, this logic – based on the distinction between self-owning people and natural people – was used to take governing authority away from Indigenous communities and individuals, placing it within the hands of non-Indigenous nations and peoples.

Contemporarily, the dominant model of education within Western democracies (from the elementary to graduate school level) is organized around meritocratic principles (Lampert 2013; Labaree 2020; Sandel 2020). Of course, educational institutions acknowledge a student’s life circumstances shape their engagement with the education system, taking into account that some students enter educational systems as either ‘privileged’ or ‘underprivileged’ (Labaree 2020, 37). However, once students enter the educational system, they enter into a Cartesian realm where they are imagined and treated as ‘equal’ students who all can use reason to extract themselves from the circumstances which constitute them and ‘individually earn’ their grades. As Labaree (2020, 37) notes, the result of such a process is the transformation of privileged and underprivileged students into “people of merit.”

Liberal political philosophers (MacPherson 1962; Tully 1980; Shapiro 1991), argue that Locke used the concept of self-ownership to argue that people own the external goods they make. Thus, within Locke’s theory, we find the genesis for the establishment of a doctrine of individual rights (self-ownership), and a theory of labour that sanctioned the owning of private property (MacPherson 1962). As Shapiro (2001, 145-146) notes, “Markets in productive

capacities affirm individual rights by legitimating the idea of self-ownership. If people did not own themselves they would not, after all, be in a position to sell the use of *their* productive capacities.” In terms of economic activity this can be positive, as the liberal notion of self-ownership “incentivizes hard work and ingenuity, while also allowing people to feel they have some measure of control over their lives and the circumstances in which they find themselves” (Manson 2019, 220). The corollary to this logic, which is rarely discussed by liberals but has been discussed by critics of liberalism (Harvey 2011, 104), is that “individuals who fail to produce value have no claim to property. The dispossession of indigenous populations in North America by “productive” colonists, for instance, was justified because indigenous populations did not produce value.” Value from a Lockean perspective is directly tied to the workmanship ideal (Shapiro 2003), namely, the claim that people own the goods they have appropriated from nature and made productive. From this perspective, land that is allowed to “waste”, i.e., is not cultivated, is not being made productive, and as such is not owned by anyone (Kolers 2000). As Atleo (2011) notes, and as we will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, Locke’s perspective on the land – and as such value – is different from that of many Indigenous peoples, who see the land as a relative to whom one has responsibilities.

Contemporarily, research (Workman 2009; Lyon-Callo 2008 in Manson 2019, 220) has also demonstrated that the idea of self-ownership instills in people the idea that “their and other people’s inability to work in a “productive” or “creative” manner [is] a “moral defect” of their own making, even if this “failure” is attributable to processes beyond their control.” From here, marginalized people begin to manifest the meritocratic ideal, saying that they ‘deserve’ the goods and harms that arise from the exercise of their ‘individual’ actions (Lyon-Callo 2008; Manson 2019).



It should be noted though, Locke's arguments about the nature of property (and similar arguments used by non-Indigenous states, corporations, and persons to justify the dispossession of Indigenous lands) rest on dubious dualist premises which imagine that people are capable of extricating themselves from the relationships which constitute, meaning one can legitimately reject his claim that people are entitled to the fruits of 'their labour' (Shapiro 1991). In short, the philosophical and folk theoretical basis for colonial dispossession of Indigenous lands has no basis in scientific fact, but rather, is a mere value claim about how the world ought to be.

To be clear, I am not arguing that the liberal concept of self-ownership or property is static and the only way of seeing morality and property within political liberalism or liberal societies. Rather, the liberal individualistic view of subjecthood, effort, and desert has evolved over the centuries, and, as liberals themselves have argued, has been combined with other logics (such as postmodernism, socialism, etc.) (Smith 2016). However, whether one thinks that Locke advocated for *laissez-faire* capitalism (MacPherson 1962) or egalitarianism (Tully 1980), Locke's dualist logic allowed people to own themselves and property, both of which are essential features of liberal-capitalist societies (Shapiro 2001; Pateman 2002; Graeber 2014). Indeed, I would argue that even if one disagrees with the concept of self-ownership and the meritocratic ideal which flows from it when one engages in the act of selling one's productive capacity for a wage, one is engaging in a social practice centered around the logic of self-ownership and meritocracy, thereby reproducing these logics. With that in mind, let us turn to liberal theorists who claim to reject liberal individualistic discourses on reality, to see how they reconcile the contradiction between liberal relationality and liberal individualism that is internalized in liberal political theories and institutions.

#### **4.4 Part III: The liberal rejection(?) of meritocracy**

##### **4.4.1 Free-market liberalism, welfare liberalism, and merit**

Political theorists (Shapiro 1991; Sandel 2020) have demonstrated that both contemporary free-market liberals and welfare liberals theoretically reject individualistic conceptions of effort, autonomy, and reward at the level of describing how productive capacities and rewards are distributed within market economies. Shapiro and Sandel demonstrate that both free-market liberals and welfare liberals argue that the biological and social endowments people inherit that allow them to exercise their productive capacities are the product of the work of others and luck and are not reducible to individual agency. Further, both free-market liberals and welfare liberals argue that it is by luck and the work of others that one inherits a system where the exercise of one's capacities is considered scarce enough to be rewarded or not rewarded. As such, it seems that both free market and welfare liberals are resolving the contradiction between liberal relational and liberal individualistic discourses on reality in favour of liberal relational discourse on reality. Further, both free-market liberals and welfare liberals reject appeals to moral merit as a mechanism for distributing economic goods and harms as unscientific.

Yet as Shapiro (1991) and Sandel (2020) argue, ultimately both free-market and welfare liberals do not reject meritocratic conceptions of effort, selfhood, and reward when they theorize on how economies *ought* to function. This is because both free-market and welfare liberals appeal to the notion that people are entitled to the fruits of their labor. In the case of free-market liberals, the argument that people are entitled to the fruits of their labour finds its form in the claim that people should be able to do whatever they want with their private property and that taxing those with wealth is coercion verging on theft (Shapiro 1991; Sandel 2020). In terms of welfare liberals, though they think that society ought to be governed to the benefit of the least

well off, the idea that people are entitled to the fruits of their labour finds its form in the claim that though the capacities people inherit is because of the work of others and luck, how individuals choose to use their capacities is reducible to their individual actions (Shapiro 2003). Such an argument re-instates an individualistic discourse on reality which claims that people make and own their actions. Welfare liberals such as John Rawls also reinscribe an individualistic discourse on reality into their theories by arguing that in the economic realm, people have “entitlements to legitimate expectations” (Sandel 2020, 141). What that means practically is that in a world where people are governed and govern their lives according to the logic that the economic goods or harms they receive in life are reducible to their individual efforts, it is legitimate for them to expect that they will be compensated for their *individual* exertions of effort. Thus, as Sandel (144) notes in contemporary capitalist societies, it is not at all hard to imagine that the idea of “entitlements to legitimate expectations” can reinstate the meritocratic notion that people *deserve* the economic goods and harms they receive in life. Thus, we can see that both free-market liberals and welfare liberals resolve the internal contradiction within political liberalism (between liberal relational and individualistic discourses on reality) by rejecting the causal story told by liberal individualistic theories, which argue the self is made by the self while accepting individualistic discourses on reality as a *political ideal*.

Indeed, the liberal political theorist Ian Shapiro (1991, 64) argues that the “belief that autonomous productive action is possible may be indispensable to the basic integrity of the human psyche and necessary for generating and sustaining the incentive to work” but also argues that nevertheless, this individualistic conception of subjecthood, effort, and reward “incorporates causal and moral fictions.” Much of Shapiro’s scholarship (1991, 2001, 2003) seems to at once reject the causal story told by liberal individualistic discourses on reality while also

pragmatically accepting it as an indispensable liberal governing logic. However, Shapiro never explicitly explores the downside of liberal individualistic discourses on reality for marginalized groups of people. Indeed, Vincent Lyon-Callo's (2008) research with people experiencing homelessness demonstrates that they often engage in acts of self-blame when they realize that they cannot use reason and work to transcend the circumstances in which they find themselves. Further, unlike Sandel (2020), a fellow critic of liberal individualistic discourses on reality, Shapiro does not explore potential benefits of liberal relational discourses on reality (such as the solace one gains when one realizes that much of the misfortune one suffers is because of processes beyond one's control and is not reducible to one's actions). Instead, Shapiro (2003, 143) argues that it is "perverse to deny the legitimacy of so powerful a spur as the psychic boost that producing something that one can own brings. This is perhaps why Chief Seattle's aphorism to the effect that "the earth does not belong to us, we belong to the earth" has never achieved much historical traction ...". Thus, even a trenchant critic of the theoretical foundations of liberalism is unwilling to conceive of the possibility that the argument that the earth owns us (an argument which is very similar to John Locke's argument that God owns us) might be a viable political ideology which might inform how non-Indigenous governments distribute economic resources to their citizenry.

#### **4.4.2 Privilege theory, education, and "earned" privileges**

Thus far, we have spoken of liberal theories which are hostile or skeptical of Indigenous relational governing logics. However, there are liberal theories, such as privilege theory, that explicitly align themselves with the Indigenous drives for justice and freedom, while also

actively seeking to ‘use’ Indigenous relational governing logics.<sup>70</sup> How does privilege theory confront the concept of merit (and the liberal individualistic discourse on reality which underwrites it)? To answer this question, we have to first understand that scholars and activists who use terms like privilege and oppression come from a diverse array of analytic paradigms. As such, this section will focus on the works of Peggy McIntosh (privilege theory’s major proponent) and her academic progeny and how they understand and mobilize concepts such as privilege and disadvantage.

McIntosh (1988) (and her followers) reject the notion that the resources people receive in life (such as wealth and status) are reducible to their individual effort, noting that people were born into their social positions which were systemically structured to give certain people (such as white people, men, those with wealth, etc.) privileges and other groups of people (such as racialized people, women, the working class, etc.) disadvantages. Indeed, McIntosh (1988, 33), explicitly rejects the notion of meritocracy, saying “For me white privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive subject. The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy. If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one’s life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own.” Further, McIntosh (36) argues that “It seems to me obliviousness to white advantage, like obliviousness to male advantage, is kept strongly inculcated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy, the myth that democratic choice is equally available to all.” Thus, for McIntosh, privilege and one’s unawareness of having privilege, is a function of systems of power and is not

---

<sup>70</sup> See Olsen (2017) for example of privilege theorists who engage with and seek to learn from Indigenous relational theorists.

reducible to one's effort. Thus, McIntosh seemingly resolves the contradiction between liberal relational and liberal individualistic discourses on reality in favour of liberal relationality.

Privilege theorists encourage people to engage in acts of critical self-reflection to recognize that the privileges they have inherited and the disadvantages other groups of people have inherited (both of which are collectively produced by systems of power) (Margolin 2015). These acts of critical self-reflection can be objectified through social practices such as engaging in workshops that discuss the concept of privilege, as well as by implementing policies in a variety of social contexts in the hopes of dulling the impact of various forms of privilege.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, the main method privilege theorists use to critique the notion of liberal individualism – the act of individual critical self-reflection – seems to also re-instantiate the idea that the goods that people receive in life (in this case, knowledge of one's privilege and other's oppression) is reducible to one's effort (i.e., individual critical self-reflection). Indeed, as Krus (2005, 181) argues, the concept of privilege as viewed from the perspective of privilege theorists “generally ceases to be thought about as structural. Instead, privilege is presumed to be the personal possession of an autonomous self, a self that is also assumed to be the bearer of strongly neo-Kantian qualities of reason and will.” As Monahan (2021) argues, one implication of treating privilege as a property one makes and owns is that privilege begins to be seen as a thing that can be earned *or* given away (instead of being the product of social processes which are not reducible to individual agency). Indeed, McIntosh (1988, 34) seems to be aware of the negative implications of describing advantages as privileges, saying “the word “privilege” now seems to

---

<sup>71</sup> See Shuck et al. (2016) for example of privilege theorists whose work seeks understand dynamics of privilege in workplace, so as to enact workplace policies and practices which limit its effects.

me misleading. We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether *earned* or conferred by birth or luck.” [emphasis added]. Note that while McIntosh is uneasy with the idea that privileges are favourable, she *doesn't* reject the notion that privileges can be *earned*. Indeed, McIntosh *explicitly* argues that privilege can occur because of birth or be *earned*.

Given that McIntosh (1988) herself makes a distinction between ‘earned’ and ‘unearned’ privileges, it is not at all surprising that contemporary privilege theorists (Bailey 1998; Weinberg 2015; Shuck et al. 2016; Taiwo 2018) make the same distinction. Indeed, all of the above scholars recognize that though ‘unearned’ privileges like whiteness might impact how students perform in school, they all argue that credentials acquired because of one’s post-secondary education are individually ‘earned’ privileges. And while the above scholars avoid the terms merit, it should be noted that the education system is imbued with moral language which describes ‘good’ and ‘bad’ students who ‘deserve’ the ‘good’ or bad grades’ they receive for the ‘individual’ exercise of their cognitive capacities. But is it the case that students individually earn their educational privilege? As Sandel (2020, 13-14) observes in regards to students who successfully gain admission into prestigious universities

While it is true that their admission reflects dedication and hard work, it cannot really be said that it is solely their own doing. What about the parents and teachers who helped them on their way? What about talents and gifts not wholly of their making? What about the good fortune to live in a society that cultivates and rewards the talents they happen to have? Those who, by dint of effort and talent, prevail in a competitive meritocracy are indebted in ways the competition obscures.

Further, the academic ‘failures’ of some students are often a function of processes beyond their control, such as being born into circumstances (such as poverty) that can hinder their engagement with the educational system (Lampert 2013; Labaree 2020). Indeed, as Labaree (2020, 37) observes, a meritocratic conception of education

legitimizes social inequality. People who were born on third base get credit for hitting a triple, and people who have to start in the batter’s box face the real possibility of striking out. According to the educational system, divergent social outcomes are the result of differences in individual merit, so, one way or the other, people get what they deserve.

Thus, it seems the privilege theorists (Bailey 1998; Weinberg 2015; Shuck et al. 2016; Taiwo 2018) who argue that educational credentials are individually earned privileges are reinterpreting and modifying liberal individualistic discourses on reality to advocate for a more benign meritocratic order, as opposed to the abolition of the concept of merit. It is with these thoughts in mind that I turn to Indigenous relational scholars who are also highly critical of the liberal individualistic discourse on reality to see how they resolve the contradiction between liberal individualistic and Indigenous relational discourses on reality, particularly as it relates to conceptions of effort, subjecthood, and desert.

#### **4.5 Part IV: Indigenous relational discourses on reality**

Before discussing Indigenous relational discourses on reality, I want to acknowledge the criticisms of Indigenous scholars (Paradies 2006; Simpson 2007; Million 2013; LaRocque 2015) who argue that when people speak of articulation and practice of Indigenous relational



ontologies/knowledges, etc., we should recognize how Indigenous peoples use diverse discourses on reality to understand and apprehend the world. Indeed, some Indigenous scholars use other discourses on reality such as Marxism (see Coulthard 2014) or poststructuralism (see Million 2013) to comprehend and apprehend reality. Often, these discourses on reality are not seen as ‘Indigenous’ but rather, ‘Western’ (LaRocque 2015).<sup>72</sup> This seems odd to me, given that these discourses on reality are being expressed by Indigenous peoples and might shape how the above Indigenous scholars conceptualize and engage with the world. Thus, in this section, I will be focusing on Indigenous relational discourses on reality with the recognition that this is not the only discourse on reality that Indigenous peoples use to apprehend and comprehend reality.

Further, I agree with Indigenous scholars who argue that scholars often link the words ‘Indigenous ontology’ and ‘Indigenous epistemology’ to notions of Indigenous authenticity/inauthenticity, thereby marginalizing Indigenous perspectives informed by ‘Western’ ontologies as inauthentic (Paradies 2006; Hokowhitu 2016). As such, I will be using the term Indigenous relational discourse on reality and Indigenous relationality instead of Indigenous ontologies. Finally, this section builds on my previous research (Manson 2019), which demonstrated that even the articulation and practice of Indigenous relationality are embedded within and a partial manifestation of dominant liberal governing orders. I also recognize that Indigenous relational discourses on reality are a logic (though not the only one) that Indigenous peoples use to govern their communities and individual lives (Manson 2019), meaning that I will also use the phrase ‘Indigenous relational governing logics’ from time to time in this chapter.

---

<sup>72</sup> See Borrows and Tully (2018) for an example of an such discourse.

As I noted previously (Manson 2019, 221) Indigenous relationality can be understood as the recognition “that Indigenous peoples are members of a broad community of beings to whom they are related, through common origin, and connected through a web of complex reciprocal relationships that are attached to responsibilities.” This concept finds its expression in phrases such as *tsawalk*, for the Nuuchahnulth (Atleo, 2011, ix), which describes a discourse on reality which is premised on the idea that “all questions of existence, being, and knowing, regardless of seeming contradictions, are considered to be *tsawalk* – one and inseparable. They are interrelated and interconnected.” For V.F. Cordova (2007, 107) the concept of relationality finds its expression in the Jicarilla Apache word *Usen*, which describes a “mysterious “force” that is “all pervasive, that is, it is everywhere in all things; perhaps *is* all things.” [emphasis in the original]. This discourse also finds its expression in the sentiments of Cree elders (LaBoucane-Benson et al. (2012) in Yates, Harris, and S. Wilson 2018, 802) who argue that “there is no separation between the water and human beings . . . We are the water, and the water is us.” It also finds its expression in Opaskwayak Cree educational scholar Shawn Wilson’s (2008, 73) observation that “reality is relationships or sets of relationships.” V.F. Cordova (1992) argues that Indigenous relational governing logics (such as the ones outlined above) are *monist* in that they are arguing that reality is *one thing*. Cordova (2007, 146) further argues that according to an Indigenous relational discourse on reality “there is no divinity that exists outside the universe – primarily because there is no “outside.” Whatever *is*, is an indivisible, infinite, and divine *something*. All things are perceived as either *participating* in this one thing or being *manifestations* of this one thing.” [emphases in the original]. Note, that this Indigenous relational governing logic is entirely distinct from a Cartesian dualist conception of reality which imagines that people can and do exist outside of relationships that constitute them.

Indigenous peoples can use many discourses and practices to articulate this notion of oneness, whether it through specific Indigenous languages and traditional ceremonies, through secularized accounts, whereby oneness is understood as “the cosmos” (see S. Wilson 2008), or in religious accounts, where oneness is understood as a divine entity (see Atleo 2004). Further, there are variants of the idea that we are always constituted by and engaged in relationships. For instance, I know Indigenous people who recognize that reality is comprised of relationships but also only see humans as subjects and see nonhuman elements as objects. Though I cannot find any scholarship which articulates such a perspective, I’ve heard such discourse used within Indigenous communities. Further, some Indigenous relational scholars say all elements are imbued with relational spirit (see Cardinal in S. Wilson 2008), while there are others (see Kimmerer 2013; Cote 2016) who see all elements *except* commodities as kin.

#### **4.5.1 Indigenous relationality and gifting practices**

Indigenous relational scholars tend to conceptualize individual effort as being a manifestation of *collective effort*. For instance, Cordova (2007, 42) argues that “Each of us occupies a world that is made by our predecessors. We are given reality; we do not discover it.” Similarly, Shawn Wilson (2008, 38) argues that knowledge “belongs to the cosmos of which we are all a part,” meaning that in educational settings, researchers do not individually produce and own knowledge, but rather “are merely interpreters of this knowledge.” Similarly, Potawatomi scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, 23-24) argues that

A gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved toward you without your beckoning. It is not a reward; you cannot earn it, or call it to you, or even

deserve it. And yet it appears. Your only role is to be open-eyed and present. Gifts exist in a realm of humility and mystery—as with random acts of kindness, we do not know their source.

As we can see from the above quotations, Indigenous relational discourses on reality stand in opposition to liberal individualistic discourses on reality which imagine that individuals can use reason and work to extract themselves from the processes which constitute them. The above Indigenous discourses on reality also stand in opposition to the liberal individualistic notions of desert, which claim that people own what they make. The differences between liberal individualistic and Indigenous relational conceptions of subjecthood, effort, and desert have real-world consequences for contemporary Indigenous nations and peoples, and are not just theoretical quibbles. Indeed, Angela Riley's (2007) research has demonstrated that much legal conflict between liberal and Indigenous nations over Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and conceptions of the good has arisen from divergent understandings (liberal individualistic versus Indigenous communitarian) of individuality, and the distinct values that flow from such understandings.

Indigenous relational scholars argue that at the level of subsistence, the recognition that we are manifestations of and participating in relationships leads to an ethic of care (Atleo 2004; Cordova 2007; Kimmerer 2013; S. Wilson 2008). This logic flows from the fact that we are products of relationships, many of which we cannot see. As such, since we don't know who all our relatives are or how our actions might impact them, we must be *careful* with how we interact with our human and nonhuman kin. Again, there are subtle differences in relational discourses on reality on what counts as kin, meaning there are subtle differences in notions of care. For

instance, Woodland Cree scholar and activist Lewis Cardinal (in S. Wilson 2008, 90) argues that Indigenous peoples must give even a commodity (such as a tape recorder which was recording his words) recognition, saying it is “made from mother earth. It has a spirit of its own. This spirit probably hasn’t been recognized and given the right respect that it should. When we work in a world of automated things, we forget that ... everything is sacred, and that includes what we make.” Conversely, Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, 26) argues that though commodities come from the earth she “has no inherent obligation to those socks as a commodity, as private property ... But what if those very same socks, red and gray striped, were knitted by my grandmother and given to me as a gift? That changes everything. A gift creates an ongoing relationship.” The difference between Cardinal and Kimmerer is subtle, in that both recognize that commodities come from the earth, but Cardinal thinks he must recognize commodities as sacred because they were produced by the earth, whereas Kimmerer thinks that she has no inherent obligations to commodities regardless if they are produced by the earth. Or, Cardinal thinks he is in a social relationship with commodities, whereas Kimmerer sees commodities as an expression of and medium for social relationships. Finally, I am aware of Indigenous persons who only see humans as relatives and as such only give gifts to their human relatives. Although each of the preceding perspectives had different notions on what constitutes a subject, what unites the above perspectives is the notion that we exist because of the effort of our relatives (they gave us gifts), therefore, we have a responsibility to give gifts to relatives.

#### **4.5.2 Indigenous internal critique of liberalism and capitalism**

The above logics of Indigenous relationality and the gift occur within a context of dispossession and settlement, whereby Canada dispossessed and settled on the lands of

Indigenous nations, dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their governing authorities, and sought to eradicate and replace Indigenous relational governing logics with liberal-capitalist governing logics (Daigle 2019b). That being said, Indigenous forms of governance that are explicitly organized around relational governing logics still exist within non-Indigenous states. For instance, Audra Simpson's (2014, 10) research demonstrates that the Mohawk nation engages in a form of nested sovereignty, whereby Mohawk sovereignty (guided by Mohawk relational governing and liberal governing logics which has been imposed upon them) exists within Canadian sovereignty. Audra Simpson (10) argues that "One [form of sovereignty] does not entirely negate the other, but they necessarily stand in terrific tension and pose serious jurisdictional and normative challenges to each other." Further, Taiaiake Alfred (2009, 79) argues that Indigenous peoples in Canada have modified the European notion of sovereignty to critique "the state's imposition of control. By forcing the state to recognize major inconsistencies between its own principles and its treatment of Native people, it has pointed to the racism and contradiction inherent in settler states' claimed authority over non-consenting peoples." Thus, the existence of nested sovereignty is at once a form of political refusal (whereby Indigenous peoples refuse to relinquish their governing authority over their communities and lives) (A. Simpson 2014) and a form of internal critique, whereby Indigenous nations reinterpret and modify the liberal concept of sovereignty in service of their relational ideals.

In terms of knowledge acquisition and interpretation (i.e., education), Indigenous peoples have engaged in internal criticism of the hegemonic liberal ideas and practices that Canada imposed upon them. For instance, N. Wilson et al. (2018) demonstrate that Indigenous peoples from British Columbia, the Yukon, and Alaska use the practice of scientific water sampling – typically associated with reductionist, objective (i.e., Cartesian) worldview – to be good relatives

to water, which they view as kin. Such findings challenge the dominant perspective on the role of science within Indigenous communities, which is often premised on a binary between ‘Indigenous’ knowledge (which is often conceptualized as experiential, non-quantifiable, holistic) and non-Indigenous scientific knowledge (which is non-experiential, quantifiable, and reductionist). While it is important to recognize the utility and vitality of non-scientific Indigenous knowledges (Simpson 2004), a strict binary between ‘scientific’ and ‘Indigenous knowledge’ ignores how Indigenous peoples reinterpret and modify ‘Western’ technology and ideas (such as scientific water sampling) in service of their Indigenous relational governing logics.

I also think that Indigenous relational scholars working within university settings are examples of internal criticism in action. For instance, Shawn Wilson (2008, 39) argues that he does not think that inserting Indigenous perspectives into dominant research paradigms “will be very effective, as it is hard to remove the underlying epistemology and ontology upon which the paradigms are built.” Yet Wilson himself is embedded within an educational system organized according to liberal individualism, meaning that Wilson’s work internalizes a contradiction between liberal individualistic and Indigenous relational discourses on reality. Wilson *conceptually* resolves this contradiction by reinterpreting and modifying liberal concepts of knowledge production and ownership, premised as they are on the idea that individuals own what they make, by arguing that knowledge “belongs to the cosmos of which we are all a part,” and that “researchers are merely interpreters of this knowledge” (38). However, this resolution is only partial because at the end of the day Wilson still claims individual copyright over his work, much like I will be claiming individual copyright over this dissertation. However, for Indigenous scholars such as Wilson or myself to succeed and get our ideas out into the world, we must

obtain ‘good’ grades, demonstrate how our work is *our individual work*, work hard to obtain money for our research, etc. Thus, contemporary academic practices incentivize and normalize liberal individualistic and meritocratic discourses on reality. Thus, through our acts of academic internal critique, we reconstitute the very structures and ideologies we oppose.

There is historical (Raibmon 2005) and contemporary (Manson 2019) examples of Indigenous peoples using liberal notions of ownership to engage in gifting practices that are informed by their Indigenous relational governing logics. Here, we see a reinterpretation and modification of liberal capitalist logics in service of the promulgation and maintenance of Indigenous relational governing logics. Further, some Indigenous scholars (Kimmerer 2013; Cote 2016) argue that an economy organized around the capitalist exchange of commodities does not produce wealth, but rather, depletes and de-sanctifies the earth and threatens Indigenous sovereignty. Here, Indigenous relational scholars reinterpret and modify the concept of the commodity, transforming it from an artifact that produces wealth and freedom to an artifact that threatens the wealth and freedom of Indigenous peoples and their non-human relations. However, as with education, Indigenous peoples (and I would argue all people’s) mere act of participating in capitalist economic systems reproduces its logics of self-ownership (Shapiro 2001). Further, Indigenous relationality can be mobilized in service of liberal and capitalist values. Recall that liberalism and capitalism are critically reliant upon the idea that humans are subjects and all other elements are objects which can be turned into commodities that can be sold for profit. Since Indigenous peoples are embedded in capitalist societies, they are incentivized to view their nonhuman relatives as commodities that can be sold for profit (Altamirano-Jimenez 2013; Coulthard 2014; Bulkan 2017). In short, one can view an element as a relative one minute, and then as a commodity that needs to be sold for profit the next. Indeed, as noted earlier in this



chapter, an anthropocentric understanding of Indigenous relationality (which does not see nonhuman elements as relatives to whom one has responsibilities) also circulates within Indigenous communities. From this perspective, an Indigenous leader could argue that their approval of harvesting of elements such as old-growth forests was done to be ‘a good relative’ to members of their Indigenous community. In short, Indigenous relational governing logics can be reinterpreted through a liberal-capitalist lens. Indeed, this isn’t that surprising given that research has demonstrated that non-Indigenous state institutions, corporations, and individuals have interpreted and modified Indigenous relationality in service of liberal individualism and corporate profit (Aldred 2000; Schreiber and Newell 2006). Thus, Indigenous relationality is not the final answer to political questions: people will still have to argue and defend their ideas on how the world is and ought to be within a context that is largely structured according to individualistic values which are antagonistic to Indigenous relational governing logics.

Still, I do not want to be overly pessimistic. Like Leanne Simpson (2004), I acknowledge the role Indigenous resistance to colonial domination has played in the maintenance of Indigenous relational governing logics. Indeed, as Dian Million (2013, 162) notes

Our epistemologies, our cultures, represent ways of thinking about the world truly different from capitalism. These epistemologies *are* the cultures that everyone is referring to – they are ways of knowing, and I believe they are diverse, differently located, not always rural, never static, and do effect change.

Indigenous resistance to Canadian dispossession of their lands and governing authority has been deeply informed by and reproduces Indigenous relational governing logics (Coulthard

2014). As Dian Million (2013, 162) argues, though these logics are not “pure”, their survival is a testament to Indigenous peoples’ power to imagine and live a life that is different from the liberal-capitalist status quo which has been imposed upon them and in which they are embedded. This is an especially poignant observation when one realizes that non-Indigenous nations and peoples have used considerable resources to resist and eradicate Indigenous relational governing logics. The reason these Indigenous relational governing logics still survive is not just because Indigenous peoples self-consciously reflect and act upon their logics; rather, Indigenous relational governing logics are calcified in, emanate from, and reproduce institutions that structure and are structured by the lives of Indigenous communities and peoples (Atleo 2011). In short, Indigenous peoples consciously and unconsciously reproduce Indigenous relational governing logics (which can be interpreted and enacted in a multitude of ways) by the mere act of living in communities governed according to such logics. And it is this final thought which I will briefly touch on in the last section of this chapter.

#### **4.6 Part V: Conclusion and reflection**

This chapter was concerned with some of the conceptual and practical difficulties Indigenous relational scholars will encounter when engaging in the task of transforming liberal educational and economic systems into relational social systems. This chapter demonstrated that both liberal and Indigenous governing logics have internalized contradictions between relational discourses on reality and liberal individualistic discourses on reality. For instance, in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter both John Locke (1988 [1689]) and Yankunytjatjara elder Bob Randall (Global Oneness Project 2009b) forward the relational argument that the Creator (God or earth) made and therefore owns reality. Yet the theories of Locke and his

followers internalized a contradiction between relationality and individualism, a contradiction that allowed people to recognize that their lives were caused by processes beyond their control *and* allowed individuals to own the things ‘they’ made (themselves and private property). Conversely, Randall (and I would argue the Indigenous relational scholars discussed previously in this chapter) leave very little *conceptual* space for the idea that people individually produce and own what they make. Instead, these scholars argue ‘relatives gave to you, so you have to give to your relatives.’ Of course, Indigenous peoples have also internalized a contradiction between liberal individualism and Indigenous relational governing logics which is born from the fact that they live in communities that are largely governed according to liberal individualistic and Indigenous relational discourses on reality. And while research has demonstrated that Indigenous peoples can resolve this contradiction in service of liberal-capitalism (Alfred 2009; Coulthard 2014), it is also true that Indigenous nations and individuals engage in acts of internal criticism whereby they use Indigenous relational governing logics to reinterpret and modify liberal hegemonic discourses and practices in service of Indigenous governing logics. This is found when Indigenous peoples use their wages that they ‘individually earned’ to engage in gifting practices with their human and nonhuman relatives (Manson 2019) or when Indigenous scholars use their incomes and status to advocate for more relational and egalitarian educational institutions (i.e., S. Wilson 2008).

Conversely, liberal nations and individuals have a long history of rejecting relational discourses on reality (whether liberal or Indigenous relational) in favour of liberal individualistic discourses on reality. And while much liberal rejection of Indigenous relational governing logics can be chalked up to conscious choice, I do think that many non-Indigenous peoples who live in liberal societies also *unconsciously* reject relational discourses on reality. Many non-Indigenous

peoples have internalized the tenets of liberal individualism precisely because they live in communities that are largely governed according to the tenets of liberal individualism. Here, individuals are largely coerced into participating in systems that compel them to act in a manner that is informed by and reproduces dualist, individualistic, and meritocratic logics.

That being said, I agree with Walzer's (1987) insight that dominant governing logics contain contradictions that have the potential for their destruction. Indeed, as we saw in this chapter, liberal governing logics contains both relational *and* individualistic components. And while the above liberal scholars in this chapter resolved such contradictions in favour of liberal individualistic discourse on reality, I don't think such a resolution is predestined. Indeed, it seems to me that liberals – especially progressive liberals – can vacillate between liberal relational and liberal individualistic discourses on reality. Take for instance the former President of the USA Barack Obama's two seemingly contradictory statements:

If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help. There was a great teacher somewhere in your life. Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you've got a business – you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen. (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2012, Paragraph 78)

Now, the premise that we're all created equal is the opening line in the American story. And while we don't promise equal outcomes, we have strived to deliver equal opportunity – the idea that success doesn't depend on being born into wealth or privilege,

it depends on effort and merit. (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2013, Paragraph 7).

Here, we see a person with *enormous* power and privilege advocating for both a liberal relational (the former statement) and a liberal individualistic (the latter statement) discourse on reality. Obama's argument that the wealth of business people is generated by collective effort was done to argue for increased taxation of business. However, the uncomfortable corollary of Obama's argument is that economic harms that people receive in life, such as poverty, are also a function of collective effort (Manson 2019). Perhaps this is why Obama backed away from such sentiments in his latter comment, instead choosing to laud the idea that economic success was a function of individual effort and merit. Such statements remind us that North American societies are largely organized around the meritocratic ideal that people have individually earned and therefore deserve the goods and harms they receive in life (Sandel 2020). As such, challenging the meritocratic ideal which governs institutions such as education or the economy requires much more than isolated and sporadic acts of individual internal critique; it requires the transformation of educational and economic systems in a manner that allows people to internalize and be incentivized to accept the idea that life is a gift – from nonhuman animals, teachers, and workers who built roads we travel on, etc. – and that certain responsibilities flow from this fact.

It seems that one avenue of change that is open to non-Indigenous peoples is to use relational discourses on reality that occur within their given ideologies to criticize and change the structures they find so abhorrent. Such acts would avoid the difficult task (for Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons alike) of trying to convince non-Indigenous peoples of the validity of

Indigenous relational governing logics, only for them to reinterpret and modify it in service of individualistic ideals. Instead, non-Indigenous peoples could use language and ideas that are already familiar to non-Indigenous peoples, and are already located within their ideological traditions, to critique liberal individualism. Thus, a coalition of similarity and difference could be enacted, whereby non-Indigenous and Indigenous persons would mobilize broadly similar concepts to engender the type of relational and egalitarian social systems they want to see. I don't know how such transformational acts can be done, but I do think that the seeds of such actions can be found in the hegemonic logic which governs Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons alike.

## **Chapter 5: Indigenous peoples' conceptions and enactments of work and their economic lives in Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In Canada, as of the 2016 census, approximately 51.8% of Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) live in cities and towns that have a population of 30,000 or more (Canada, 2017, 9). Concentration in coastal urban areas in the Canadian west is a given, in particular as Indigenous peoples have moved to cities like Vancouver and Nanaimo, British Columbia in the face of lost governing authority, and economic lifeways dispossessed by the Canadian federal, provincial, and municipal governments (Million 2013; Daschuk 2013). It is well established, for example, that Canadian federal, provincial, and municipal governments used these mechanisms of dispossession to coerce Indigenous peoples into accepting liberal governing logics and the capitalist economic order (Coulthard 2014). As well, Indigenous peoples in Canada are, in the current colonial context, structurally unfree in that they must exchange money or labour for commodities to meet their subsistence. However, the relative weight of attention across scholarly research on Indigenous people remains focused on economic practices nominally conceptualized as traditional, such as hunting, fishing, and gathering.<sup>73</sup> There is a set of scholarship that focuses on how Indigenous nations in Canada that are located outside urban areas engage with domestic and global capitalism (Altamirano-Jimenez 2013; Coulthard 2014; Bulkan 2017) as well as how Indigenous people engage in the process of selling their productive capacities for a wage (Manson 2019). While all of these explorations of Indigenous economic experiences are valuable, their claims are not necessarily applicable to the

---

<sup>73</sup> See Nadasdy (2005) and Kulchyski (2020) for example.

individual economic experiences of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities, particularly as the above literature does not explore the interplay between processes of objectification, alienation, recognition, misrecognition, and Indigenous work and economic experiences.

In this chapter, I will be discussing the economic lives of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. I seek to address scholarship in urban space as recommended, for example, by Metis sociologist Chris Andersen (2013) who notes the potential of a burgeoning field of research on Indigeneity in urban communities which paints a broad demographical picture of Indigenous economic life. Its goal is to draw attention to how many Indigenous peoples experience poverty, but also, the emergence of a financially well-off and educated Indigenous ‘middle-class’ who live in urban communities. What might deepen this emerging scholarship and the focus of this paper is a closer look at how individual Indigenous persons who live in urban communities themselves conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives. My goal is to recognize how Indigenous persons who live in urban communities have historically (Raibmon 2005) and contemporarily (Manson 2019) engaged in economic practices (such as wage labour and gifting) that are structured by and reproduce liberal and Indigenous governing logics, but to also engage more directly with labour studies. Indeed, I agree with labour studies theorist Thom Workman’s (2009, 34) argument that one way of understanding the social relations of power which structure economic life within capitalist societies is to understand how workers “feel” under capitalism. Workman (34) further argues that this can be accomplished by understanding how people “personally strategize to pay bills, raise a family, keep a job, and generally, make ends meet.” That is, it is through a detailed accounting of the everyday economic experiences of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver



and Nanaimo (such as their experiences at work and how they spend their incomes, etc.) that I will articulate their lived economic experiences.

Understanding this task is enabled herein by using a modified version of the Hegelian concepts of objectification,<sup>74</sup> recognition, misrecognition,<sup>75</sup> and both Hegelian and Marxist conceptions of alienation.<sup>76</sup> I will be modifying these concepts to take into account how different governing logics – liberal and Indigenous relational – and social positions (i.e., gender, ability, and class) structure and are structured by Indigenous lives. In particular, I analyze the economic lives of a subset of five Indigenous peoples who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo who are similarly situated, in that they are all Indigenous. However, these Indigenous persons are dissimilarly situated because they have different yearly incomes and obtain their incomes differently. In so doing, I illuminate how Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives – including their commonalities and differences. Their commonalities, as I will elaborate, were linked to mechanisms of dispossession, misrecognition (sexist, racist, and ableist), exploitation, and economic austerity, and that each Indigenous person faced multiple forms of alienation. A further commonality is that each Indigenous person in this chapter sought to overcome alienation through work and the building of social relationships. What emerges is for the Indigenous persons in this chapter, work

---

<sup>74</sup> Objectification, simply put, is the process by which our ideas are given form by the objects we create (Marcuse 1986). I will be discussing this concept in detail later in this chapter.

<sup>75</sup> Hegelian recognition is the process by which people seek, give, and receive esteem from those whom they hold in esteem (Shapiro 1990). I will be discussing this concept in detail later in this chapter. Conversely, misrecognition is the process by which people recognize other (or feel they are being recognized by others) as extensions of their own ego and not subjects on their own terms (Inwood 1983). I will be discussing this concept in detail later in this chapter.

<sup>76</sup> Alienation refers to a psychological and material condition whereby one feels / are disconnected from context, relationships with others, and a relationship with one's self (Shantz, Alfes, and Truss 2015). I will be discussing this concept in detail later in this chapter.

is a way to cultivate community and a sense of self. Particularly, work for several Indigenous persons in this chapter is a means to Indigenous governing logics, which frame their acceptance and use of their incomes. I conclude the chapter by advocating for an approach to understanding the economic lives of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities that seeks to not only theorize about the types of economic activities they ought to be engaged in, but also the economic activities they are indeed engaged in.

## **5.2 Methodological practice**

All of the interviews conducted for this research took place in Vancouver and Nanaimo, metropolitan regions located in coastal British Columbia, Canada. Interviews with 26 Indigenous persons were conducted face-to-face and over the telephone from 2019 to 2020. For this chapter, I drew largely from people linked to my social network, who I knew traced their lineage to Indigenous peoples, who claimed and were claimed by Indigenous peoples and persons as Indigenous. I chose my social network as it is comprised of people from a broad socioeconomic spectrum. Further, since the main goal of this chapter is to understand how Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives, particularly, how they feel living under capitalism, I chose to focus on the stories of five Indigenous persons because I thought they were representative of broader trends that existed among all 26 participants. These Indigenous persons have varying levels of income and obtained their incomes in manners that were distinct from each other.

Interview conversations lasted 45 minutes to two hours. Immediately after the interviews were conducted, I discussed with participants the methods and theories that were being used to analyze their words, with some participants providing me with additional feedback on how they

wanted me to interpret their words. After the interviews were transcribed, hand-coded using a mixture of deductive and inductive strategies, and analyzed, I validated the results with participants who had expressed interest in seeing the results. All participants in this study are anonymized by de-identifying information specific to their biographies and by using pseudonyms.

Conversations were organized around a broad set of questions, which focused on the participants' conceptualizations of and enactments of work and economic life. These questions themselves were a subset of other questions which sought to understand participants' views on 'nature' and 'community'. As it pertains to the topic of work and economic life, such questions included, but were not limited to: What do you do for a living? How long have you worked at your job?; How many hours per week do you work?; Do you feel your fellow employees and your employers treat you fairly? And: How does you being Indigenous impact how you work? Though I asked these more formal questions, I also let the line of questioning take on a more conversational tone.

Like other Indigenous researchers (S. Wilson 2008; Kovach 2010), I grounded my research in the concept of Indigenous relationality. I recognized that the people I was conducting research with were in an immediate and broad sense of the word "relatives", and as such, I have a responsibility to mutually beneficial relationships with them (Atleo 2004; S. Wilson 2008). I recognize that the stories of the participants aren't data, but rather are their theories about how life is and ought to be (Million 2014). I organized the words of the participants in sectionalized, vignette-style to illuminate their words as theory and for the pragmatic reason that each section is in essence, a mini case-study of under-explored aspects of the economic experiences of Indigenous persons who live in cities and towns. For instance, as far as I can tell no literature

describes the economic experiences of Indigenous persons who work in the gig economy; Indigenous persons who work as leaders; and Indigenous persons who work in the service industry, all of which I describe in this chapter.

My analytic paradigm is a modified form of realism as articulated by Shapiro and Wendt (2005), which recognizes that people inherit endowments (genetic, social, political, economic, familial, *discourses*, etc.), which they continually modify in context, as opposed to these endowments being the product of individual choices that exist outside the causal order. Such a perspective recognizes that how people modify these endowments is not reducible to individual agency, but rather is a function of luck and the work of others. I use abduction, otherwise known as inference to the best explanation (Shapiro and Wendt 2005; Kagan 2012), to help me understand which discourses/practices/processes participants inherit and modify to create theories on how the world is and ought to be. Finally, I make no claims about what counts as ‘authentic’ Indigenous discourses on reality or experiences as it pertains to Indigenous participants' engagement with work and the economy. This is because I recognize all discourses and experiences and practices expressed by Indigenous persons *as Indigenous* by being expressed and experienced by Indigenous persons.

I use realism to modify the below analytical frameworks – Hegelian recognition and misrecognition and Hegelian and Marxian objectification and alienation – which I use to understand the stories of the Indigenous peoples who participated in this research.

### **5.2.1 Recognition, misrecognition, objectification, and alienation**

Michael Sandel (2020) argues that labour markets are generally understood as distributors of income, and as such, tend to be theorized solely in economic terms. However, as

Sandel (2011) notes, the labour market “not only remunerates work with an income but publicly recognizes each person’s work as a contribution to the common good.” Generally speaking, the role *recognition* plays in Indigenous economic life (in rural or urban communities) is undertheorized. As such, like Sandel, I think that Hegel can help us understand the role intersubjective recognition plays in mediating people’s (in this case Indigenous peoples) conceptualizations and enactments of work. Hegel’s theory of recognition is generally theorized as flowing from his work *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977 [1807], 111), where, Hegel argues that “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.” For Hegel, *mutual recognition* is an intersubjective process whereby people seek, give, and receive esteem from people they hold in esteem (Shapiro 1990). For the process of mutual recognition to be just, both people engaged in the process have to recognize each other as subjects *in their own right* (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014).

*Misrecognition* occurs when people conceptualize and engage with others (or think that others are conceptualizing and engaging with them) as an objective extension of other people’s will instead of subjects in their own right (Coulthard 2014). Scholars have interpreted Hegel’s theory of recognition as describing relationships between dissimilarly situated groups of people which are typified by dramatic power imbalances (Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014; Shapiro 2016). I agree with such interpretations but would like to add that Hegel’s dialectical reasoning (particularly the concept of objectification outlined below) can be interpreted more generally to describe intersubjective relationships between *individuals* and the relationships one has with oneself, particularly as it relates to the role of economic practices. As such, I will also be using Hegel’s theory of recognition to understand how Indigenous persons in this chapter engage in processes of recognition with other individuals.

Philosophers (Marcuse 1986) and anthropologists (Miller 2000, 2005) have illuminated a movement that occurs across Hegel's work, called objectification, which they argue is intimately tied to processes of recognition. I agree with their insights and situate my work in approximation to their works. For Hegel, how people engage in acts of recognition is tied to a process called *objectification*, because, as (Marcuse 1986, 117), argues, the "object, shaped and cultivated by human labor, is in reality the objectification of a self-conscious subject." In short, the material practices we engage in (whether commodity production, exchange, or consumption) are material expressions of our ideas, and thus, when we make artifacts, the artifacts in some sense make us. For Hegel, the objectification process shapes how we see ourselves, how we see others, and how others see us. Conversely, Hegel argues that unfreedom is typified by a process of *alienation*, whereby people are prevented by others from engaging in acts of objectification (Miller 2005).<sup>77</sup> Or in other words, alienation is the process whereby people are separated from controlling, producing, and owning the objects/resources which allow them to cultivate a sense of self and engage in reciprocal relationships with others.

Hegelian concepts of recognition, misrecognition, and alienation are an idealist and teleological, by which I mean for Hegel change in these processes arise from internal contradictions within ideas, which necessarily moves towards an ideal state of mutual recognition (Kolb 2018). However, while it is true that intersubjective processes of recognition and the artifacts we create seem to *solely* be a manifestation of the unified, rational, and

---

<sup>77</sup> This process of objectification / alienation is found in Hegel's (1996 [1798]) other works, such as the fragment *Love*. However, this process finds its most cogent expression in Hegel's (1977 [1807], 118] famous master-slave dialectic, where the slave reunifies with objective reality and his sense of self (which the slave had been alienated from) through "formative *activity* [which] is at the same time the individuality or pure being-for-self of consciousness which now, in the work outside of it, acquires an element of permanence. It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness *qua* worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independence."

teleological process (reason and labour), as Kolb (17) notes in actuality artifacts and (and I would argue intersubjective relationships) “were assembled from earlier [processes] that may originally have been selected for quite different purposes.” This alternate interpretation means that people’s ability to engage in acts of objectification, processes of recognition and misrecognition, and their sense of connection and alienation, arise *not only* from purposeful intersubjective relationships but also from a multitude of irrational and undirected causal forces and contingency. Further, like Cohen (1988), I am not arguing that dialectical processes, (such as objectification, recognition, misrecognition, and alienation) are ‘natural laws’ to which all people are subject, but rather, am arguing that these processes sometimes occur in people’s lives.

Conversely, Marx argues that under capitalism alienation takes on a particular form, whereby the capitalist mode of production makes it seem as though the economic conditions we create, the commodities we create, are not our creations, making them seem *alien* to us (Cohen 1988; Miller 2005). In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx (1986 [1844], 108) describes this process of alienation under capitalism as occurring when

the object which labor produces – labor’s product – confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor. Labor’s realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labor appears as *loss of realization* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*.” [emphasis in the original].

For Marx (Miller 2005, 17), this process of alienation turns people into commodities (objects) (meaning that in some sense we misrecognize workers as commodities instead of people) by denying them “their material being as people who made themselves through their labour, in their transformation of nature.” Thus, for Marx, because capitalism denies workers the resources they need to cultivate their sense of community and self, they do not feel connected to the world, they feel *alienated* (Cohen 1988; Miller 2005; Shantz et al. 2015). Marx’s (1986 [1844]) conception of objectification and alienation differs from Hegel in that he recognizes that the struggle for resources that occurs between capitalists and workers starts from a place of inequality, where one group (capitalists) is given the power to control the economic behaviour of another group of people (workers); whereas as Coulthard (2014) notes, Hegel’s struggle for recognition occurs between people who initially meet as equals. Taking inspiration from the insights of Coulthard (2014) and Simpson (2014), I extend the above concepts by noting that within colonial contexts, the struggles between Indigenous nations and Canada over resources and recognition also start from a place of inequality, whereby Canada has the power to control the behaviour of Indigenous peoples, and that this power derives from Canada’s genocidal dispossession of Indigenous lands governing authority.

Further, while Hegel had pertinent insights into the role access to and use of resources had in regards to how people conceptualized themselves and others, Hegel had racist views of Indigenous peoples (Camara 2005; Stone 2017). Indeed, Hegel argued that Indigenous peoples were ‘sunk’ or ‘dominated’ by nature, meaning that their choices were not authentically their own, which for Hegel meant that Indigenous peoples were not ‘fully developed’ people (Stone 2017). Of course, the social/natural dialectic of Hegel is based on a category error in that people (and their choices) are always manifestations of and embedded in natural processes beyond their



immediate perception and control (Vogel 2003). As such, the notion of self-determination/authenticity that arises from his theory of objectification is a moral value and not a scientific fact. And while Hegel's argument that people who are dominated by context are not fully developed humans is repugnant, I also think it points to a dominant tendency within Western political theories and societies (in which Indigenous peoples live)<sup>78</sup> to argue that only individuals who are capable of being the 'authentic' origin of their choices and actions are truly sovereign (Shapiro 2003). Indeed, while I recognize that the concept of 'self' determination is an important ideal and value for marginalized people, it is also a value that can be used to denigrate people (such as people who are experiencing homelessness) as not fully human because they are 'dominated' by context. Thus, we should heed Michael Zweig's (2000, 133) observation that any discussion of the "existence and life circumstances of the working class" requires the "recognition that within the working class, and within the poorer sections of the working class, not all workers are equal." Zweig further notes that different groups of people experience different types of working experiences (positive and negative) based on their race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality. With that being said, let's turn to the stories of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo to understand how they conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives.

---

<sup>78</sup> Indeed, political theorists (Shapiro 2001; Sandel 2020) and empirical researchers (Lyon-Callo 2008; Manson 2019) have demonstrated how modern liberalism (particularly the concept of self-ownership which is foundational for liberal doctrines of rights and capitalism) is premised on the idea that people can be the authentic origins of their choices, even if such theories might derive from non-dialectical premisses.

### 5.3 Working as a leader

Lindsay<sup>79</sup> is an Indigenous woman who lives in Vancouver and is a university-educated worker who works with an organization that advocates on behalf of Indigenous communities in Canada. Lindsay's work – which ranges from policy analysis to archival research – is highly technical.<sup>80</sup> Because of Lindsay's credentials and experience, her last job (at the time of this interview she was waiting to start a new job) was salaried and had pay that ranged between \$50,000-\$70,000 / year. Lindsay's income range is above the 2019 median income for Canadian women in the age 35-44 group (\$45,300) (Canada 2021a). Lindsay was eligible for benefits (health, dental, pension, and three weeks' vacation), though her work was not protected by a union. Further, Lindsay considers herself to be highly upwardly mobile and to be fulfilling her career goals. Her work can be broadly characterized as falling within 'leadership' position categories, as her credentials and experience mean that she often takes on added responsibilities that involve leading and organizing workers.

Lindsay describes her previous working environment (where she worked with other Indigenous women) as team-oriented:

We are all bright, hard-working, warm, personable people that wanted to do fulfilling work. And they wanted to do, you know, good work, and like they have a lot of integrity.

---

<sup>79</sup> Lindsay (female, age 35-44), in interview with the author. August 2019. All quotations referring to Lindsay are from this interview.

<sup>80</sup> In this chapter, I use age ranges for the participants that differs from Chapter 3 age ranges. This is to match the age-range parameters established by Government of Canada websites where we obtained the median incomes we used in this chapter.

And, they are very dedicated, and we all just kind of worked well in a team or on our own. You know, it wasn't competitive or anything like that.

Note the importance Lindsay places on the notion of hard work. Often, in workplace environments, the notion of 'hard work' is associated with the idea that if individual people 'work hard' they will receive their just deserts (Sandel 2020). However, when Lindsay speaks of 'hard work', she speaks of *cooperative* hard work that is not competitive and which she links with virtues such as integrity.

Indeed, for Lindsay a work environment that fosters cooperation is important, saying "I get a lot out of people working well together and helping each other and I think a lot of good work can come from that. At the same time, I realized through this job, that I like producing work that I was proud of and that was good and rigorous." For Lindsay, a high-quality product (i.e., research) is the outcome of cooperative labour. In turn, Lindsay realized that this cooperative work process revealed facts about herself, namely that she enjoys creating products inflected with goodness and rigor. Thus, Lindsay sees herself in the intersubjective relationships she is forming at work and the product she is producing. In short, through the act of objectification, Lindsay unveiled important facts about the world and herself.

However, as noted earlier, at the time of our interview Lindsay was in the process of transitioning to a new job (which she told me gave her greater control over the products she was making, job security, benefits, and union protection). Lindsay says one of the reasons she left her previous place of employment was because of workplace conflict between her fellow Indigenous coworkers and their non-Indigenous, male employer. Lindsay says "Yeah I had some issues with the way the organization was run ... you know there wasn't anything illegal ... there wasn't any

discrimination or stuff like that [occurring in the workplace].” However, Lindsay mobilizes feminist and privilege theory discourses to clarify her statement and to further describe her former workplace, saying “So our boss, to be honest, I found to be quite patriarchal and [acted like] a privileged white male a lot of the time.” Lindsay says that her employer was overconfident in his ability to understand areas of work outside his area of expertise and that he would not listen to criticism. This meant that he would often ignore the advice of his credentialed Indigenous workers, using his non-expert insights to solve problems that required expert Indigenous insights. In the section below, Lindsay relays an encounter her employer had with another university-educated, highly credentialed, female Indigenous worker.

Lindsay: “So [a fellow Indigenous coworker] is an expert in one of the things that I was asking [my employer about]. And she told our boss her ideas and he like totally shot her down and was like ‘No, it’s not that, it’s like this.’ And I just couldn’t believe the way he had handled that situation. I felt really bad for the way he put [my Indigenous coworker] down.”

Author: “Oh, he put her down, hey?”

Lindsay: “Yeah, he did. ... I don’t think it came from like an evil place and he was intentionally doing these things. I think he’s very insecure and just not very good with people. And, the point is I’m just not a negative person but I was getting very negative and I didn’t like it. I didn’t like the way I was like talking about people. I thought about what I could do to try to make the situation better, and I decided on trying to find a different job.”

Note the tension in Lindsay's narrative between her observation that her employer's interactions with his Indigenous female employees were informed by 'white privilege' and are 'patriarchal' and her statement that he wasn't acting in a discriminatory manner. The latter portion of Lindsay's narrative is consistent with the findings of Baker and Kelan (2019), which showed that women employed in leadership positions often downplay sexist and discriminatory behaviour by their male colleagues. On the other hand, Lindsay does not deny her former employer's discriminatory behaviour. Further, Lindsay locates her employer's discriminatory behaviour towards his Indigenous female employees in structural processes (racism and sexism). One possible explanation for this tension in Lindsay's narrative, between downplaying her employer's acts of discrimination and calling them discriminatory, is because Lindsay is a highly educated, credentialed, Indigenous woman who has years of experience working in leadership positions. As such, her education and experience have exposed her to analytical tools which allow her to conceptualize and engage with the workplace in a manner that recognizes the social structures that are the source of her employer's actions. At the same time, Lindsay's downplaying of the discrimination she witnessed can also be read as a function of structural processes (i.e., sexism) which compel women to individualize social problems (Baker and Kelan 2019).

Lindsay's response to workplace discrimination highlights the multi-layered aspect of processes of recognition. Typically, theories of recognition tend to restrict their analysis to a set of face-to-face interactions between 'self' and 'other' (Markell 2009; Coulthard 2014). However, Lindsay's feelings of workplace dissatisfaction do not arise because she thinks her employer is misrecognizing her, but rather, she thinks her employer's 'white privilege' and 'male privilege' are causing him to misrecognize himself as an expert on Indigenous issues, and to misrecognize

Indigenous women as people who lack expertise on Indigenous issues. In short, her employer's sexist and racist practices create a contradiction between how Lindsay views her female Indigenous coworkers and how her white male employer sees them. Rollero, Fedi, and Piccoli (2016) argue that workplace status (i.e., the material and non-material outcome of processes of recognition (Sandel 2020)) is a more prominent indicator for workplace wellbeing relative to gender. However, their research does not acknowledge the role gender plays in how women are recognized, recognize themselves, and recognize others. Indeed, Lindsay's sense of alienation arises from what she thinks are sexist and racist processes of recognition.

Lindsay resolves this contradiction between how she and her employer view their female Indigenous coworkers by expressing solidarity with her Indigenous female coworkers and disdain for her employer. Lindsay's sense of solidarity, which is informed by feminist and privilege theory discourses on reality, is demonstrated by her saying that her employer should recognize that his whiteness and maleness make him different from his Indigenous female employees and that this difference means that his Indigenous workers have a level of expertise that he lacks. However, Lindsay also resolves the conflict between her employer and her female Indigenous colleagues by blaming herself for her 'inability' to 'positively' cope with the conflict. Lindsay's response to workplace conflict is reminiscent to that of dissimilarly situated women's response to injustice (Lyon-Callo 2008; Shildrick and MacDonald 2013), where women also inherit and modify discourses that stress individual responsibility, which induces them to engage in acts of *self-blame* when confronted with the structural roots of their economic marginalization. Indeed, Lindsay's acts of self-blame paradoxically relocate the workplace conflict she is experiencing from sexist and racist acts of her employer to a conflict within Lindsay, between her 'positive' and 'negative' self.

Research by Finney, Finney, and Maes (2018) argues that employees who work for abusive employers do not experience high levels of workplace alienation. However, their research speaks generally of abuse and does not differentiate abuse which finds its source in sexism and racism. Lindsay alienated herself from her work environment (she quit her job) to deal with the discriminatory practices of her employer. Ultimately, Lindsay's decision to alienate herself from her work environment wasn't entirely negative. Lindsay's current line of employment is unionized, salaried, and allows her to build a community, a sense of self, and continue to be a community leader in the Indigenous community writ large. As Cohen (1988, 191) notes, the "freedom of detachment" that workers under capitalism experience (their ability to 'choose' where they work) occurs within a realm of structural *unfreedom*, whereby workers as a class have *no choice but to sell their productive capacities for a wage*. As such, this freedom of detachment is fraught with instability. Indeed, while Lindsay is a credentialed Indigenous worker who was able to find a financially and creatively rich line of employment, her decision to quit her job meant she did not receive wages while looking for a new line of employment. As Cohen (191) notes, the freedom of detachment that workers experience under capitalism comes at the cost of alienating themselves from the "solace and security" of working in an environment that one feels at home in. In Lindsay's case, her employer's use of racist and sexist discourses worked to dispossess Lindsay of social relationships with her fellow female Indigenous colleagues and her sense that she had control over the production process.

#### **5.4 Working in the service industry**

Nicholas is an Indigenous man who is employed full-time (40 hours a week) at \$20 / hour, which is a gross yearly income of approximately \$38,400, which is 63.6% of the 2019

median income for men aged 35-44 (\$60,400) (Canada 2021b).<sup>81</sup> His work is in the service industry and is a combination of sales and general labour work. Nicholas supplements his income by working as a landscaper and labourer. Nicholas says, “Yeah, you have to [work more than one job]. I mean in this day and age you can’t just live off one income, right?” Nicholas feels compelled to work more than one job because he needs to pay child support for his two children, who live with his ex-spouse. And while Nicholas might feel he has no choice but to work two jobs, he enjoys the work he does to supplement his main source of income.

Author: “So what kind of work do you do to supplement your income?”

Nicholas: “It’s mostly labouring. I mean honestly, it’s like some landscaping and stuff like that. Once in a while we do a little bit of timber framing or whatever, but it’s mostly labour work.”

Author: “So, that’s a little different than what you’re doing, as a full-time gig so why do you choose labour work for side gigs?”

Nicholas: “I love it.”

Author: “Yeah?”

Nicholas: “I used to do it all the time. Like it used to be what I did, landscaping and stuff like that. But it just seemed like the easiest, quickest way to make some extra money.”

---

<sup>81</sup> Nicholas (male, aged 35-44), in interview with the author. October 2019. All quotations referring to Nicholas are from this interview.



It seems that Nicholas finds his sales position enjoyable as well, saying “You know [my fellow employees and myself] just kind of joke around a lot and have fun at work.” However, Nicholas tries to encourage fun at work for pragmatic reasons.

Nicholas: “I try to encourage the whole smiling at work thing because you know nobody wants to be there. Don’t make it harder on everybody else just because you don’t want to be there, right?”

Author: “You think most people don’t want to work?”

Nicholas: “Yeah, well one of my coworkers, she’s always grumpy, she’s just always storming around the office [making grumbling sounds]. I’m like ‘Oh my God, just stay in your [office] and leave the rest of us alone, we’re trying to like, get through the day.’”

Author: “So, you kind of recognize that we’re just forced to work, right?”

Nicholas: “Yeah, you have to – it’s just kind of what we have to do. It’s not like I just woke up and was like, ‘Oh, I love getting up at five in the morning,’ like it’s my favourite thing to do.”

In short, Nicholas thinks that workers share a universal experience, a sort of unfreedom where they have no choice but to sell their productive capacities for a wage, which he thinks alienates them from the particular activities they would rather be engaged in. In turn, Nicholas notes how this process of alienation shapes how his coworkers form and experience their workplace relationships. Nicholas's observations are consistent with dialectical conceptions of work (Hegelian and Marxian), which argues that people change the world and themselves through work, and as such, come to form their sense of community and their sense of self

through the labour process (Miller 2005). Nicholas' observation that he and his coworkers would rather be somewhere other than work indicates that they do not see themselves in their work, which makes them less engaged with their work and each other.

Author: "So, you said that you have a good relationship [with your coworkers] though, so you're actively trying to make it a good relationship with people though, right?"

Nicholas: "Yeah, yeah! You have to. Like I said, work is just like ... you know you're with those people more than you're at home, so you know your relationship with them has to be ... up there."

Nicholas is not describing his workplace as community or home; rather he is saying the labour process forces people into relationships that alienate them from their communities and homes. Indeed, research has demonstrated that the structure and quality of interpersonal relationships at work shape whether and to what extent people feel alienated from the labour processes, their coworkers, and themselves (Fedi et al. 2015; Shantz et al. 2015). However, Nicholas is not advocating that he and his coworkers become more engaged with the labour process to build a sense of community and to self-actualize, but rather, is advocating that they keep their working relationships cordial to make work tolerable.

However, it would be unwise to conflate Nicholas' experiences of workplace alienation with the idea that he is experiencing anomie in his life. As mentioned earlier, Nicholas works two jobs because he needs extra income to support his children who live with his ex-partner. Nicholas recognizes himself and wishes to be recognized by others, as a father who provides for his children. Thus, for Nicholas, work is a medium for caring for and preserving relationships

(with himself and his children) outside of work. This confirms G.A. Cohen's (1988) observation that while many people see work as a medium for self-actualization, many workers see work as a means to an end (i.e., which allows them to cultivate relationships outside work) and not an end in itself.

Conversely, Nicholas characterizes his relationship with his employer in a slightly positive light, which as we shall see, is because of his past work experiences.

Author: "Do you feel your employer treats you fairly?"

Nicholas: "I want to say yeah. Yeah, it's not horrible. I've been at other jobs [where] they used to 'joke around' all the time, (but I could tell they weren't joking), [where they would say] ... 'Oh, you know you're the hardest working Native I've ever seen, blah, blah blah.' I'm like, 'Seriously, like what the hell's wrong with you guys?'"

Nicholas is painting a picture of a workplace that is at best, 'not horrible' relative to previous employment, where employers and coworkers inherited and modified racist discourses about the work ethic of Indigenous peoples, which they used to describe Nicholas' work ethic. In simplest terms, the stereotype Nicholas is referring to is the 'lazy Indian' stereotype, which depicts Indigenous peoples as lazy people who are incapable of working hard (Merskin 2001; Mihesuah 2010). Mills and McCreary (2012) argue that non-Indigenous peoples have used such stereotypes to locate the financial success of non-Indigenous peoples and the economic hardship Indigenous peoples face within the realm of individual effort, which works to obscure the structural roots of inequality between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

Nicholas thinks that if his coworkers saw him as a worker first and foremost, this would resolve the contradiction between how he recognizes himself (as a competent and hard worker) and how his coworkers have recognized him.

Author: “Yeah, so, that’s what you really value in a work environment is just being able to go and do your work?”

Nicholas: “Yeah, and not realize the colour of my skin all the time.”

Author: “... So that leads to my first question. Do you feel like your employers, past or present, have treated you differently because you’re Native?”

Nicholas: “Oh yeah. Like I said, guaranteed! I mean at [my former job] it was so different, right? I just worked so damn hard! And then at this new job I don’t even put a tenth of the effort I had to at [my old line of employment] and they think I’m amazing, like I’m some sort of wonder.”

Here, Nicholas mobilizes a universalist discourse of what work is and ought to be to argue that works should be a place free of processes (such as racism) that hinder the work process. Nicholas wants to be recognized as a worker – and not have his Indigeneity play a role in his working relations – not because he wants to work at a colour-blind, meritocratic line of employment, nor because he is ashamed of his Indigeneity. Rather, Nicholas thinks his coworkers' use of the ‘lazy Indian’ trope to (mis)recognize him means that he had to put in an inordinate amount of effort to be recognized as a good worker. Thus, Nicholas is content at his new place of employment because his self-conception (as a capable worker) is not contradicted by his coworkers’ view of him.

In the previous two sections, I discussed workers whose conception and enactment of work was mediated through the production process. In the next section, I will discuss the experiences of an Indigenous worker whose conception and enactment of work is mediated through the capitalist exchange process and the role this plays in how he recognizes himself, how he is recognized by others, and how he recognizes others.

## **5.5 Working in the gig economy**

Mick<sup>82</sup> is an Indigenous man who lives and works in Vancouver, earning his income by buying and selling commodities. Before discussing Mick's work experiences, it's important to broadly explain the sector of the capitalist economy known as "the gig economy". This is because Mick's line of work can be classified as 'gig' work. Typically, the capitalist-worker relationship is given its form by a contract, whereby an employee agrees to sell the use of their productive capacities (for a defined amount of time) in exchange for a wage (Shapiro 2001; Pateman 2002). This agreement is centered around the notion of self-ownership (the idea that people own themselves because they make themselves) and workmanship (i.e., the idea that people are entitled to the fruits of their labour) (Shapiro 2001). However, employment within the gig economy is often structured around a contract whereby a worker agrees to use their productive capacities to sell goods and services for *a profit* (which can either go to the employee, or can be split between employer and employee) (Petriglieri, Ashford, and Wrzesniewski 2019). In the case of Mick, he signed a contract with his employer where he agreed to sell commodities

---

<sup>82</sup> Mick (male, age 55-59), in interview with the author. April 2019. All quotations referring to Mick are from this interview.

(which I will be calling Product A and Product B) to customers for a profit. Mick's employer profits from the initial sale of the commodities to Mick, meaning Mick does not share profits generated from the sale of his commodities.

Mick starts his work process by travelling 1.5 hours from his home to the location of the merchant he purchases his commodities from. Mick buys Product A at \$10 / unit and Product B at \$20 / unit. Mick then sells Product A for \$20 per unit and Product B for \$40. After Mick has purchased Product A and Product B, he travels another one hour back to his home, where he stores his products. After organizing his products, Mick then travels to different locations within Vancouver to sell his commodities. Mick says the length of his workday is variable.

Author: "So how many hours do you work usually?"

Mick: "I probably work about, maybe six hours a day, six days a week. It depends too on my sales ... Sometimes I only work three hours. What I like about this [line of work] is I'm my own boss and I work whatever hours that I feel."

Author: "So why is that important to you?"

Mick: "Well that is important because I don't have to be stressed out in any kind of way ... I like all the interaction with the people too, so it makes it great like people treat you with respect ..."

Given that Mick sets his work schedule, decides where he will sell his commodities, and directly profits from the sale of his commodities, it is not difficult to understand why he sees himself as his own boss, in essence, an extension of his own will. Further, note how Mick associates his feelings of being his own boss with freedom and good health (e.g., stress-free).

Mick's work experiences are similar to those of other workers in the gig economy who say they experience high levels of autonomy within their respective professions (Ashford, Caza, and Reid 2018; Pichault and McKeown 2019). Indeed, this feeling of autonomy and self-control is due to a slew of reasons which includes factors such as the fact that gig economy workers are responsible for their own schedules, nominally control how profits from their endeavors are used and have very limited interaction with their employers and fellow workers within their respective organizations (Petriglieri, Ashford, and Wrzesniewski 2019).

Mick did not disclose his yearly income, only saying that he spends approximately 50% of his income on shelter and a large portion (he did not give me a numerical estimate) on groceries. Regardless, Mick's financial experiences are similar to those of other gig economy workers who experience high levels of economic insecurity (Petriglieri, Ashford, and Wrzesniewski 2019). Indeed, Mick says the number of days per week he works depends upon how much product he sells, meaning he regularly works six days per week. Thus, in theory, Mick can work whenever he wants, but in practice, the capitalist exchange process *compels* Mick to work six days a week. Thus, while Mick might not be an extension of the capitalist production process, Mick's time and energy (i.e., his self-determination) are largely controlled by *the capitalist exchange process*. Thus, Mick is as *structurally unfree* as wage workers because he has *no choice* but to sell commodities for money.

Mick says that his line of work helps him build a sense of community between himself and his customers, one defined by respect.

Mick: "Yeah. And here in [Vancouver] people treat me good. So, it's a community-oriented place where I get along with a lot of people."

Author: “So is that important for you to be involved in community-oriented practices or what have you?”

Mick: “Yeah it is because it’s a way of showing your own self-respect to people and how people will treat you with that same respect.”

Author: “So what do you mean by self-respect?”

Mick: “Self-respect is how you treat others and how you want others to treat you.”

Mick also characterized his relationship with his employer as being one of respect, saying “[They] have a respect for Indigenous people and their ways and things that are happening around with the Indigenous people too.”

Noting Mick’s use of the term respect, I sought a line of questioning which I thought would allow him to unpack the word respect.

Author: “Do you think your Indigenous values inform how you work?”

Mick: “No.”

Author: “No?”

Mick: “No, I think it’s just the way that I treat people that really helps.”

Author: “So how does how you treat people when at work help?”

Mick: “It’s the respect that I give them, it’s the kindness and the way that that I [interact] with people that’s what makes it really happen ...”

Previously, my research (Manson 2019) demonstrated that the food-based trading and sharing practices of Indigenous persons on Vancouver Island were shaped by the concept of



respect. I argued that when these Indigenous persons spoke of respect, they were saying that relatives (human and nonhuman) gave gifts to them, which allowed them to live, and as such, people have a responsibility to give gifts to other relatives (regardless of whether they have given gifts or not). This type of relational respect is both consequentialist (relatives gave to you, so you have to give) and deontological (good relatives give without expecting anything in return). However, note that Mick at once rejects the notion that values *particular to his Indigeneity* inform how he engages in the capitalist exchange process, while also affirming that the concept of respect *does* shape how he exchanges commodities. Thus, Mick is not speaking of an Indigenous relational form of respect. Rather, Mick's understanding of respect is akin to the *deontological* respect outlined by the philosopher Stephen Darwall (1977, 36), which describes an intangible *something* "to which all persons are entitled." Darwall (38) argues that when people use this form of "recognition-respect" they are saying "that persons as such are entitled to respect." This cosmopolitan form of respect means that people "are entitled to have other persons take seriously and weigh appropriately the fact that they are persons in deliberating about what to do" (Darwall 38). Indeed, for Mick, the capitalist exchange process (between himself and his employer, or between himself and his customers) must be a manifestation of a type of cosmopolitan respect (recognition-respect) that should be applied not only to marginalized groups (such as Indigenous peoples) but all people. In the following section, we will be encountering an Indigenous woman who uses and Indigenous relational forms of respect as a guide for how to conceptualize and enact her economic life.

## 5.6 Receiving one's income through disability assistance

Roberta<sup>83</sup> is an Indigenous elder who cannot work because she has long-term, debilitating health conditions. Roberta receives her income through the British Columbia Economic Assistance (BCEA) program run by the Government of British Columbia, where her case is managed under the Disability Assistance (DA) program. When I interviewed Roberta, she received \$808.42 / month from the DA program. Of this income, the DA allocates \$375 / month to cover shelter costs and \$433.42 / month for non-shelter living expenses (British Columbia 2019a). Roberta's rent is \$425 / month, meaning the DA deducts \$50 from her non-shelter allowance to cover Roberta's shelter expenses. This means that Roberta receives \$383.42 / month as a non-shelter allowance. Roberta supplements her income by providing a relative with babysitting services for \$60 / month. In total, Roberta's yearly income is \$10,421.04 of which \$5100 year (approximately 49% of her income) is used for shelter, \$4601.04 (approximately 44% of her income) is her non-shelter allowance, and \$720 (7% of her income) is the income Roberta earns by providing babysitting services to her relative. Roberta's income is 30.1% of the median income (\$34,600) for Canadian women aged 55-64 years old (Canada 2021c).

Roberta thinks her income is inadequate, saying "I get enough to last me month-to-month. I have to make it last month-to-month ... Rent is really impossible. It's really hard to find a place that you can afford to live in." Further, Roberta's health conditions require her to live close to the Nanaimo General Hospital, so to provide her with ease of access to routine and emergency medical services. This is consistent with Durst and Coburn's (2015) observation that

---

<sup>83</sup> Roberta (female, age 55-64), in interview with author. March 2019. All quotations referring to Roberta are from this interview.

Indigenous peoples with disabilities often choose to live in cities to easily access medical service providers.

As noted above, Roberta provides her relative with babysitting services, for which she charges \$60 / month. Roberta also receives goods for the services she provides, saying “I tell my [relative] well if you want to help me, you could buy this for me. Whether it be milk, or vegetables or whatever.” While Roberta uses caring language (using the term “help” instead of “pay” for instance), she does accept cash payments and food for the babysitting services she provides (though not anywhere approximating a minimum wage). Marxist feminists (Folbre 1982; Figart, Mutari, and Power 2002) have argued, that in capitalist-patriarchal societies, social practices such as childcare are often discussed by governments and in the popular discourse as natural duties of women and not productive labour. Relatedly, Indigenous feminist scholars (Altamirano-Jimenez 2013; Million 2013) argue that the economic practices of Indigenous women (such as child-care) are often understood as natural maternal practices as opposed to the economic practices of Indigenous men (such as hunting and fishing), which are often discussed as though they are definitive representations of authentic Indigenous economic practices. With that in mind, I recognize Roberta’s provision of childcare services as an Indigenous economic practice.

That being said, one of the reasons Roberta does not charge her relative an hourly minimum wage for the babysitting services she provides is because Roberta was taught that relatives have given to her, and as such, she has a responsibility to give to relatives. This logic, oddly enough, intersects well with the neoliberal ideology which gives the BCEA DA its form. Indeed, Pulkingham (2015) argues the BCEA DA is structured in a manner that pushes individuals away from relying on state mechanisms for social goods (such as income and

childcare) and towards relying on the market and family for said social goods. Indeed, Roberta's relative cannot afford to send her child to private daycare facilities (i.e., the market), and as such, relies upon the childcare services provided by Roberta (her family). Thus, the neoliberal governing logic which gives the BCEA DA its form contradicts, intersects with, and reproduces Roberta's relational gifting logic. As such, I agree with Cheng and Kim (2014, 372) who argue that the paradox between the state dispossession of peoples experiencing poverty on the one hand, and the rise of caring economies (typically run by non-governmental organizations) on the other hand should not be seen as discrete solutions to the problem of economic inequality, but rather, as processes which "sympiotically nourish the problems they are putatively addressing."

It should be noted too that access to benefits associated with the BCEA DA is linked to one's ability or inability to sell one's productive capacities for a wage (Manson 2019). Further, Indigenous persons with disabilities are given virtually the same level of benefits as able-bodied persons who cannot sell their productive capacities for a wage (Pulkingham 2015; Manson 2019). The government justifies giving able-bodied people who receive government benefits low incomes by arguing that it will entice people to work while also cutting down on government expenditures. However, Indigenous persons who have disabilities, such as Roberta, have disabilities that prevent them from working for a wage. The fact that they receive incomes similar to able-bodied people who cannot work is not a sign of some perverse understanding of equality, but ableism. In short, the BCEA DA is structured around the idea that people who have disabilities do not deserve to have an income that approximates the incomes of people who work for a wage. But again, given that people with disabilities did not *earn* their disabilities, it seems arbitrary to argue that workers deserve livable incomes and people with disabilities do not.

Conceptually and practically, Roberta uses her cultural values to adapt to, manage, and persevere through the challenging economic conditions she has inherited, saying

I always go to how I was raised. What we did to make our things last, our food. And I've become really good at portioning out how much to cook and how much to let it last ... I make sure I have all my meats and all my vegetables. Whatever we need to last throughout the month.

It is interesting that Roberta associates her family members' lessons about the importance of frugality (i.e., meal-planning) with cultural values and practices. This suggests that Roberta's family has experienced intergenerational material deprivation. Indeed, while there is research that analyzes the relationship between Indigenous food-based practices and cultural values (Daigle 2019b; Manson 2019), and the relationship between Indigenous experiences of poverty and food insecurity (Skinner et al. 2013; Cidro et al. 2015), as far I can tell there is no research which *explicitly* draws the connection between intergenerational Indigenous economic deprivation and the development of Indigenous values.

Roberta does not feel ashamed for depending on others – such as the state, foodbanks, or family – for her economic survival. Indeed, Roberta says

“I believe that [the government] should do everything they can to help ... I feel that no-one should be turned away, if they really need the help. And the proof is in looking at the person, you know?”

Author: “As opposed to documentation?”

Roberta: “Yes, yes. If they can see first-hand what it is a person is going through, they shouldn’t hesitate to help.”

Further, Roberta does not think that people experiencing poverty are inferior to those who are not experiencing poverty. Roberta says she thinks non-Indigenous peoples often misrecognize Indigenous peoples as inferior relative to non-Indigenous peoples. Roberta says these acts of misrecognition occur because non-Indigenous peoples witness Indigenous peoples experiencing poverty, and conflate their impoverishment with inferiority. Indeed, critical Indigenous (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014) and non-Indigenous (Zweig 2000; Lyon-Callo 2008; Workman 2009) scholars have noted how the state or individuals dispossessing marginalized people of resources (such as land or income) prevents the latter from building community, self-actualizing, while also pushes them into poverty (which causes others to misrecognize the dispossessed as inferior others).

Roberta thinks that if non-Indigenous peoples saw Indigenous economic practices in action, they would be able to recognize Indigenous peoples for who they are:

You know, it comes back to a lot of that they don’t see who we are, truly are. How we live and what we do. If they saw it first hand, came to our communities, saw what we do. Like, my late cousin, I really miss him because he always went out fishing to help [out the community]. He didn’t have to do it, he loved doing it. Giving to the community, giving them fresh salmon, you know? They really need to know who we are. We are great people.

Later in the interview, I asked Roberta why she thought it was important to give to relatives, and she said “Because of the help I received.” Thus, for Roberta, the relational gift-giving process is an expression of the gifts her relatives have given to her, her responsibility to give to others, her kinship ties, and the greatness of her community.

Roberta resolves the contradiction between how she thinks others view Indigenous peoples (as inferior others) and her understanding of Indigenous peoples as great people by appealing to the grandness of the gift-giving process (informed by Indigenous relational governing logics) which occurs within her community. Thus, Roberta’s reference to the gift-giving process allows her to ‘turn away’<sup>84</sup> from the colonial gaze which sees Indigenous peoples as inferior, allowing her to affirm the greatness of herself and her people. That being said, Roberta’s life is an expression of colonial policies which dispossess Indigenous peoples of their ability to enact economic practices that are informed by their relational governing logics. Roberta’s life is also an expression of neoliberal policies which seek to make persons with disabilities rely on non-government social networks for the provisions of social goods.

## **5.7 Receiving one’s income through temporary assistance**

Georgina<sup>85</sup> is an Indigenous woman from an Indigenous nation that has signed a treaty with Canada. Georgina receives her income through the BCEA Temporary Assistance (TA) program. Georgina did not tell me her exact yearly income, but according to the BCEA TA, a single person under the age of 65 was eligible to receive a shelter income of \$375 / month or, if

---

<sup>84</sup> To paraphrase research by Indigenous resurgence scholars Alfred and Corntassel (2005) and Coulthard (2014).

<sup>85</sup> Georgina (female age 25-34), in interview with author. March 2020. All quotations referring to Georgina are from this interview.

the BCEA deemed them to be a person who had Persistent Multiple Barriers (PMB), \$432.92 (British Columbia 2019b). Georgina does not receive income for shelter support, as she is experiencing homelessness. Either way, Georgina's income (which is either \$4500 or \$5195.04) is approximately 11.7% or 13.5% of the median income (\$38,500) of Canadian women aged 25-34 (Canada 2021d). Georgina says experiencing homelessness makes it difficult to manage her expenses, noting "I just spend it however I need to spend it in that moment."

Georgina says that BCEA TA caseworkers have told her that she meets the criteria for receiving her income through DA (again, Disability Assistance). However, Georgina says she does not want to receive her income through DA "nor do I want the government or anything to see me on disability because it is just going to make me look bad ... And I think when you go on [DA] you can never come off of it." It should be noted that when Georgina says a person receiving their income from DA can "never come off of it", she is not speaking negatively of people who receive their incomes through DA as being 'dependent'; rather Georgina is speaking of the stigma she thinks is attached to the government labelling people as disabled. Indeed, Gaszo et al. (2020) argue that in regards to Indigenous peoples' use of social assistance programs, a dominant social, cultural, and political discourse is that Indigenous peoples are 'overly dependent on the state for their incomes, which supposedly produces a 'culture of dependency' among Indigenous peoples. It's important to note that contemporary social assistance programs in British Columbia are designed to make people who are experiencing poverty *less* (not more) economically dependent upon the state, encouraging them to conceptualize and rely upon labor markets, non-governmental organizations, or families as providers of social goods (Pulkingham 2015).



Conversely, Georgina thinks it is morally permissible for Indigenous peoples to use social assistance programs.

Georgina: “One thing about income assistance (which is why there’s a big stigma around ‘welfare Indians’ or whatever) is that a treaty was signed in the beginning [between my Indigenous nation and British Columbia], the very beginning. It was supposed to be okay [to receive economic assistance from non-Indigenous governments, because they said] ‘We’re coming over, we’re taking your land. But you know what, here’s something to help compensate for that.’ That was the original purpose of welfare.”

Author: “And what do you think of that original purpose?”

Georgina: “It’s still not being completely followed because if that was the purpose then everybody should be getting [money] regardless. And now everybody is mixed up on what [welfare] was for. But that’s okay because you know, not everybody’s educated on what happened to the Natives.”

Above, Georgina is linking the income she receives from the BCEA TA to *treaty obligations* non-Indigenous governments have towards Indigenous peoples. Thus, for Georgina, Indigenous use of the BCEA DA and TA is a material expression of non-Indigenous states’ economic responsibilities towards Indigenous peoples and not Indigenous peoples’ material and psychic dependency on non-Indigenous governments. Indeed, Georgina says that non-Indigenous governments skirting their economic obligations to Indigenous peoples causes Indigenous peoples to experience poverty. Georgina says that non-Indigenous peoples who see Indigenous peoples experiencing poverty misrecognize them as inferior “savages.” Georgina resolves the

contradiction between how she views herself and how others view Indigenous peoples (as inferior ‘savages’) by arguing that Indigenous people who receive their incomes through social assistance programs are enacting their treaty rights.

Indeed, Georgina’s understanding of social welfare programs as expressions of the treaty process informed her decision to engage in front-line activism against homelessness in the city of Nanaimo to “address why we [Indigenous peoples] don’t have housing and how we’ve been here the longest. And we shouldn’t have Natives that are homeless. We shouldn’t. Especially because of the treaty.” Thus, Georgina joined a ‘tent city’, an encampment of people who are experiencing homelessness. This tent city was erected to draw attention to the plight of people experiencing homelessness and to pressure local officials to build homeless shelters and low-income housing.

Georgina: “[At the tent city] I was asking ... to have all of [community members] together to have a meeting and go over everything ... we just kind of talked for days about everything. And I was like ‘Yeah, okay, this is something I stand behind and I believe in because we needed to make people aware of how many people are on the streets. And how everybody has different stories and it’s not easy.’ So, I stayed at tent city, and figured it out.”

Author: “You stayed at tent city?”

Georgina: “Yes. And I helped each and every person. Every day I went from tent to tent. I was helping fix [the tents], I would bring them water, I would sit there and talk to [other protesters] ...”

Here, we can see that Georgina's demands for material resources and recognition from the state do not make her psychologically dependent upon the state and its liberal and capitalist values. Rather, it is because Georgina sees social assistance as an expression of the *treaty process* that she engages in an embodied struggle with the state over material resources (income and housing) and recognition. While such acts might be inspiring, the economic context Georgina inherited and, indeed, Georgina's economic life, are expressions of a colonial process that dispossesses Indigenous peoples of their land and governing authority, and neoliberal governmentality which thinks it is permissible to allow people to be unhoused while receiving a yearly income of \$4500-\$5195.04.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I demonstrated that processes of recognition (by others and self) and misrecognition (which spring forth from racism, sexism, ableism, and economic dispossession), objectification, and alienation shaped how five Indigenous peoples who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives (whether working as a leader, working in the gig economy, or receiving social assistance from the BCEA TA or DA). In short, the five Indigenous persons in this chapter who received or engaged in positive acts of objectification and recognition felt as though they were part of and building community and a sense of self. For instance, both Lindsay (at least initially) and Mick experienced high levels of control over their economic lives. As such, both Lindsay and Mick were able to discover important aspects about themselves and others, allowing them to feel like they were becoming the person that they wanted to be and were building a sense of community.

However, for the five Indigenous persons in this chapter, the affirming processes of community building and building a sense of self were always fraught with tension because they were subject to processes that existed outside of their immediate control (processes such as the capitalist production and exchange process, as well as colonialism, sexism, racism, ableism, and neoliberal austerity policies). Indeed, the use of racist and sexist discourse by employers, coworkers, and society at large *dispossessed* four out of the five Indigenous persons in this chapter (Lindsay, Nicholas, Roberta, and Georgina) of their sense of attachment (to community and community-at-work) and their self-conceptualization (as experts within a given field, as competent workers, as great people, and as people worthy of being treated with dignity and respect). As such, some Indigenous persons in this chapter conceptually and literally alienated themselves from their work. Other Indigenous persons in this chapter used Indigenous various discourses (feminism, privilege theory, cosmopolitanism, universalism, relationality, and treaty discourse) to resolve the contradiction between their self-conceptualization and racist images of Indigeneity that non-Indigenous peoples presented them with.

It should also be noted that the Canadian government has dispossessed the Indigenous nations of all five Indigenous participants of their governing authority and their economic bases (i.e., territory). The topic of the non-Indigenous states dispossessing Indigenous nations of the land and its consequences for Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities has been discussed fairly well (Lawrence 2004; Coulthard 2014). Yet what I don't think has been covered well enough is how Indigenous peoples' conceptualization and enactment of work and their economic lives structure and are structured by the actions of employers, coworkers, social workers, etc. In short, the aforementioned actors also dispossess Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities of economic resources and status they need to fulfill their sense of

community and self. Further, while there is research that has highlighted the emergence of an Indigenous middle-class within urban communities (Andersen 2013), this research does not discuss the distinct ways each class experiences capitalism. For instance, Lindsay and Georgina both experienced types of alienation. However, Lindsay's experiences of alienation are fundamentally different from those of Georgina because Lindsay had more resources (in terms of income and status) than Georgina. With these thoughts in mind, I hope this chapter can lead to a broader discussion about the multitude of ways Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to understand how a diverse group of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize or enact their lives as this intersects with the meaning of land, reconciliation, relations, and economic practices. To do this I engaged with the field of critical Indigenous studies, focusing on Indigenous theorizations on Indigeneity in urban communities, relationality, and political economy in contemporary colonial contexts. I also engaged with the field of political philosophy, in particular, liberal political philosophers' theorizations on liberalism. However, most importantly I engaged with Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo's theorizations on how the world is and ought to be. Admittedly, my collaboration with these Indigenous persons was as an engaged researcher who wanted to challenge the view that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities were place-less and culture-less people. Paradoxically, one way I sought to challenge this view was to focus less on 'proving' how authentically Indigenous their practices were, using a conception of Indigeneity based on intersubjective recognition and life experience. In short, I know that all of the participants in this study recognized themselves and were recognized by others as being Indigenous. As such, I knew that all the Indigenous persons who participated in this dissertation had *experienced life* as Indigenous peoples. This approach to understanding Indigeneity was not meant to sacrifice the notion that many Indigenous persons *valued* and engaged in traditional practices, or led their lives in a manner that was informed by their Indigenous relational governing logics. Rather, my approach was meant to focus less on how Indigenous peoples who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo ought to live their lives and more on how they are living their lives.

This focus on how Indigenous peoples live their lives as opposed to how they ought to live their lives dovetails nicely with those of Indigenous scholars (V. Deloria 2007; Hokowhitu 2009) who argue for anti-teleological views of Indigenous community and life. These scholars argue for the importance of recognizing that *what it means to be Indigenous* arises from everyday communal and individual practices as opposed to orientations towards a pure past we never experienced and a pure future we will never experience. While I agree with such anti-teleological insights in principle, people often act teleologically or conceptualize the world in teleological terms (MacIntyre 2007; Sandel 2009; 2020). Thus, when speaking of Indigenous ‘everydayness’, it is wise to recognize that Indigenous persons’ everyday actions are often purposive. I also think Indigenous peoples’ everyday practices are historically oriented. Indeed, Indigenous participants repeatedly spoke of learning from the practices of their Indigenous ancestors (who some participants idealized) and from the historical actions of non-Indigenous peoples (who some participants villainized) to plan for a better future life for themselves and their community. And while orienting oneself to the past in service of the future has the potential to evacuate meaning from the present (Hokowhitu 2009), the Indigenous participants I engaged with demonstrated that this is not always the case. Indeed, for Indigenous participants, learning from the past (which was often idealized) in service of a future (which itself was often idealized) worked to imbue their present lives with meaning and values which are very often radically different from and challenge dominant values found in Canadian society.

The diverse perspectives of Indigenous scholars and Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo challenged my theorizations on life and the way things ought to be. For instance, in my previous work (Manson 2019) I did not make it *explicitly* clear that Indigenous peoples *use* multiple ontologies, or what I call discourses on reality or governing logics. Perhaps

I didn't engage with this idea because I thought it challenged my desire to live my life in accordance with Indigenous relationality. Still, the argument by several Indigenous scholars (Paradies 2006; A. Simpson 2007; Hokowhitu 2009; Million 2013) that one cannot reduce what it means to be Indigenous to a solitary discourse on reality was a hard insight for me to ignore. These arguments pushed me towards recognizing that *being* Indigenous is about recognition and experience as much as it is about purposive, idealized social practices. Similarly, the diverse social practices and ideas of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo taught me not only the importance of recognizing, respecting, and engaging with diverse perspectives that exist within Indigenous communities but also, that diverse Indigenous perspectives and social practices can *flow from* a shared Indigenous relational discourse on reality. All of these insights deeply informed my analysis of Indigenous scholars' theorizations on how the world is and ought to be as found in Chapters 2 and Chapters 4.

The participants in Chapters 3 and Chapters 5 challenged my conceptualizations of the importance of recognition in colonial contexts. My ideas on recognition were similar to those of Alfred and Cornthassel (2005) and Coulthard (2014), in that I thought that Indigenous peoples ought to 'turn away' from the gaze of non-Indigenous states, peoples, corporations, and persons and engage in acts of self-affirmation / self-recognition. However, participants' recounting of their everyday experiences in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 demonstrated to me that recognition and misrecognition are not merely political processes that occur between groups of peoples (i.e., the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples), but are quotidian social processes that occur in diverse spaces, such as work, within Indigenous communities, at a tent city, or in one's home. In such spaces 'turning away' from the gaze of those who misrecognize Indigenous persons is exceedingly difficult or impossible. However, as we saw in Chapter 3, Indigenous persons who



lived in Vancouver and Nanaimo did engage in acts of self-affirmation, where they affirmed their identities through acts of reciprocal recognition with other Indigenous persons, non-Indigenous persons who are working-class, and nonhuman elements. Still, some Indigenous persons who lived in Nanaimo felt like they were being misrecognized as inauthentically Indigenous by other Indigenous persons. What these participants taught me is that processes of recognition and misrecognition are not life or death struggles (though they can be), but can be rather benign. In short, when participants were misrecognized as inauthentically Indigenous, they simply turned to and engaged with Indigenous persons who recognized them as Indigenous.

This brings us to the heart of the matter. What does it mean when others see you in a way you do not see yourself? How does one work through such a contradiction? What are the sources of such contradictions? The participants in this dissertation taught me that one cannot understand processes of recognition and misrecognition without discussing how the distribution of resources (such as land, income, status) structures such processes. We saw this in Chapter 5, where sexism contributed to a process where an Indigenous woman felt that her employer was misrecognizing her fellow female Indigenous colleagues as lacking expertise in a given field of research *and* that her employer was misrecognizing *himself* as an expert in a field in which he had no familiarity, which made her feel alienated from her coworkers and herself. In Chapter 5 we saw how Indigenous persons who have disabilities and Indigenous persons who are experiencing homelessness were aware that because they lacked economic resources, others saw and treated them as less than human. What Indigenous participants in this chapter taught me is that taking resources away from people dehumanizes them, which in turn turns them into objective extensions of other peoples' will.

## 6.1 Key Findings and contributions

In Chapter 2 I discussed the topics of Indigeneity in urban communities and the politics of recognition among Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples and among Indigenous persons. I argued that different descriptive discourses on reality (i.e., discourses which described how reality is) informed and were informed by different understandings of what counts as ‘the land’ and what counts as a subject. I demonstrated that these different discourses on reality (including ones I use to understand how the world is and ought to be) had positive and negative implications for how Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities are recognized and engaged with by others, recognize themselves, and recognize and engage with others. This chapter has three key contributions. First, I demonstrated that even among Indigenous relational scholars, there are distinct conceptual differences about what counts as ‘land’, and subsequently, as a subject. Relatedly, I also demonstrated that some Indigenous scholars, such as Glen Coulthard (2014) *combined* Indigenous relationality with other political theories such as Marxism. Secondly, I demonstrated that there is no such thing as a ‘neutral’ or ‘benign’ discourse on reality as it pertains to Indigeneity in the urban communities. A major reason for this is that even Indigenous relational theories which reject dualism are embedded in societies where dominant understandings of land and Indigeneity are structured by dualism. Indeed, I even acknowledged that the theories of Indigenous relationality I found persuasive (which argue that the totality of existence is relational and that even elements such as cities count as the land and dialectics) had both negative and positive implications for Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities. Finally, and relatedly, I demonstrated the importance of recognizing that how theories on what counts as ‘the land’, and what counts as an Indigenous subject structure and are structured by a context where dualist conceptions of land and subjecthood predominate.

In Chapter 3, I built on theoretical discussions about what constitutes ‘the land’ and subjecthood to discuss how Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo understand nature, subjecthood, and whether these understandings could aid in discussions about reconciliation (understood as the movement toward improving relationships between Indigenous peoples, nonhuman elements, and non-Indigenous peoples) in urban contexts. My examination demonstrates the various ways Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo reconcile the contradiction of living in communities that are largely governed according to dualist, liberal, and capitalist logics which *contradict* the Indigenous relational governing logics of their respective communities. I argue that the everyday acts of reconciliation of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo can inform the process of reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and Canada *writ large*. I demonstrate that Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo engage in social practices which allows them to affirm Indigenous diversity and Indigenous relational understandings of subjecthood, to engage in political empathy with other marginalized peoples and elements, and to critique the upward distribution of wealth away from people and elements who have been dispossessed, to peoples who already have inordinate amounts of power and resources. I demonstrate the analytic power of understanding Indigenous peoples – whether they live in rural or urban communities – as peoples who are embedded within and engage with different systems of power which not only contradict their values but can also be used to affirm them.

Chapter 4 builds on the insights of Indigenous participants in Chapter 3, in particular, Indigenous participants observations that economic resources were being taken away from Indigenous persons, non-Indigenous working-class persons, and nonhuman elements and upwardly distributed to non-Indigenous entities and persons who already have an inordinate

number of resources and power. I wanted to know what kinds of assumptions about the nature of reality inform liberal and Indigenous decisions regarding the distribution of goods and harms within a given society/community. I contextualized this query in theoretical discussions about Indigenous relationality and the idea among Indigenous relational scholars that the liberal university and capitalist economy practices can be turned into relational systems. I demonstrated that liberalism – a governing logic that gives the education and economic system its form – and Indigenous relationality share common features, namely a relational discourse on reality that recognizes that the goods and harms people receive in life are because of processes beyond one's immediate control. However, I also demonstrated that since much liberalism is dualist, it also contains an *individualistic* discourse on reality, which argues that people can use reason and work to transcend context and own and be responsible for one's actions. This individualistic discourse on reality contradicts and sits in tension with liberal relational discourses on reality. Non-Indigenous nations, governments, and persons use this individualistic discourse on reality to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their territory and governing authority over their lands and individual lives. I argue that since Indigenous nations have had such dualist logics imposed on them, they too have inherited a contradiction between individualistic and Indigenous relational governing logics. Liberal education systems and capitalism are premised upon, incentivize and naturalize dualist understandings of the world that impact not only liberals but also Indigenous peoples. Thus, I argue that the pathway to making the academy and economy relational involves not only engaging in acts of individual internal critique of liberalism, but also engaging in acts of large-scale structural change which allow the education and economic system to be premised on, incentivize, and naturalize relational discourses on reality.

Chapter 5 synthesizes the insights of the previous chapters, which discussed concepts such as liberal individualistic and Indigenous relational discourses on reality, processes of recognition, objectification, and alienation, and distribution of economic resources within liberal states and contributes to research on Indigenous economies, Indigeneity in urban communities, and labour studies. My examination demonstrates the various ways a diverse group of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo conceptualize and enact work and their economic lives. I demonstrate that for these Indigenous persons, work and economic practices allow them to cultivate a sense of community and who they want to be. However, I also demonstrate that Indigenous conceptions of work and economic practices are also typified by processes of unfreedom, as expressed through misrecognition (sexist, racist, ableist), economic inequality, and alienation. I argue for the importance of recognizing how class, race, gender, and ability structure and are structured by Indigenous economic practices, and subsequently, Indigenous peoples' ability to live their lives in a manner they deem appropriate.

## **6.2 Limitations**

There are several limitations to this dissertation. The findings of my empirical chapters (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5) are drawn from the specific experiences of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo. Though Indigenous peoples share common experiences related to colonization – such as dispossession, alienation, etc. – the experiences of Indigenous persons who live in Vancouver and Nanaimo might also be different from those of Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities in Canada and other countries. That being said, research has demonstrated that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities in other countries face existential challenges which are similar to those faced by Indigenous persons who participated in

this dissertation (Walker and Barcham 2010). Another limitation of this dissertation is related to my desire to recognize and engage with the diversity of Indigenous perspectives about the world while also being cognizant of the fact that different Indigenous peoples sometimes broadly share similar perspectives about the world. While I recognized that Indigenous peoples used multiple discourses on reality alongside Indigenous relationality, I recognize that even speaking of an Indigenous relational discourse on reality might lead to essentialist interpretations which are premised on the idea that Indigenous relational discourses on reality are the only discourse on reality Indigenous peoples use to understand reality and live their lives. However, my method of *recognizing* that the different discourses on reality that Indigenous peoples *use are Indigenous* by being expressed by Indigenous peoples allowed me to avoid the pitfalls of homogenizing essentialism that is so often present when discussing Indigenous discourses on reality.

### **6.3 Reflections on relationality and the gift**

This dissertation was driven in large part by the notion that Indigenous peoples who live in urban communities in Canada are factually present but absent in the academic and popular imaginary. Part of the reason for this idea that Indigenous peoples are absent in cities is related to how notions of Indigeneity are so tied to dualist conceptions of land and subjecthood. In short, cities are seen as areas bereft of land, bereft of earth, and therefore, bereft of Indigenous peoples whose identities, we are told, spring forth from and are rooted to the land and earth. In Chapter 2 I was able to reflect, briefly, on my perspective on Indigenous relationality, the land, and subjecthood. That said, in Chapter 2 I focused on the perspectives of other Indigenous relational scholars. In this conclusion, I want to reflect on Indigenous relationality as a way to expand upon my ideas on the subject, but also to point to potential future areas of research.

Before going any further, it's important to answer the question, why the focus on dualism and Indigenous relationality? Did I not say that Indigenous persons use other discourses on reality to describe how the world is and ought to be? Is it not somehow 'essentialist', in the loosest understanding of the word, to only focus on these two discourses on reality? In a word, no. I am not arguing that these two discourses on reality are the *only* discourses on reality which structure and are structured by Indigenous lives, but that there is evidence that they are *dominant* discourses on reality which structure and are structured by Indigenous lives, and as such worthy of inquiry. Indeed, throughout this dissertation, I used dialectical discourses on reality to describe how the world is and ought to be. In my mind, when I, or any other Indigenous person, *uses* so-called alternative discourses on reality such as dialectics, they are Indigenous discourses on reality because Indigenous persons are using them to understand and apprehend the social world.

Further, I am interested in such topics because I am an Indigenous relational scholar, whose perspective builds off interpretations and modifications of *arguments* forwarded by other Indigenous relational scholars (Cordova 2007; S. Wilson 2008; Atleo 2011). Like the aforementioned scholars, I think all elements are manifestations of, embedded in and participating in relationships. This *monist* perspective is very similar to other monist philosophical perspectives, such as physicalism, as both relationality and physicalism are realist perspectives that acknowledge the determining role relationships (in the case of physicalism, understood in terms of physics) play in constituting people. As such, my perspective is in opposition to dualist conceptions of reality which hold human exceptionalist (the idea that people are exceptional from nature) and human exemptionalist (the argument that humans are exempt from the laws of nature) views on reality (Williams 2007).

The idea that people *are* ecological beings who are firmly embedded and acting in ecosystems (Vogel 2003) is at once trivial and life-altering. For instance, philosophers such as Vogel, argue that since people are ecological beings, it follows that the artifacts that people produce are also expressions of ecological processes. Such views are similar to those of Indigenous scholars, activists, artists, and participants we encountered in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Some scholars argue that *not* recognizing that people are embedded in and expressions of ecological processes are dangerous because it fosters the idea that people can use reason to sit outside, dominate, and control nature (Cronon 1996; Vogel 2003). However, other scholars recognize that people and their artifacts (such as cities and associated ‘modern’ technology) are expressions of naturalistic processes, but think it is pertinent to evade this fact.<sup>86 87</sup> I think these scholars engage in such a process so to mobilize dualist discourses on reality (which imagines people and nature as being distinct and separate entities), to protect nature from ‘human intrusion’.

Cronon (1996, 81) argues that imagining people as separate from nature gives people “permission to evade responsibility for the lives we actually lead.” Further, an ethic of care that relies on the human-nature distinction seems to *presume* that such a distinction will lead to the protection of nonhuman elements labelled as ‘nature.’ However, as we saw throughout this dissertation, philosophers and everyday people have historically and contemporarily discussed and engaged with ‘natural’ elements such as ‘wilderness’ areas as spaces in need of ‘cultivation’

---

<sup>86</sup> Nolen Gertz (2019) refers to such a process as nihilism.

<sup>87</sup> See Noss (1991) and Houck (1998) for such arguments.



and ‘improvement’ for the common good of humanity (Tully 1993; Kolers 2000; Atleo 2011). Thus, imagining humans as distinct from nature is no guarantee they will be protected.

As this relates to Indigenous peoples, the notion that people are separate from ‘nature’, paradoxically, has been used by conservationists as a concept to manage and control the behaviour of Indigenous peoples (Sandlos 2001; West, Igoe, & Brockington 2006). I say paradoxically because as I demonstrated throughout this dissertation, a dominant non-Indigenous, environmentalist discourse about Indigenous peoples is that they are less ‘rational,’ more ‘physical,’ and more ‘natural beings’ (i.e., ‘noble savages’), who belong in ‘natural’ spaces. Often, when Indigenous peoples begin to use nonhuman elements in these ‘natural’ spaces, non-Indigenous institutions and persons begin to speak of Indigenous peoples as ‘ignoble savages’ whose ‘irrational’ and ‘inefficient’ land-management practices threaten the sanctity of ‘wilderness’ areas (Sandlos 2001; West, Igoe, & Brockington 2006). It seems that Indigenous peoples are seen as ‘not belonging’ even in spaces where they are supposed to belong.

In Chapter 2, I argued that some non-Indigenous persons use a dualist understanding of land (as not occurring in cities) to locate Indigeneity away from cities. It is logical to infer that people who design programs that seek to get Indigenous people ‘out into nature’ are aware of and accept the fact that people and their artifacts are expressions of nature. It is also safe to infer that some of these people consciously evade this fact in service of their values, which might be in opposition to liberal-capitalist values. Thus, this outlook disaffirms a fundamental aspect of reality (namely that people are part of nature) to affirm an environmentalist ethic of care. The argument that Indigenous peoples need to ‘get out in nature’ and away from cities, towns, and technology is also partially born out of the idea that technology such as cars and the internet *alienates* people from the earth, allowing them to be comfortable with living in a world where

the earth is pillaged in the name of hyper-commodification.<sup>88</sup> While this might be the case, it is also true that Indigenous scholars use a wide variety of technology to disseminate their ideas on how the world is and ought to be, thus shaping the public discourse about the nature of reality in a positive manner. Further, I do not believe that technology alienates people from the earth and relationships, but rather that technology (and I would add labour used to form technology) makes it *appear* as though we are alienated from the earth. In this dissertation, we saw similar arguments by Tommy Orange (2018), Max Harrison (Global Oneness Project 2009a), and in Chapter 3 by Indigenous participants such as Stanley and Roderick. Indeed, taking my cue from Roderick and Stanley, I wonder what is technology other than earthen materials that have been fashioned into a commodity? Cities and commodities are formed by relationships (between human and nonhuman elements), and while these relationships can constrain our ability to connect with the earth in a way that we think is appropriate, they also enable our existence. The hard work of a migrant labourer who picked the apple I bought from the store and am eating; the hard work of labourers in China who assembled the computer I am using to write this dissertation; all of these relationships (along with relationships between nonhuman elements of which I cannot see) enable my existence. Acknowledging the relationships that enable our existence is a sign of respect.

I recognize the necessity of negating colonial-capitalist values in service of the maintenance and promotion of alternative relational values. However, I would caution Indigenous relational scholars and their allies to avoid the paradoxical and counter-productive process of negating the relational truth of reality in the service of relational ideals. Instead, it is

---

<sup>88</sup> See Kimmerer (2013) for such an argument.

wise to recognize and find a way to live with the fact that all elements (including the ones fashioned by people) are embedded in, manifestations of, and participating in relationships at all times. The distance between people and the earth is non-existent.

Acknowledging the relational nature of reality entails recognizing that life is a gift. We inherited our capacities to live, know, and act. Our individual ‘agency’ is in reality a mere modification of these endowments. Even our ability to modify these endowments is not reducible to our individual actions but is a function of the work of others (human and nonhuman) and luck. Throughout this dissertation we saw scholars and presidents alike at once acknowledge and seek to evade the reality that life is a gift, so to maintain and reproduce individualist values (and hence individualistic discourses on reality). And the world, except for a fortunate few, has grown all the poorer for it. But the victories of those who deny reality are made hollow by their ideologies. Although John Locke has passed on, his essence becoming one with the Earth, his insight that the Earth and people are made and belong to the Creator remains, lingering over those who say that the goods and harms we receive are because of our individual work. His insight is similar to those of Indigenous persons who plead with humanity to recognize that life is a gift given to us by the Creator (whether that Creator is the earth, the cosmos, or a divine entity that sits outside the causal realm). But the difference is for some Indigenous persons, responsibilities of care flow from the idea that the earth owns us, whereas for Locke and his followers, what flows from the concept of divine ownership is a self and property that is bound against the world (Richardson 2010).

It seems we are all fenced-in on an estate that has become shrouded by darkness. For centuries those with power have hidden the light of Creation in a box outside our view. Occasionally, while struggling through the void in search of eyes other than our own, someone

opens the box, releasing light that gives the gift its form. From here, we make a choice: embrace the totality of all that has been revealed, or continue blindly consuming our surroundings, haunted by memories of the gift.

## Bibliography

- Aldred, Lisa. "Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality." *American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 329-352.
- Alfred, Taiaiake, and Jeff Corntassel. "Being Indigenous: Resurgences Against Contemporary Colonialism." *Government and Opposition* 40, no. 4 (2005): 597-614.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2005.00166.x>.
- Alfred, Taiaiake. *Peace, Power, and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Altamirano-Jiménez, Isabel. *Indigenous Encounters with Neoliberalism: Place, Women, and the Environment in Canada and Mexico*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013.
- Al-Zyoud, Hussein, Shahidul Islam, and Carolyn Leblanc. "Trends and dynamics of inequality in Alberta." *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work* 28, no. 3 (2018): 182-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10301763.2018.1520678>.
- Andersen, Chris. "Urban Aboriginality as a Distinctive Identity, in Twelve Parts." In *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, edited by Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, 46-68. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013.
- Arneil, Barbara, and Nancy J. Hirschmann. "Disability and Political Theory: An Introduction." eds. Barbara Arneil and Nancy J. Hirschmann, 1-19. *Disability and Political Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Ashford, Susan J., Brianna Barker Caza, and Erin M. Reid. "From Surviving to Thriving in the Gig Economy: A Research Agenda for Individuals in the New World of Work." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 38 (2018): 23-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2018.11.001>.
- ?Aq'am First Nation. *Land and Natural Resources*. 2020. <https://www.aqam.net/resources>.

- Atleo, E. Richard. *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004.
- . *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis*. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2011.
- Bailey, Alison. "Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye's 'Oppression'." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29, no. 3 (1998). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1334782>.
- Baker, Darren T., and Elisabeth K. Kelan. "Splitting and Blaming: The Psychic Life of Neoliberal Executive Women." *Human Relations* 72, no. 1 (2019): 69-97.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0018726718772010>.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Liberty*, edited by Henry Hardy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Blaser, Mario. "Political Ontology: Cultural Studies Without 'Cultures'?" *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 5-6 (2009): 873-896.
- Bloom, Paul. "Religion is Natural." *Developmental Science* 10, no. 1 (2007): 147-151.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7687.2007.00577.x>.
- Borrows, John and James Tully. "Introduction." In *Reconciliation and Resurgence: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, edited by Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2018.
- British Columbia. British Columbia Economic Assistance Program. *Disability Assistance Rate Table*. Victoria, 2019a. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/bc-employment-and-assistance-rate-tables/disability-assistance-rate-table>.
- . British Columbia Economic Assistance Program. *Income Assistance Rate*

- Table. Victoria, 2019b. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/bc-employment-and-assistance-rate-tables/income-assistance-rate-table>
- Bulkan, Janette. “Indigenous Forest Management”. *CAB Reviews: Perspectives in Agriculture, Veterinary Science, Nutrition and Natural Resources* 12 no. 4 (2017): 1–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1079/PAVSNNR201712004>.
- Burns, Madeline Mackenzie Lynn. “Reclaiming Indigenous Sexual Being: Sovereignty and Decolonization Through Sexuality.” *The Arbutus Review* 11, no. 1 (2020): 28-38.
- Butler, Judith, and Athena Athanasiou. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2013.
- Camara, Babacar. “The falsity of Hegel’s theses on Africa.” *Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005): 82-96.
- Canada. Statistics Canada. *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Key Results from the 2016 Census*. Ottawa, 2017a. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.pdf?st=1YjEGba0>.
- . Statistic Canada. *Population Centre and Rural Area Classification 2016*. Ottawa, 2017b. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/subjects/standard/pcrac/2016/introduction>
- . Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2016 Census. Vancouver [Census metropolitan area], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province]*. Ottawa, 2017c.  
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMACA&Code1=933&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All>.

- . Statistics Canada. *Income of Individuals by Age Group, Sex and Income Source, Canada, Provinces and Selected Census Metropolitan Areas*. Ottawa, 2021a.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110023901&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.5&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.3&pickMembers%5B3%5D=4.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2019&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2019&referencePeriods=20190101%2C20190101>.
- . Statistics Canada. *Income of Individuals by Age Group, Sex and Income Source, Canada, Provinces and Selected Census Metropolitan Areas*. Ottawa, 2021b.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110023901&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.5&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.2&pickMembers%5B3%5D=4.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2019&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2019&referencePeriods=20190101%2C20190101>.
- . Statistics Canada. *Income of Individuals by Age Group, Sex and Income Source, Canada, Provinces and Selected Census Metropolitan Areas*. Ottawa, 2021c.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110023901&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.7&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.3&pickMembers%5B3%5D=4.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2019&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2019&referencePeriods=20190101%2C20190101>.
- . Statistics Canada. *Income of Individuals by Age Group, Sex and Income Source, Canada, Provinces and Selected Census Metropolitan Areas*. Ottawa, 2021d.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110023901&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.4&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.3&pickMembers>



- %5B3%5D=4.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2019&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2019&referencePeriods=20190101%2C20190101.
- Caney, Simon. "Liberalism and Communitarianism: A Misconceived Debate." *Political Studies* 40, no. 2 (1992): 273-289. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1992.tb01384.x>.
- Carey, Michael. *Snuneymuxw Justice as an Alternative to the Canadian Justice System*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis. Victoria: University of Victoria, 2007.
- Carpio, Myla Vicente. *Indigenous Albuquerque*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011.
- Cheng, Sealing, and Eunjung Kim. "The Paradoxes of Neoliberalism: Migrant Korean Sex Workers in the United States and "Sex Trafficking"." *Social Politics* 21, no. 3 (2014): 355-381. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxu019>.
- Christensen, Julia, and Paul Andrew. "'They Don't Let Us Look After Each Other Like We Used To': Reframing Indigenous Homeless Geographies as Home / Journeying in Northwest Territories, Canada." In *Indigenous Homelessness: Perspectives from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*, edited by Evelyn J. Peters and Julia Christensen, 24-48. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016.
- Christman, John. "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 117, no. 1/2 (2004): 143-164.
- Cidro, Jaime, Bamidele Adekunle, Evelyn Peters, and Tabitha Martens. "Beyond Food Security: Understanding Access to Cultural Food for Urban Indigenous People in Winnipeg as Indigenous Food Sovereignty." *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 24, no. 1 (2015): 24-43.
- City of Vancouver. *Memorandum: VanRims.: 01-900-20*. Vancouver, 2020.

- <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/2017-10-27-city-of-vancouver-2016-census-indigenous-peoples-immigration-and-ethno-cultural-diversity.PDF>.
- Cohen, G.A. *History, Labour, and Freedom: Themes from Marx*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- . *Lectures on the History of Moral and Political Philosophy*, edited by Jonathan Wolff. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Coleman, Charly. *The Virtues of Abandon: An Anti-individualist History of the French Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- Collins, Brian. "Adding Substance to the Debate: Descartes on Freedom of the Will." *Essays in Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (2013): 218-238. <https://doi.org/10.7710/1526-0569.1473>.
- Coombes, Brad. "Maori and Environmental Justice: The Case of "Lake" Otara. In *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, edited by Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, 334-353. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013.
- Coombes, Brad, Jay T. Johnson, and Richard Howitt. "Indigenous geographies II: The aspirational spaces in postcolonial politics—reconciliation, belonging and social provision." *Progress in Human Geography* 37, no. 5 (2013): 691-700. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0309132513514723>.
- Corburn, Jason. "Urban Place and Health Equity: Critical Issues and Practices." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 14, no. 2 (2017): 117.
- Cordova, V. F. (Viola Faye). 1992. *The Concept of Monism in Navajo Thought*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, U.S.A.
- . *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V.F. Cordova*, edited by Katheen Dean Moore, Kurt Peters, and Amber Lacy. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007.

- Corntassel, Jeff, and Cheryl Bryce. "Practicing Sustainable Self-determination: Indigenous Approaches to Cultural Restoration and Revitalization." *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2011): 151-166.
- Coté, Charlotte. "'Indigenizing' Food Sovereignty. Revitalizing Indigenous Food Practices and Ecological Knowledges in Canada and the United States." *Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2016): 57. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h5030057>.
- Coulthard, Glen. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- Cruikshank, Julie. *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005.
- Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong nature." *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 7-28.
- Daigle, Michelle. "The Spectacle of Reconciliation: On (the) Unsettling Responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples in the Academy." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 0, no. 0 (2019a): 1-19.
- . "Tracing the Terrain of Indigenous Food Sovereignities." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 46, no. 2 (2019b): 297-315.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1324423>.
- Darwall, Stephen L. "Two Kinds of Respect." *Ethics* 88, no. 1 (1977): 36-49.
- Daschuk, James William. *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*. University of Regina Press, 2013.
- Deloria, Philip Joseph. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Deloria, Vine. "Review: Comfortable Fictions and the Struggle for Turf. Reviewed Work(s):

- The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies by James A. Clifton.” *American Indian Quarterly* 16, No. 3 (Summer, 1992): 397-410.
- <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1185800>.
- Descartes, Rene. “Discourse on Method” in Translated by Desmond Clarke, *Discourse on Method and Related Writings*, 6-54. London: Penguin Books, 1999 [1637].
- Durst, Douglas, and Elaine Coburn. “Who is Ready to Listen? Aboriginal Persons with Disabilities.” In *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom: Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence*, edited by Elaine Coburn, 88-110. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2015.
- Eagle Shield, Alayna, Michael M. Munson, and Timothy San Pedro. “Dreams, Healing, and Listening to Learn: Educational Movements in the Everyday.” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 54, no. 1 (2021): 39-49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1863881>.
- Elliot, Elicia. “Review: Tommy Orange’s stunning debut novel *There, There*.” *Globe and Mail*, June 5, 2018. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books/reviews/article-review-tommy-oranges-stunning-debut-novel-there-there/>.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967a.
- . *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translate by Farrington. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967b.
- Fedi, Angela, Letizia Pucci, Stefano Tartaglia, and Chiara Rollero. “Correlates of Work-Alienation and Positive Job Attitudes in High-and Low-status Workers.” *Career Development International* (2016).
- Figart, Deborah M., Ellen Mutari, and Marilyn Power. *Living Wages, Equal Wages: Gender and Labor Market Policies in the United States*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Finney, Trenea Gillespie, R. Zachary Finney, and Jeanne D. Maes. “Abusive Supervision and

- Work Alienation: An Exploratory Study.” *Journal of Organizational Psychology* 18, no. 1 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.33423/jop.v18i1.1318>.
- Folbre, Nancy. “Exploitation Comes Home: A Critique of the Marxian Theory of Family Labour.” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 6, no. 4 (1982): 317-329.
- Fortier, Craig, and Edward Hon-Sing Wong. “The Settler Colonialism of Social Work and the Social Work of Settler Colonialism.” *Settler Colonial Studies* 9, no. 4 (2019): 437-456.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1973.
- Friedel, Tracy L. “Looking for Learning in All the Wrong Places: Urban Native youths’ Cultured Response to Western-Oriented Place-Based Learning.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 24, no. 5 (2011): 531-546.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2011.600266>.
- Gazso, Amber, Stephanie Baker Collins, Tracy Smith-Carrier, and Carrie Smith. “The Generationing of Social Assistance Receipt and “Welfare Dependency” in Ontario, Canada.” *Social Problems* 67, no. 3 (2020): 585-601.
- Gertz, Nolen. *Nihilism*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2019.
- Global Oneness Project. “Max Harrison: Complete Interview,” YouTube video, 17:00, February 27, 2009a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06UpQQQ7cBM>.
- . “The Land Owns Us,” YouTube video, 6:14, February 26, 2009b.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0sWIVR1hXw&ab\\_channel=GlobalOnenessProject](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0sWIVR1hXw&ab_channel=GlobalOnenessProject).
- Graeber, David. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2014.
- . “Radical Alterity is Just Another Way of Saying “Reality” a Reply to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.” *HAU: journal of ethnographic theory* 5, no. 2 (2015): 1-41.

<https://doi.org/10.14318/hau5.2.003>.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers, 1987.

Harris, Cole. "How Did Colonialism Dispossession? Comments from an Edge of Empire." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (2004): 165-182.

—. *Making native space: Colonialism, resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*. Vancouver, UBC Press, 2002.

Harrison, Peter. "Descartes on Animals." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 42, no 167, 1992: 219-227. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2220217>.

Harvey, David. "The Future of the Commons." *Radical history review* 2011, no. 109 (2011): 101-107. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2010-017>.

Heaslip, Robyn. *From Xwel'temness towards practices of ethical being in Sto':lo Homelands: A Narrative Approach to Transforming Intergenerational White Settler Subjectivities* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada, 2017.

Hogan, Brandon. "Frantz Fanon's Engagement with Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 11, no. 8 (2018): 16-32.

Hokowhitu, Brendan. "Indigenous Existentialism and the Body." *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 101-118. <https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v15i2.2040>.

—. "Producing Indigeneity." In *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, edited by Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, 354-376. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013.

—. "Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States by Audra Simpson." *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 162-164.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977 [1807].

—. “Love.” In *Early Theological Writings*, edited by T.M. Knox, 302-308. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Houck, Oliver A. “Are Humans Part of Ecosystems?” *Envtl. L.* 28 (1998): 1-14.

Inwood, Michael. *Hegel*. London: Routledge, 1983.

Jerolmack, Colin. “How Pigeons Became Rats: The Cultural-Spatial Logic of problem Animals.” *Social problems* 55, no. 1 (2008): 72-94.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/sp.2008.55.1.72>.

Jolley, Nicholas. *Locke’s Touchy Subjects: Materialism and Immortality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Kagan, Shelly. *Death*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013.

King, Hayden. “The Problem with “Indigenous Peoples”; Re-considering International Indigenous Rights Activism.” In *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom: Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence*, edited by Elaine Coburn, 167-183. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2015.

Kolb, David. “Darwin Rocks Hegel: Does Nature Have a History?” *Hegel Bulletin* 29 no. 1-2 (2008): 97-117. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263523200000793>.

Kolers, Avery. “The Lockean Efficiency Argument and Aboriginal Land Rights.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 78, no. 3 (2000): 391-404.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00048400012349671>.

- Kovach, Margaret. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
- Kruks, Sonia. "Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Privilege." *Hypatia* 20, no. 1 (2005): 178-205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2005.tb00378.x>.
- Kulchyski, Peter. "Bush/Revolution: Theses on the Challenges that Gatherers and Hunters Pose to Dominant Structures." *Third World Quarterly* 41, no. 8 (2020): 1406-1420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1695115>.
- Kuokkanen, Rauna. *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011.
- Labaree, David F. "How Schools Came to Democratize Merit, Formalize Achievement, and Naturalize Privilege: The Case of the United States." *IJHE Bildungsgeschichte—International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 10, no. 1 (2020): 29-41. <https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00028312034001039>.
- Lampert, Khen. *Meritocratic Education and Social Worthlessness*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.
- LaRocque, Emma. "'Resist No Longer': Reflections on Resistance Writing and Teaching." In *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom: Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence*, edited by Elaine Coburn, 5-23. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2015.
- Laslett, Peter. "Introduction." In *Two Treatises of Government*, edited by Peter Laslett, 3-122. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 [1689].
- Lawrence, Bonita. *"Real" Indians: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2004.



- Leff, Arthur Allen. 1979. "Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law." *Duke Law Journal*, no 6: 1229-1249.
- Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*, edited by Peter Laslett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 [1689].
- Low, Margaret. *Practices of Sovereignty: Negotiated Agreements, Jurisdiction, and Well-being for Heiltsuk Nation*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2018.
- Lyon-Callo, Vincent. *Inequality, Poverty, and Neoliberal Governance: Activist Ethnography in the Homeless Sheltering Industry*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Luther, Erin. "Tales of Cruelty and Belonging: In Search of an Ethic for Urban Human-Wildlife Relations." *Animal Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (2013): 35-54.
- Macpherson, C.B., 1962, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Manson, Johnnie. "Workmanship and Relationships: Trading and Sharing Practices of Indigenous Peoples on Vancouver Island." *BC Studies: The British Columbia Quarterly* no. 200 (Winter 2018 / 2019): 215-239. <https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i200.191475>.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1986.
- Margolin, Leslie. "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: The Invention of White Privilege Pedagogy." *Cogent Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1053183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2015.1053183>.
- Markell, Patchen. *Bound by Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Marx, Karl. *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, edited by Dirk J. Stuart.

United States of America: International Publishers.

Maxwell, Joseph. *A Realist Approach for Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE

Publications, 2012.

Mauss, Marcel. *The gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London:

Routledge, 2002.

McCartney, Shelagh. "Re-thinking Housing: From physical manifestation of colonial planning policy to community-focused networks." *Urban Planning* 1, no. 4 (2016): 20-31.

<https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v1i4.737>.

McCaslin, Wanda D. *Justice as Healing: Indigenous Ways*. St. Paul: Living Justice Press,

2005.

McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." *Independent School*,

Winter, 31-36, 1988.

McIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame: University of Notre

Dame Press, 2007.

McMillan, A.D. *Since the Time of The Transformers: The Ancient Heritage of The Nuw-chah-*

*nulth, Dididaht, and Makah*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999.

Mehta, Neeta. "Mind-Body Dualism: A Critique from a Health Perspective." *Mens sana*

*monographs* 9, no. 1 (2011): 202. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4103%2F0973-1229.77436>.

Merskin, Debra. "Winnebagos, Cherokees, Apaches, and Dakotas: The Persistence of

Stereotyping of American Indians in American Advertising Brands." *Howard Journal of Communication* 12, no. 3 (2001): 159-169.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/106461701753210439>.

- Mihesuah, Devon A. *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities*. Atlanta: SCB Distributors, 2010.
- Miller, Daniel. *The Dialectics of Shopping*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- . “Introduction.” In *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, 1-50. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Million, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2013.
- . “There’s a River in Me: Theory from Life.” In, *Theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson & Audra Smith, 31-42. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Milloy, John, S. *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and The Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017.
- Mills Suzanne & Tyler McCreary, “Social Unionism, Partnership and Conflict: Union Engagement with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada,” in *Rethinking the Politics of Labour in Canada*, edited by Stephanie Ross & Larry Savage, 116-131. Halifax: Fernwood, 2012.
- Monahan, Michael J. “The Concept of Privilege: A Critical Appraisal.” *South African Journal of Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2014): 73-83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2014.892681>.
- . “White Privilege by Shannon Sullivan.” *Critical Philosophy of Race* 9, no. 1 (2021): 166-176.
- Musqueam. *Community Profile: Knowing Our Past, Exploring Our Future*. Vancouver: Ecoplan, 2007.
- Nadasdy, Paul. *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon*. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2003.

- . “Transcending the Debate Over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism.” *Ethnohistory* 52, no. 2 (2005): 291-331.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-52-2-291>.
- . “The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human–Animal Sociality.” *American ethnologist* 34, no. 1 (2007): 25-43.  
<https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2007.34.1.25>.
- Norris, Mary Jane, Stewart Clatworthy, and Evelyn Peters. “The Urbanization of Aboriginal Populations in Canada.” In *Indigenous in the city: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, edited by Chris Andersen and Evelyn J. Peters, 29-45. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013.
- Noss, Reed F. “Sustainability and Wilderness.” *Conservation Biology* 5, no. 1 (1991): 120-122.
- Olsen, Torjer A. “Privilege, Decentring and the Challenge of Being (Non-) Indigenous in the Study of Indigenous Issues.” *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 47, no. 2 (2018): 206-215. Doi:10.1017/jie.2017.16.
- Orange, Tommy. *There, There*. New York: McClelland and Steward, 2018.
- Paradies, Yin C. “Beyond Black and White: Essentialism, Hybridity and Indigeneity.” *Journal of Sociology* 42, no. 4 (2006): 355-367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042685406290993>.
- Pasternak, Shiri. “How Capitalism will Save Colonialism: The Privatization of Reserve Lands in Canada.” *Antipode* 47, no. 1 (2015): 179-196.
- Pateman, Carole. “Self-ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (2002): 20-53.
- Peters, Evelyn, and Chris Andersen. “Introduction.” In *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary*

- Identities and Cultural Innovation*, edited by Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, 1-20.  
Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013.
- Petriglieri, Gianpiero, Susan J. Ashford, and Amy Wrzesniewski. "Agony and Ecstasy in the Gig Economy: Cultivating Holding Environments for Precarious and Personalized Work Identities." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (2019): 124-170.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0001839218759646>.
- Pichault, François, and Tui McKeown. "Autonomy at Work in the Gig Economy: Analysing Work Status, Work Content and Working Conditions of Independent Professionals." *New Technology, Work and Employment* 34, no. 1 (2019): 59-72.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12132>.
- Pulkingham, Jane. "Social assistance in British Columbia." In *Welfare Reform in Canada: Provincial Social Assistance in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Daniel Beland and Pierre Marc Daigneault, 143-160. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.
- Raibmon, Paige. *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from The Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Richardson, Janice. "Feminism, Property in the Person and Concepts of Self." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 12, no. 1 (2010): 56-71.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2009.00393.x>.
- Richmond, Chantelle, Rachel Bezner Kerr, Hannah Neufeld, Marylynn Steckley, Kathi Wilson, and Brian Dokis. "Supporting food security for Indigenous families through the restoration of Indigenous foodways." *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien* 65, no. 1 (2021): 97-109.

- Rifkin, Mark. *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Riley, Angela R. “(Tribal) Sovereignty and Illiberalism.” *California Law Review* 95, no. 3 (2007): 799-848.
- Rollero, Chiara, Angela Fedi, and Norma De Piccoli. “Gender or Occupational Status: What Counts More for Well-being at Work?.” *Social Indicators Research* 128, no. 2 (2016): 467-480. DOI: 10.1007/s11205-015-1039-x.
- Rowlands, Michael. “A Materialist Approach to Materiality.” In *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, 72-87. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Sandel, Michael. *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009.
- . *The Tyranny of Merit: What’s Become of the Common Good?* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020.
- Sandlos, John. “From the Outside Looking In: Aesthetics, Politics, and Wildlife Conservation in the Canadian North.” *Environmental History* (2001): 6-31.
- Seagrave, S. Adam. “Self-Ownership vs. Divine Ownership: A Lockean Solution to a Liberal Democratic Dilemma.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 3 (2011): 710-723. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2010.00496.x>.
- Schreiber, Dorothee, and Dianne Newell. “Commentary: Negotiating TEK in BC Salmon Farming: Learning from Each Other or Managing Tradition and Eliminating Contention?” *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly* 150 (2006): 79-102.
- Shantz, Amanda, Kerstin Alfes, Catherine Bailey, and Emma Soane. “Drivers and Outcomes of

- Work Alienation: Reviving a Concept.” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 24, no. 4 (2015): 382-393. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1056492615573325>.
- Shapiro, Ian. *The Evolution of Rights in Liberal Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- . *Democratic Justice*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001.
- . *The Moral Foundations of Politics*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003.
- . *Politics Against Domination*. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Shapiro, Ian, and Alexander Wendt. “Chapter 1: Social Science and The Politics of Consent.” In *The Flight from Reality in The Human Sciences*, Ian Shapiro, 19-50. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Shildrick, Tracy, and Robert MacDonald. “Poverty Talk: How People Experiencing Poverty Deny Their Poverty and Why They Blame ‘The Poor’.” *The Sociological Review* 61, no. 2 (2013): 285-303. <https://doi.org/10.1111%2F1467-954X.12018>.
- Shuck, Brad, Joshua C. Collins, Tonette S. Rocco, and Raquel Diaz. “Deconstructing the Privilege and Power of Employee Engagement: Issues of Inequality for Management and Human Resource Development.” *Human Resource Development Review* 15, no. 2 (2016): 208-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1534484316643904>.
- Simplican, Stacey, C. The “Perverse Result” of Disability Rights: Deregulating Care Workers’ Labor Unions in the Supreme Court. *New Political Science*, 39, no 1, 2017: 1-16.
- Simpson, Audra. “On the Logic of Discernment.” *American Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2007): 479-491. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40068474>.
- . *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham and

- London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Simpson, Audra, and Andrea Smith. "Introduction." In *Theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, 1-30. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Simpson, Leanne R. "Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge." *American Indian Quarterly* (2004): 373-384.
- . *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence, and a New Re-Emergence*. Winnipeg: Arbiter Ring Publishing, 2011.
- Singer, Peter. *Hegel: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Skinner, Kelly, Rhona M. Hanning, Ellen Desjardins, and Leonard JS Tsuji. "Giving Voice to Food Insecurity in a Remote Indigenous Community in Subarctic Ontario, Canada: Traditional Ways, Ways to Cope, Ways Forward." *BMC Public Health* 13, no. 1 (2013): 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-427>.
- Smart, J.C. "Sensations and Brain Processes." *The Philosophical Review* 68, no. 2 (1959): 141-156. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2182164>.
- Smith, Steven B. *Political Philosophy*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012.
- . *Modernity and Its Discontents*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016.
- Snuneymuxw. *Reserves*. 2020a. <https://www.snuneymuxw.ca/nation/territory/reserves>
- . *Nation*. 2020b. <https://www.snuneymuxw.ca/>.
- . *Description*. 2020c. <https://www.snuneymuxw.ca/snuneymuxw>.
- Stone, Alison Laura. "Hegel and Colonialism." *Hegel Bulletin* (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2017.17>.



- Taiwo, Akin. "Privilege as a Moving Target." *Critical Social Work* 19, no. 2 (2018): 38-58.  
<https://doi.org/10.22329/csw.v19i2.5679>.
- Thornton, Stephen P. Solipsism and the Problem of Other Minds. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2004. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/solipsis/>.
- Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012).
- Tuck, Eve, and Marcia McKenzie. "Relational Validity and the "Where" of Inquiry: Place and Land in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 21, no. 7 (2015): 633-638.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1077800414563809>.
- Tully, James. *A Discourse on Property*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- . *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Tseshah First Nation. *Declaration of 'cišaa'aqsumin*. 2020.  
<https://tseshaht.com/governance/declaration-of-c%cc%93isaa%ca%94aqsumin/>.
- Villet, Charles. "Hegel and Fanon on the Question of Mutual Recognition: A Comparative Analysis." *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 7 (2011): 39-51.  
<https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics200325230>.
- Vogel, Steven. "The Nature of Artifacts." *Environmental Ethics* 25, no. 2 (2003): 149-168.
- Walker, Ryan, and Manuhia Barcham. "Indigenous-inclusive Citizenship: The City and Social Housing in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia." *Environment and Planning A* 42, no. 2 (2010): 314-331. <https://doi.org/10.1068%2Fa41314>.
- Walzer, Michael. *Interpretation and Social Criticism*. Cambridge: Harvard, 1987.

- Weinberg, Merlinda. "Professional Privilege, Ethics and Pedagogy." *Ethics and Social Welfare* 9, no. 3 (2015): 225-239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2015.1024152>.
- West, Paige, James Igoe, and Dan Brockington. "Parks and Peoples: The Social Impact of Protected Areas." *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 35 (2006): 251-277.
- Whiteman, Gail. "All My Relations: Understanding Perceptions of Justice and Conflict Between Companies and Indigenous peoples." *Organization Studies* 30, no. 1 (2009): 101-120.
- Williams, Jerry. "Thinking as Natural: Another Look at Human Exemptionalism." *Human Ecology Review* (2007): 130-139. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24707699>.
- Wilson, Kathi, and Evelyn J. Peters. "'You Can Make a Place for It': Remapping Urban First Nations Spaces of Identity." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23, no. 3 (2005): 395-413.
- Wilson, Nicole J. "'More precious than gold': Indigenous water governance in the context of Modern land claims in Yukon." Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2018.
- Wilson, Nicole J., Edda Mutter, Jody Inkster, and Terre Satterfield. "Community-Based Monitoring as the Practice of Indigenous Governance: A Case Study of Indigenous-led Water Quality Monitoring in the Yukon River Basin." *Journal of Environmental Management* 210 (2018): 290-298. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2018.01.020>.
- Wilson, Nicole J., and Jody Inkster. "Respecting Water: Indigenous Water Governance, Ontologies, and the Politics of Kinship on the Ground." *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 1, no. 4 (2018): 516-538. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848618789378>.
- Wilson, Shawn. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008.

Workman, Thomas. *If You're in My Way I'm Walking: The Assault on Working People Since 1970*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2009.

Yates, Julian S., Leila M. Harris, and Nicole J. Wilson. "Multiple Ontologies of Water: Politics, Conflict and Implications for Governance." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35, no. 5 (2017): 797-815. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0263775817700395>.

The White House Office of the Press Secretary. "Remarks by The President at a Campaign Event in Roanoke, Virginia." 2012. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/13/remarks-president-campaign-event-roanoke-virginia>.

—. "Remarks by The President on Economic Mobility." 2013. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/12/04/remarks-president-economic-mobility#:~:text=Now%2C%20the%20premise%20that%20we,depends%20on%20effort%20and%20merit>.

Zweig, Michael. *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.