International Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Culture, LLC

September 2019

European Scientific Institute, ESI

The content is peer-reviewed

September 2019 Edition Vol. 6, No. 3

ISSN 2518-3966

About The Journal

The International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture (LLC) is a peer-reviewed journal which accepts high quality research articles. It is a quarterly published international journal and is available to all researchers who are interested in publishing their scientific achievements. We welcome submissions focusing on theories, methods, and applications in Linguistics, Literature, and Culture.

In the past few years, academicians from over 40 countries around the globe have published their papers in the International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture.

Authors can publish their articles after a review by our editorial board. Our mission is to provide greater and faster flow of the newest scientific thought. LLC's role is to serve as a kind of bridge between researchers around the world. LLC is open to all researchers, regardless of their geographical origin, race, nationality, religion or gender, as long as they have an adequate scientific paper in the field of Linguistics, Literature and Culture.

LLC fully supports the open access and open science concept. The full content of the papers is available on LLC website and is free for usage.

LLC Team

Andrew Nelson
Managing Editor
Beth Garcia
Associate Editor

Table Of Contents:

Cultural Models for Negotiating Guyanese Identity as Illustrated in Jan Lowe Shinebourne's Chinese Women and Other Fiction

Abigail Persaud Cheddie
University of Guyana, Guyana

Doi: 10.19044/llc.v6no3a1 URL:http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/llc.v6no3a1

Abstract

Guyanese elementary level pupils are often introduced to the formal sociological study of their country with the expression 'the land of six peoples' – an axiom that can encourage defining self through separatism. Though this expression serves as a concrete Social Studies introduction to children who cannot yet think abstractly, adherence to this fixed and segmenting model as the main measure of conceptualising self and others can become limiting and problematic in a society that is already struggling with defining individual and national identities in a more fluid manner. In her fictional works collectively, Jan Lowe Shinebourne moves towards locating models more suited to the flexible negotiation of the Guyanese identity. To examine how she does so, this paper firstly considers some limitations of the multicultural model and shows how the author introduces her interrogation of this model in her first two novels and in her second novel introduces her exploration of the cross-cultural model, then experiments with this model more extensively in her third novel *Chinese Women*. Finally, the paper briefly highlights how Lowe Shinebourne explores the use of the intercultural model in her fourth novel and the transnational model in her collection of short stories. Ultimately, Lowe Shinebourne manages to elevate the validity of engaging with other models of understanding self, rather than remaining steadfast to the problematic old local multicultural lens.

Keywords: Shinebourne; Guyanese identity; cross-cultural; intercultural; transnational; transcultural.

Introduction

Jan Lowe Shinebourne's novel *Chinese Women* (2010) explores how race and race relations in Guyana heavily influence the formation of individual and national identities. This is a theme which the author begins examining in her earlier works *Timepiece* (1986) and *The Last English Plantation* (1988)

and which she addresses more comprehensively in *Chinese Women* and supports with her narrative in *The Last Ship* (2015). These novels, along with her collection of short stories – *The Godmother and Other Stories* (2004), can be seen as attempting a search for a suitable cultural model of negotiating identity on the Guyanese landscape. Taken as a body of work, these texts provide a framework for contemplating the limitations and suitability of cultural models used in mapping identity on the post-colonial Guyanese landscape.

In order to examine Lowe Shinebourne's search for this suitable model, this paper highlights how the author's body of work moves from illustrating more fixed to more fluid conceptualisations of identity. Firstly, the paper considers the complications and limitatons of using the multicultural model in a country like Guyana and shows how Lowe Shinebourne launches her search for an appropriate model through the characters in her first two novels *Timepiece* and *The Last English Plantation*. I then examine how she introduces the use of the cross-cultural model in *The Last English Plantation* through her protagonist June Lehall and how she continues applying this model more extensively through her protagonist Albert Aziz in *Chinese Women*. I show how in this novel she first problematises how post-colonial Guyanese identity is founded on a racialised model of understanding self, then offers a solution through Albert's negotiation of self. Finally, I briefly highlight how Lowe Shinebourne continues to move towards more fluid models by exploring the use of the intercultural model in her third novel *The Last Ship* and the transnational model in her collection of short stories *The Godmother and Other Stories*.

One of the earliest approaches to identity in elementary schools in Guyana is through a multicultural model – Guyana is described as 'the land of six peoples.' As a child, this was one of the first axioms that was supposed to help me understand who I was. Though theoretically, this model is used to heighten children's sensitivities to themselves and encourage appreciation for each other, in the same moment that it proposes attitudes of self-acceptance and celebration of others, it confounds and excludes. For one thing, it is a model that merges at its foundation, in unequally problematic parts, elements of history, race, ethnicity and other cultural elements. To begin with, the countable six groups offers a history lesson – a suggestion of the order of arrival and colonisation. Then, the group of six is a model that can be interpreted partly on race and often conflictingly partly on ethnicity. Frank Thomasson (2009) refers to the groups as *peoples*, listing them as "the indigenous Amerindians, Europeans, Africans, Portuguese (Madeirans), East Indians and Chinese" (p.18), while Winston McGowan (2018) classifies these six groups into five races: "Amerindians, Europeans" (being "…two main groups, Britons and Portuguese…"), "People of African descent, East Indians

and Chinese" (p.12). To young children, this 'land-of-six-peoples' model, which is sometimes casually re-worded as the 'land-of-six-races,' can create confusion and a synonymy between race and ethnicity and culture. Sometimes, for instance, in some schools' 'Culture Day' performances, pupils are assigned clothing traditionally associated with different racial groups and are expected to interpret these pieces of clothing such as saris and cheongsams, for example, as their 'culture.' Additionally, the word peoples connotes a sense of cultural diversity, implying that the plural condition of the country requires a kind of multiplex interpretation by its citizens, an interpretation which may often be processed in separatist manner.

Further, as children, we were encouraged to interpret ourselves and our friends as fitting into one of these groups of peoples. Yet, how were those who were mixed with two or more of these races or those who outwardly looked like one race but were mixed with another supposed to interpret themselves using this streamlined model? Or how ought those who looked like one race but assumed closer contact with another race or other races, or with no race in particular, to use this model to interpret themselves? Also, how might someone who interchanged his cultural perspective or ethnic understanding of himself depending on social context engage with the ambivalent multicultural model? Further, how might someone processing and exchanging a variety of dynamic influences define himself? Lowe Shinebourne in an interview with Annie-Marie Lee-Loy (2008) shares similar personal experiences growing up in Guyana: "I look Chinese but in fact, my ethnic ancestry is Chinese and Indian" (p.38). In spite of her phenotype, she reflects: "I found it difficult to identify as Chinese since my father's Chinese relatives did not accept us as Chinese" (p.40). She elaborates: "Because of … intense divided loyalties in my family, and my mother's racial way of interpreting them, I think I felt a pressure to choose to identify with my Indian or Chinese side, and found it much easier to identify with the Indian side" (p.40). Lowe Shinebourne's own description of how elements of race, phenotype and social expectations acted upon her identity formation and became an interrogation of her sense of self suggests that the rigid multicultural model cannot suffice to resolve more complex issues in mapping Guyanese identity – individual or national.

Melanie Pooch (2016) emphasises that "Multiculturalism tends to entail clear-defined and differing cultures within one society and thus, the prefix 'multi' can create borders, boundaries, and categorizations of different cultures…. [Multiculturalism focuses] on the division of the different cultures…" (p.50). Similarly, Jennifer L. Eagan (2015), bringing the three terms race, ethnicity and culture together, also highlights that multiculturalism is "the view that cultures, races, and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgement of their differences within a dominant political culture" (para.1). In the case of Guyana, the

dominant culture would have been the (ex)coloniser's British influence on the landscape, impacting systems such as law, education, economics, religion and language. Therefore, the use of a multicultural model, though useful in some ways, can become problematic, for as Eagan points out: "There is the question of which cultures will be recognized. Some theorists have worried that multiculturalism can lead to a competition between cultural groups all vying for recognition and that this will further reinforce the dominance of the dominant culture" (para.7). Thus, as Pooch clearly points out that "The crisis of the individual is frequently intensified in a multicultural context" (p.41) and so it is evident that Lowe Shinebourne and her mother through fixed cultural conceptualisations appear to have struggled to negotiate their individual racial and ethnic identities and their ongoing constructions of cultural identity birthed by the uneven forces of dominance on their colonial landscape. They needed more flexible models and terminologies suited to their conditions, rather than the one modelled after the colonial regime. Max Fisher (2013) in studying the Harvard Institute for Economic Research's map on world ethnic diversity (2002) remarks on the ethnic homogeneity of European countries stating that: "A number of now-global ideas about the nation-state, about national identity as tied to ethnicity and about nationalism itself originally came from Europe….in most of Europe, ethnicity and nationality are pretty close to the same thing" (para.11). Thus, there is a high probability that Guyana has struggled with defining a more fluid national identity having focused on the rigid 'land of six peoples' model, which was clearly based on a combination of race and ethnicity, with hopes that this basis would seamlessly translate into national identity. Fifty plus years after independence, Guyana still struggles with selecting an approach fitted to its condition, perhaps because the impetus for the multicultural approach originated from an ethnically homogenous ideology. On Guyana's post-colonial landscape, the equation that racial and/or ethnic groups equals national identity cannot suffice. Thus, it is crucial to match suitable models and terminologies to the relevant cultural situations.

In his introduction to Fernando Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Bronislaw Malinowski (1940) suggests that the terminologies which we use to understand ourselves culturally can either complicate or liberate our existence:

> There is probably nothing more misleading in scientific work than the problem of terminology… of finding the expression that fits the facts and thus becomes a useful instrument of thought instead of a barrier to understanding. It is evident that quarreling over mere words is but a waste of time; what is not quite so apparent is…when we adopt a term whose component elements or basic meaning contains certain false or misleading semantic implications from which we cannot free

ourselves….

By highlighting how the use of a term such as acculturation creates complications in the power dynamics of peoples versus the use of Ortiz's coined term transculturation which implies more mutually balanced dynamics between peoples, Malinowski illustrates the need to be more meticulous with our choice of terminology in mapping identity.

Alluding to Cuba's history of the arrival of peoples, Ortiz in his chapter "On the Social Phenomenon of 'Transculturation' and Its Importance in Cuba" proposes that the term transculturation implies an exchange of cultural influences between and among peoples and ultimately the creation of a new culture, unique on its own, which Malinowski in his introduction acknowledges as:

> ...a process in which both parts of the equation are modified, a process from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex, a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of traits, nor even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, original and independent. [It is]… an exchange between two cultures, both of them active, both contributing their share, and both co-operating to bring about a new reality of civilization.

Guyana, that shares some similar aspects of arrival and contact of cultures as Cuba, has undoubtedly experienced and is experiencing transculturation(s), so that now the landscape is and continues to be its own unique 'culture.' In practice, to use Ortiz's term and Malinowski's interpretation of it, transculturations have already occurred and are occuring in Guyana. Therefore, to try and separate racial and/or ethnic groups into cultures in theory is misdirected. Further to try and perceive identity in a separatist manner in theory is even more complicated, when in practice it in fact is not. Against such a conceptualisation, the use of the multicultural model as presented in the 'land-of-six-peoples' axiom becomes confounding and inadequate in understanding self. It becomes a terminology that limits Guyanese individual and national identities.

What Lowe Shinebourne and her mother needed instead in that moment of identity struggle was a different measure of conceptualising identity, the kind of measure put forth by Stuart Hall (1989): "Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished historical fact...we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within not outside, representation" (p.68). This is more evident now in the 21st century for as Pooch says:

> Culture itself is a construct that aims at describing ways of life, customs and traditions as well as further similarities of individuals or groups. Shared language and heritage usually define the common ground for a specific cultural group. The acceleration of cultural flows,

> the interconnectedness of cultures, and the porosity of borders, however, is highlighted and furthered in the age of globalization.(p.38)

Further, as Miquel Rodrigo-Alsina and Pilar Medina-Bravo (2016) explain of globalization and the multicultural model: "…although an increase in information about cultures increases visibility, it does not imply greater interaction between peoples" (para.14). Therefore, it does not follow naturally that a multicultural model is best suited to a multicultural society. Neither, does the use of a multicultural model ensure a measure of contact between peoples, a contact that is ironically already exisiting in practice.

Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) term contact zone seems useful in evaluating the effectiveness of the cultural models interrogated and explored in Jan Lowe Shinebourne's fiction. Pratt explains that the use of the term contact zone can "…refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (p.34). In her speech, "Arts of the Contact Zone," Pratt gives the example of how her young son's use of baseball cards allowed him to experience the world in areas such as literacy, mathematics, history, geography and sociology. With Pratt's example and definition, I would infer that when each contact zone is, or the interactions in that contact zone are, realised or maximised, the possibility of awareness, or in the case of this essay, the possibility of mapping self in a more holistic and less separatist manner, increases. If Ortiz's proposition that transculturations are constantly in motion from the moment of contact and thereafter, then a contact zone has already been inadvertently established in all transculturations. Therefore, the multicultural model popular in Guyanese elementary schools raises the question of why should the population operate under the assumption that each group of peoples retains a separate culture. It appears possible for transculturations to occur even while each of the six groups keeps itself theoretically distinct; this illusion of distinctness then leads in turn to the group enacting and enforcing the practice of individual cultures when in reality, like the variations in Lowe Shinebourne's and her mother's individual experiences, the degree of transculturations varies and is uneven from case to case, but nevertheless present.

I suggest then that since neither individual nor national identity is fixed, but since the use of the multicultural model is so deep-seated in Guyana, that the population could find the study of Lowe Shinebourne's explorations of and gradual movement from the more fixed multicultural model towards more fluid models of mapping cultural identity, implementable. In this paper, I employ Pratt's term contact zone to approximate the amount of contact and (ex)change that each cultural model explored in Lowe Shinebourne's fiction yields. I approximate the yields on the premise that operations within contact

zones must be consciously maximised before any significant (ex)change can be effected.

Lowe Shinebourne's first novel *Timepiece*, set in the 1960s, is not timid in addressing the impact of the separatist multicultural model on the Guyanese youth. The protagonist Sandra Yansen and her friend Son Young broach the topic of how others' treatment of your race could confound your identity altogether: "Sandra asked, 'Why did it hurt when they called you a Buck [derogatory term for Amerindian]?'" and Son replies, "'I think it made me feel confused, not sure who I was'" (p.168). Son's experience of identity is confounded by whoever he feels himself to be versus the stock identity his society expects him to have. If taken as the author's introductory novel on the study of identity and race in Guyana, *Timepiece* launches the exploration of models for negotiating the complexities of a Guyanese identity through Sandra's reflection that "Race is the worst problem in Guiana. It's a xenophobic country, maybe because we have so many races and we don't have a philosophy to accommodate all of us" (p.169). Sandra's analysis interrogates the multicultural model and opens avenues for selecting other models by allowing the reader to ask: How can *one* philosophy be used in a society that is not homogenous? What kind of model to negotiate identity can possibly be employed in a country that not only conceives of itself as multiracial but simultaneously carries the other slippery labels multiethnic and multicultural as well? Further, how can a clearly defined yet flexible approach be employed to both accept and challenge the ambivalent multicultural perspective and accommodate more dynamic cross-cultural, intercultural and transnational measures of mapping the Guyanese cultural identity in the 21st century?

In her second novel *The Last English Plantation*, Lowe Shinebourne extends her thesis one step further by showing through the character Lucille's ravings some of the early complications in the composition of the Guyanese identity: "This is the West Indies, not India, not Africa, not China, the West Indies! We are British" (p.124). Here, Lucille represents a population that grapples with the apparent contradictions of its identity. By choosing to identify with only the culture that dominated through regime, Lucille sees herself and Guyana as having a rigid identity. By denying racial heritage, newer ethnic alliances and the constantly changing cultural landscape, Lucille operates with a model that is inadequate for her condition as it has potential to encourage war within herself and her circles. In Lucille's case, the operations in the contact zone with herself and British culture are maximised but are ignored or minimised in the other contact zones. Similarly, Son Young's society imposes a theoretical separation of contact zones and isolates him forcefully to identify only with his 'racial group,' something which he himself does not do.

To address these complications, Lowe Shinebourne advances her thesis again by allowing her minor characters Mrs. and Mr. Searwar in *The Last English Plantation* to oppose views like Lucille's. Mrs. Searwar says that "…there was a lot of racial misunderstanding in the country, but education would solve the problem…the Caribbean was a multiracial place, [and] it was important to respect each other's cultures" (p.117), while Mr. Searwar, contrary to Lucille's interpretation of herself, situates himself with an identity synonymous with his new post-colonial national state: "I am Guianese, not British like some people say they are, but Guianese" (p.148). Mrs. and Mr. Searwar's approaches open avenues for more questioning: what it means to be Guyanese and what models can be successfully used in a multiethnic society to construct healthier individual and national identities.

As such, apart from the controversial multicultural model, there are other models that can be employed in the negotiation of self, such as the cross-cultural model which "deals with the comparison of different cultures…. differences are understood and acknowledged, and can bring about individual change..."; however, it should be noted that this model does not allow for "...collective transformations. [As] In cross-cultural societies, one culture is often considered 'the norm' and all other cultures are compared or contrasted to the dominant culture" (Schriefer, 2016, para.3). Lowe Shinebourne in her gradual move to conceptualise identities more fluidly, attempts the application of cross-cultural exchanges in *The Last English Plantation* and in her third novel, *Chinese Women*.

In *The Last English Plantation,* Lowe Shinebourne applies the use of a cross-cultural approach to negotiate the relationship between the (ex)coloniser and the (ex)colonised. In negotiating the coloniser's past role on the Guyanese landscape, she shows that it is not as straightforward as ascribing all the negative qualities of humanity to just one race and all the positive qualities to another. Thus, the protagonist June Lehall in *The Last English Plantation* cannot process why she was "…feeling sorry for the white girls." The binary codes in play cause her to contemplate that there must be "…a traitor somewhere inside her to make her feel sorry for them" (p.31). But June's inclinations to pity the girls show a decolonising process in which the ex-colonised subject is neither in pursuit of oppressing the former oppressor nor relinquishing human power to retain the role of victim. Instead, she claims equal humanity by feeling sorry for who needs feeling sorry for, regardless of who they are. The older construction of oppressor-victim is challenged by June and so June becomes an example of attempting the use of a cross-cultural model by trying to understand what the overseer's daughters Sarah and Annie Beardsley's experience might be like.

In like manner, the use of the cross-cultural model is applied more in depth in *Chinese Women*, the novel which appears to have the first extensive

exploration of an individual seeking to understand self by maximising operations in a contact zone with another group other than the coloniser's group and it is therefore the novel on which I will linger for a while.

Using a cause-effect paradigm, Lowe Shinebourne problematises the formation of pre-independent Guyanese identity. She uses her protagonist Albert Aziz to trace how colonisation resulted in a racialised construction of relationship between the colonised and coloniser, a model that was then transferred to negotiate other relationships among the various groups of people in the country. She then proposes a solution by allowing Albert to internalise the inadequacy of this old transaction and to attempt the use of a cross-cultural perspective in the mapping of his identity.

To begin with, from Albert's perspective, the coloniser is the image of all things negative but at the same time the force and framework through which he weaves his identity. Pooch in synthesising the ideas of Beise (2002), Bhabha (1994), Young (1995) and Roh-Spaulding (2002), explains such a paradox: "The colonizer-colonized relationship goes beyond dependence. It is of interdependence and mutual influence, changing both of the cultural identities. Thus, neither side of the discourse is left untouched. This influence, however, is unbalanced due to the colonizer's power" (p. 44). These exact dynamics are seen in Albert's paradoxical relationship with the Europeans. On describing the starvation, poverty and nightmares in pre-independent Guyana, he says that "To grow up on a sugar estate in British Guiana when I did, at the height of British colonialism … made you nervous and anxious" (p.38) and that "…very little divided beast and men" (p.34). Further, he emphasises the spectator-like identity of the (ex)colonised in the white man's world, thereby identifying race as the determining factor in zombifying and excluding them from the benefits enjoyed by the coloniser: "The worst fate of the Black slave or the East Indian coolie was to be a spectator of the white man's lifestyle, knowing it was unattainable, knowing that he was forever orphaned from the white man's high standard of living, his wealth, property, luxuries, and his women" (pp.30-31).

Yet, after he falls out of a tree badly injuring himself, Albert's recovery takes place at the hands of an English doctor: "Painstakingly, slowly, Dr. Webster reset my joints and ligaments until they grew back and I became whole…" (p.15). Dr. Webster recreates Albert from nothing when Albert's own countrymen, descendants of labourers like himself, would not care for him. In isolation, Dr. Webster's medical treatment for Albert can be seen as remarkable, and yet, it is the power dynamics and how they affect Albert that calls this relationship into question. It is the kind of power dynamics to which Hall refers when he says that:

> …Europe was a case of that which is endlessly speaking – and endlessly speaking *us* [the Caribbean]. The European presence thus

> interrupts the innocence of the whole discourse of 'difference' in the Caribbean by introducing the question of power. 'Europe' belongs irrevocably to the question of power, to the lines of force and consent, to the pole of the *dominant* in Caribbean culture. (76)

As a result of Dr. Webster's interruption, Albert's healing process is not an empowering community venture on the part of his family and countrymen, but is a cold scientific interdependence through which he is disempowered as he is studied and catalogued like a subject: "…I was his little miracle…. He wrote papers about me and published them in England. He showed me the medical journals they appeared in" (p.15). In the same breath that Dr. Webster treats Albert "like a son" (p.15), he treats him like a lab rat. This leads to Albert continuing to map his identity based on race, seeing himself only as: "…this dark brown Indian teenager with the disjointed arms and legs, who moved like a robot, a clockwork creature that was once broken and had to be pieced together again by a white doctor who set his springs and screws again, who wound me up with a key and let me out so I could wind my way around his world" (p.31) – a world in which the ex-colonised are powerless to choose new models of negotiating self.

The multicultural model therefore maintains the separation of groups through the 'question of power.' As a result of experiences such as these, the ex-colonised retain the binary conceptualisation of groups of people: coloniser-colonised, powerful-subjected. By transferring the structures they used to negotiate their colonial relationships, these groups begin to pit their racial differences against each other, thereby constructing the country's foundational pre-independent identity through a framework of race instead of through the unified purpose of living in a new homeland. For instance, Albert remarks of the Africans and East Indians: "…they guarded their separate lives, jealously resenting and wishing the worst on each other" (p.12). Their experiences force them to believe that race was the sole factor in taking and losing power and therefore in determining their identities and survival. Their initial contact zones with the coloniser are so impacting that they interrupt the 'innocence' of any unified purpose that the groups might have and in turn encourages continued segregation through assumption of invented power. Through Albert's experiences, we see how race-relations born out of an inadequate multicultural conceptualisation of self, intersect with other variables such as colourism, education, religion and family life and impact identity formation negatively.

Colourism fragments the Guyanese society: "The British ruled at the top, so their white skin became a status symbol. They enslaved the brown Indian and Black African. The lighter your skin colour, the higher your status, the darker, the lower. The Portuguese also came to the country to work as labourers …but because their skin was white, they became second in power to

the British" (p.11). In the example given, the Portuguese are equal to the other racial groups as labourers, but they were 'more equal' than anyone else only because of their skin colour. Following in this colonialist construction of identity, the 'hierarchy' of skin colour positioned the mixed 'educated' group as second on the ladder and then finally the rest of the population depending on the shades of their complexion. Pre-independent Guyanese identity was therefore constructed on "codes of racial snobbery and prejudice" (p.11), inherited, as Albert says, by "… the society [that] the British [had] created for us to live in, a racist society" (p.11).

Moreover, religion, intersecting with the variables of racism and classism, acts as another means of taking power by exclusion. These variables operate in Albert's futile struggle for visibility where persons are always putting others beneath themselves: his family put their newly acquired 'English' lifestyle above the Blacks, while the Hindus in turn put their religion above the Muslims – "They wanted to ensure they were not at the bottom of the pile in Guiana…so they put us, their fellow Indians, in that position instead" (p.14) – referring to them as Fulamen, "after the African Muslim Fulani tribe" (p.10), thereby creating a racial lens through which to interpret religion in order to continue the created differentiations of race and power.

Racial coding also affects the supposedly safe family unit. Lowe Shinebourne shows how the aspiration to imitate the white upper class eventually fragments the family unit. Albert sees their move to Berbice as choosing status to elevate the 'lowliness' of their 'racial position' at the cost of their familial bonds; while lying in the hospital in Georgetown, he begs them not to move to Berbice which is miles away, but "…they laughed and said Berbice was 'the land of milk and honey', and they had to go" (p.9). This move from Enmore, where they had been "dirt poor" (p.9), appears as their ticket out of the bracket of 'colonised low class' to 'freed upper class': "At fifty [years old], to be offered a job in Berbice in senior management, to become an overseer among the expatriate white overseers, was to reach the very top. It elevated him [Albert's father] beyond the dreams of most Indian men in the colony" (p.9). Not accepted by the Hindu Indians, and not aligned with the Africans who "had long escaped the sugar plantation and…joined the middle class by becoming Christian and educated…" (p.10), the Azizes feel alienated by either race, education or religion, and so when the opportunity for an overseer's position appears, the Azizes lose no time in assuming 'white personas' with which to feel superior to the others who had subjugated them. Most devastatingly to a young boy, when his father's promotion appears to finally confront the variables that had marked their alienation, Albert's worth in his family is radically reduced and he is deserted in favour of the pursuit of the new status. In assuming the 'qualities' once ascribed to a 'superior race,' the Aziz family turn themselves upon themselves, proving once again that

racial codes control even the family unit. Among other things, Mr. Aziz destroys his family by transferring the corporal punishment and violence of the plantations to his daughters who shriek and cry at being whipped and who "blubbered inhumanly in their sleep" (p.19). No liberation can come for Albert from within his own family.

In addition, Lowe Shinebourne does not exempt her protagonist from being prejudiced, as on his release from the hospital, he arrives at his new house in Berbice and admits that he "looked forward to living like a little white man" (p.17). It seems as if the only way he thinks he can free himself is by mimicking the oppressor's actions of subverting others by taking power. Albert engages in mimicry, described by Pooch as "…an act of replication or camouflage in which the colonized unconsciously tries to become like the colonizer" (p.44), and as a boy, he comes into feelings of pride and selfhood mostly through racial codes, thereby suggesting that identity, power and racial coding are synonymous in his society. In addition, he tries to code himself as superior through racial and slanderous slur by saying things like "Everyone knows Englishmen are all homosexuals" (p.15), thereby deflecting feelings of inferiority from himself onto the Englishmen and directly attacking the image of what Pooch refers to as "the putatively universal" that is the "white, male, and heterosexual" (p.45). It is difficult for Albert to ever be free from the prejudice of the prejudiced society that created him.

Ultimately, for Albert, there seems to be no liberation that can come from his own racial group, his own colour or class, his own family or even himself, or from the whites or the Hindus or the Africans who are embroiled much too closely in the race, colour, class or religious war with each other – and therefore with him, especially if the variables continue to operate in the same manner constantly. To manage these complications, he must look outside of his current framework for a psychologically healthier and more holistic solution to his condition. Yet, liberation would still have to come from within the confines of his country's own history and social dynamics.

In Albert's case, his salvation comes from his cross-cultural experiences with the Yhips and the two eponymous Chinese women – Anne Carrera and Alice Wong who seem to be the redemptive map through which he eventually chooses to read his life. Albert's turning to them allows him to soothe his anguish and find some salvation in a space that is to a greater degree, more neutral than the other groups to which he had been exposed, for as he says: "The Chinese were not implicated in the racial politics…this gave Alice a neutrality…" (p.53).

Against the backdrop of neutrality provided through the Guyanese Chinese that he knows, Albert sees the Yhips and their shop as a nurturing model, separate from the human degradation of the plantations: "There was only ever one thing that gave me relief from my fear and terror of East Indian

poverty – the Yhips' shop, or as people called it, the 'Chinee shop'" (p.38). Human restoration comes to him as he marvels at how Mrs. Yhip prepares the sandwiches "almost lovingly" (pp.39-40) and how the Yhips nurse the less fortunate and even hand out food for free: "I never saw the Yhips receive thanks or praise for their hospitality. People on the estate were not accustomed to human decency and acts of kindness…", instead they were conditioned and accustomed to "racial abuse and cruelty" (p.40). In childhood, and later in adulthood, where the model to which he is initially exposed falls short, Albert is unafraid to go in search of another model: in the Yhips' shop he says: "…those scents had a sedative effect on me. They always have done, and still do. The effect of Chinese people and their food and culture was always to give me a sense of peace – it was the best medicine for me" (pp.40-41). Albert sees that his identity could be constructed based on another model than that to which he had been exposed. By observing the stark contrast between the dislodgement of self that comes from racism and the brute conditions of plantation life versus the harmonious wholeness within himself that comes from merely watching the Yhips weave their lives in the community, he discovers a psychologically healthy mode of human sustenance. The Yhips bring to life and nurture his affective dimensions, so much so that he emphasizes more than once: "It was not only the delicious smells and sight of food we spectators went to the shop for, but also to see the gestures of kindness and mercy the Yhips performed. Growing up on a sugar estate, it was the only civilized behaviour I ever knew" (p.41). The Yhips fill a maternal role on the harsh plantation landscape at a time when Albert's affective side feels like an orphaned child. The Yhips' shop physically embodies a more accommodating structure for Albert's unstable identity, providing human contact that defies the old racial framework.

Similarly, in Anne Carrera's free movements and easy laughter with her own sons, a manner that contrasts his mother's trapped identity in which she merely gossips and racially profiles others, Albert attempts, though unsuccessfully, a rebirth, in which he ventures onto the Carrera's lawns and falls and lies like a "foetus" (p.23). By reaching out for Anne to take his arm and save him, he chooses a newer cultural model of mapping self. Though his mother arrives to wrench him away from any kind of cultural rebirth that his contact zone with Anne might offer, it is important that Albert can see in someone else's life the possibility of a model of rebirth for his own life. In the same way, Albert seeks out Alice Wong for the intimacy of her friendship and the community of her family. He details: "My friendship with Alice became the most important thing in my life….and [I] concluded love was the warm feeling of security, comfort and satisfaction I felt in her home, in the presence of her family when the air was full of the scent of cakes baking in the oven, and Chinese food being cooked in the kitchen" (p.51). Though the Wongs

eventually banish him from their home because of his race, even as they too inherit the prejudices of their society, Albert takes with him for the rest of his life the calming effect of sitting in the Wong home and pretending that he could assimilate into the wholesome effects of their 'Chinese culture.'

Albert consciously crosses over into a contact zone where he can see the Chinese as set apart from the brutality of the colonial regime, as being allowed to keep their humanity. It is their humanity that he sees as the solution to his own race, colour, class, religion, even health problems. What he cannot access in his own racial and ethnic groups or in the groups more obviously at open war against him, he unabashedly tries to access in another group. It is important to note however, that the text does not suggest that Albert's redemption miraculously comes from the Chinese heritage itself as an isolated variable, as Albert clarifies: "Anne Carrera's ethnicity was of no real interest to me. It thrilled me to watch her play with her sons and sent something like an electric charge through me that made me feel strong" (p.27). Albert is not necessarily opposed to or fanatically devoted to any one racial group or cultural lifestyle itself, rather, he manages to find salvation through crossing into a zone where he can attempt a fusion of himself with others' kinder qualities.

In both of Lowe Shinebourne's cross-cultural explorations – June's from *The Last English Plantation* and Albert's from *Chinese Women*, the protagonists are willing to open themselves to understanding and experiencing another group's reality. The result in June's case is to freely feel empathy for the other group, thereby making herself more emotionally liberated, rather than having her affective dimension dictated by the old social norms of regarding the 'coloniser' only in a negative light. In Albert's case, by opening his consciousness to another group, he allows himself to immerse in and learn positive elements of their lifestyle. Altogether, through his insistent search for another way of interpreting himself outside of the old racial framework, Albert manages to explore a cross-cultural model that could help him negotiate his identity. Firstly, he allows the Yhips to plant the seed of sharing their resources with the rest of society. By learning from them, he unlearns some of the harsh codes of social interaction that he adapted from the relationship with the coloniser and he plants ideas of cultural tolerance and human exchange. Through the Chinese that he knows, he realises that his usual measures of viewing himself can be readapted against another cultural approach – that of provision, sustenance and freeness, as opposed to skin colour, religion or status. However, Schriefer's conclusion that one complication of this cross-cultural model is that the dominant group will fail to fully accommodate the individual seeking and experiencing change turns out to be accurate. While both June and Albert experience individual change, they are still ultimately excluded from the worldview of the contextually dominant group and there

are no major group transformations on either side, only individual transformations. In short, though the cross-cultural model shows that the conscious cross over into contact zones is greater and the individual impact more observable than the multicultural model, the cross-cultural model still assumes the position of fixed groups that the individual must seek out at his own risk or reward.

Therefore, where this model is found inadequate, there is another option, that of the intercultural model. Of the intercultural model, Rodrigo-Alsina and Medina-Bravo explain:

> Whereas multiculturalism focuses on the coexistence of cultures, the focus of interculturalism is cohabitation, which implies interrelationship and, therefore, potential conflict. In multiculturalism, territory is the element that differentiates the self from others. In contrast, in interculturalism, cultures are not directly linked to a territorial identity.... (para. 20)

In her fourth novel, *The Last Ship*, Lowe Shinebourne advances her movement towards the use of more fluid models yet again through one of her main characters, Susan Leo who sees her experiences through an intercultural lens. The memorable image of Susan's entrance is symbolic of her success in boldly defying the conventional model of society's coded expectations for an individual's physical appearance: "Susan Leo looked Chinese but she was dressed like an East Indian; she was wearing the short white organza ornhi, that Indian women wore on formal occasions, along with a nose ring, gold bangles, earrings and necklaces" (p.18). Susan succeeds in using a model that allows her the freedom of choice to weave her life into any cultural space on her landscape of residence. In her case, she adapts a cultural perspective that in her interpretation better suits her daily lifestyle and she manages to be accepted and integrated into another group's 'codes.' In this instance, Susan allows herself to become so flexible so that her racial heritage or the codes accompanying the heritage are not the only defining characteristics of her identity. She redefines her identity despite the codes fixed for her, weaving in and out of any available culture suited to who she chooses to become on her new landscape.

However, the use of such a model, as with most models, opens itself to further interrogation and criticism. In such a model, "in a situation of intercultural dialogue, one must consider what aspect of identity to emphasize; in other words, one must choose what aspect of identity will interact with the other" (Rodrigo-Alsina and Medina-Bravo, 2016, para.23). Pitfalls such as being accused of cultural appropriation, or self-racism and experiencing further invisibility or rejection are also possible. As Rodrigo-Alsina and Medina-Bravo remark:

> The main problem [of inter-culturalism] is not the identity I

> attribute to myself, but whether I have enough influence to ensure that that identity is recognized by others. Here, questions such as the following arise. In what category does the other place me? Will they relate to me from a category alien to my identity, but which they still attribute to me and from which they will relate to and evaluate me? (para.24)

Ultimately the question remains whose group image would be more preferred and emerge dominant and does this dominance not contradict the very purpose of intercultural exchanges? So though in using this model the operations in the contact zone are more consciously chosen and visibly enacted, more so than both the multicultural and cross-cultural experiences, there still remains the stigma that someone is operating in a cultural space that is not theoretically originally meant to be his and he is therefore judged positively or negatively by others for operating within that space.

Finally, in her collection of short stories – *The Godmother and Other Stories*, Lowe Shinebourne explores the transnational model of mapping self as many of her characters are Guyanese emigrants seeking to negotiate their identities across national borders. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1995) define transnational migration as the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (p. 48). The character Sylvia in "Hopscotch," for instance, says that "Suffolk [England] is flat like Guyana" (p.60); the eponymous Godmother prepares a Guyanese meal in her cold English kitchen as memories of the land of her birth are superimposed on the steam from the pot on her new landscape of residence; the protagonist of "London and New York" never fails to search for the foods from her homeland regardless of which landscape she is in – the English landscape as a resident, or the American landscape as a tourist. The protagonists in many of the stories constantly negotiate themselves back and forth across national, geographic and cultural borders with the criss-crossing and layering of influences from both spaces.

In these examples of the transnational model, cultural groupings often visibly separate themselves from race and are attached to notions of nationalism instead. This is evident when a migrant character's race and or ethnicity is not foregrounded; rather their 'Guyaneseness,' whatever it is meant to be, is foregrounded. As a result of this, the new cultures compared are Guyanese 'culture' and British or American 'culture' or wherever the migrant land might be. In this model, all of the afore-mentioned 'six' groups of peoples often appear to become one unit and from the diaspora therefore constitute one contact zone – home. In such cases, it is easier to find that racial or class tensions otherwise emphasised at 'home' can become collapsed or minimised when engaging with someone from home away from home.

In summary then, taken as a body of work, Lowe Shinebourne's novels in their chronological order of publication, along with her collection of short stories progressively attempt to illustrate the possibilities of using alternative models for mapping identity. In her first two novels, Lowe Shinebourne carefully uses her space to problematise the implications of race and race relations in Guyana, while in her second two novels she builds on the framework of the first two, this time moving towards more fluid solutions. Her pieces demonstrate the necessity of closely examining the individual's or the population's condition, becoming aware of the various cultural models that can be used to negotiate identity in that condition and choosing the model best suited to the individual or group's condition in a particular context.

Through Sandra, Son Young, Lucille and the Searwars, it becomes easier to see that adherence to the fixed and segmenting nature of the multicultural model can become limiting and problematic in a society that is already struggling with defining individual and national identities in a more fluid manner. With June and Albert, the author crosses into theoretically forbidden contact zones, where June tries to make meaning of her own life by feeling empathy for the overseer's children, and Albert, in refusing to know his 'limits' in childhood crosses over into another 'culture' where he boldly seeks the benefits of cross-culturalism by coveting the memory of the Yhips' shop, reaching out to Anne Carrera and seeking out Alice's company. Then through Susan Leo, the author illustrates the merits of cultural choice and forces us to contemplate ways in which Guyanese have avoided conscious use of the intercultural approach. Finally, through characters like Sylvia and the Godmother and others a whole world of transnational interplay opens up to the reader. Altogether, the relatable struggles of these characters as they are studied chronologically can allow the local reader to become open minded enough so as to deviate from his elementary level curriculum.

In selecting a suitable model for negotiating the self, the ultimate goal ought to be "…to find deeper, more sensitive ways of seeing ourselves and each other, as human beings, souls with real, similar emotional and spiritual needs, not just racialised brute species" as Lowe Shinebourne says in her interview with Annie-Marie Lee-Loy (2008, p.44), even as the individual confronts and facilitates whatever 'contradictions' and complications he meets, which he inevitably will. Annie-Marie Lee-Loy (2009), for instance, identifies the dilemma of the Caribbean saying that

> …one must also recognize that the claim for cultural synthesis in the Caribbean paradoxically both denies and reinforces cultural differences…. In other words, statements such as Jamaica's national motto 'Out of many, one people' or Guyana's popular description as a land of six peoples, ironically highlight and reinforce ideas of stable cultural differences at the same time that they seek to overcome such

differences.(p.294)

Even the cross-cultural and intercultural models appear to be subsets of the multicultural model or at any rate, they appear to only be able to function because the multicultural model is in fact their premise. After all, how can groups cross over into and maximise their contact zones if there are no fixed groups to begin with? Yet, the population must realise that an inappropriate or ambiguous choice of model can, for years or decades, affect identity formation in the already often paradoxical postcolonial space and that the model that may have worked in one country or in one era or context may not work in another, or the model that may work for one individual may be ill-suited to another; after all, there was once a time when 'multicultural model' was a wholly positive, fashionable and empowering term to use. Therefore, one must constantly be exploring the use of models to match the complexity of the outcomes of the fusion of many heritages and the uniqueness of our experiences in Guyana and the Caribbean and in the relationship with our diaspora, mindful that each new conceptualisation brings with it its own solutions or resolutions as well as its own complications.

As Rodrigo-Alsina and Medina-Bravo express in their own conclusions: "It is not easy to let go of our prejudices, but it is even more difficult to modify our modes of thinking and our classificatory routines and to change our outlooks and perspectives. However, what seems clear is that we are living through a period of historic change that is leading to a shift in paradigms in cultural issues " (para. 33). After all, even before Guyana gained independence and emphasised its axiomatic 'land-of-six-peoples' concept, Ortiz was conceptualising in his term transculturation, a more collapsible framework from which to view the changing of a whole cultural landscape. Further, even as Guyana struggles to define its national identity, a globalised twenty first century world appears to be moving towards the concept of post-nationalism: frequent travellers identify themselves as global citizens or children of the world; overseas students or members of the diaspora identify in unequal portions with the cultures to which they are exposed; culture travels to Guyana via the internet, television, radio; millennial and generation Z Guyanese share the American culture in the fast foods they choose, the clothes they wear and the movies and music they favour, even adapting on occasion, an American accent. In some cases, there is a strong possibility that Guyanese are more willing to reinterpret themselves as North Americans rather than as products of intercultural exchanges among the ethnic groups already existing in the country. These fluid conceptualisations of self then raise further questions such as: if we are moving towards a global culture whose standards will we take, for whose 'globe' is it? In addition, more recently, the face of Guyana's landscape has been rapidly changing with the emigration of large numbers of the population to North America and Europe, and the immigration

of Chinese, Cubans and Indian nationals, as well as the circulation of Brazilian and Venezuelan influences in various sectors. Further, the influences of other persons of other nationalities who have moved to Guyana to live and work by appointment, marriage or volunteerism are also a part of the transcultural exchanges taking place. In addition, the recent oil and gas findings are also currently influencing the cultural landscape. Transculturations are occurring even as Guyana grapples with its old axiomatic conceptualisation. Therefore, in future, without using appropriate concepts to analyse the ongoing transcultural negotiations, living in a multi-ethnic and multinational space could become fragmenting and alienating. Altogether, the understanding and choice of model for negotiation of identity requires careful thought.

In this time where there are sometimes paradoxical but fluid conceptualisations of identity, it seems woefully wanting to choose to map identity with a more rigid and probably problematic model. After abandoning the old racial codes of identity construction, Guyanese must begin to employ instead conceptualisations that are more suited to our dynamic condition, while being mindful of the complications of the use of each model. Ultimately, Shinebourne's collective presentation provides an exemplar for Guyana's nation building, a gradual theoretical resolution for race relations and building human relations and concrete illustrations for negotiating individual identities.

References:

1. Eagan, Jennifer L. (2015, August 31). Multiculturalism. *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/topic/multiculturalism.
2. Fisher, Max. (2013, May 16). A Revealing Map of the World's Most and Least Ethnically Diverse Countries. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/05/16/a-revealing-map-of-the-worlds-most-and-least ethnically-diversecountries/?noredirect=on&utm_term =.6f1c884e70ef.
3. Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc. (1995). From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration. *Anthropological Quarterly* 68: 48–63. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/3317464.
4. Hall, Stuart. (1989). Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media,* (36), 68-81. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/44111666.
5. Lee-Loy, Annie-Marie. (2008, March). An Interview with Janice Lowe Shinebourne. *The Arts Journal: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Literature, Art & Culture of Guyana & the Caribbean,*

Volume 4, Numbers 1 and 2, 38-44. Retrieved from EBSCO HOST, Database: Caribbean Search.

6. Lee-Loy, Annie-Marie. (2009). Saying No to Chineseness: The Possibilities and Limits of a Diasporic Identity in Janice Lowe Shinebourne's Fiction. *Journal of Chinese Overseas 5,* 291-309. DOI:10.1163/179303909X12489373183019.
7. Lowe Shinebourne, Jan. (1986). *Timepiece.* Leeds, England: Peepal Tree Press Ltd. (New edition 2012.)
8. Lowe Shinebourne, Jan. (1988). *The Last English Plantation.* Leeds, England: Peepal Tree Press Ltd. (New editions 2002, 2011.)
9. Lowe Shinebourne, Jan. (2004). *The Godmother and Other Stories.* Leeds, England: Peepal Tree Press Ltd. (New editions 2011, 2013.)
10. Lowe Shinebourne, Jan. (2010). *Chinese Women, A Novel.* Leeds, England: Peepal Tree press Ltd.
11. Lowe Shinebourne, Jan. (2015). *The Last Ship*. Leeds, England: Peepal Tree Press Ltd.
12. Mc Gowan, Winston. (2018). *A Survey of Guyanese History – A Collection of Historical Essays and Articles by a Guyanese Scholar.* Georgetown, Guyana: Guyenterprise.
13. Ortiz, Fernando. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar.* Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.
14. Pooch, Melanie U. (2016). Cultural Diversity in a Globalizing Age. *DiverCity – Global Cities as a Literary Phenomenon: Toronto, New York, and Los Angeles in a Globalizing Age.* Transcript Verlag. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1wxt87.7.
15. Pratt, Mary Louise. (1991). Arts of the Contact Zone. *Profession,* 33-40. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469.
16. Rodrigo-Alsina, Miquel and Pilar Medina-Bravo. (2016, March). A Reflection on Identities, Culture Models and Power. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, Issue 40. Retrieved from https://immi.se/intercultural/nr40/rodrigo.html.
17. Schriefer, Paula. (2016, April 18). What's the difference between multicultural, intercultural, and cross-cultural communication? *Culture Articles.* Spring Institute. Retrieved from https://springinstitute.org/whats-difference-multicultural-intercultural-cross-cultural-communication/.
18. Thomasson, Frank. (2009). *A History of Theatre in Guyana 1800-2000.* London & Hertfordshire, England: Hansi.

Crossing Over: A Narrative Inquiry of One Man's Journey Across the Mexico/U.S. Border

Beth Garcia
Malvika Behl
Janet Tipton Hindman
West Texas A&M University, USA

Doi: 10.19044/llc.v6no3a2 URL:http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/llc.v6no3a2

Abstract

Illegal immigration is a highly debated issue in today's sociopolitical climate. While many U.S. citizens proclaim to be concerned about border security, there is also a great push to protect undocumented people who have lived in the United States most of their lives. Current research suggests that there has been an insignificant decline in undocumented immigration with most undocumented immigrants having been in the U.S. for more than ten years. With tightened border security, many immigrants endeavoring to cross the U.S./Mexico border today are forced to attempt more and more treacherous treks. Many immigrants lose their lives in these attempts; therefore, *Coyotes* (human traffickers) are sought to assist in finding unmonitored paths across the border. This qualitative narrative inquiry discusses the journey of one man crossing over from Mexico to the U.S. without authorization. Additionally, it the study highlights the personal trials he faced while trying to gain citizenship in the U.S. and provides insight into the issue of human trafficking while crossing over. The participant's narrative is then compared with Maslow's hierarchy of needs to illustrate the findings and implications.

Keywords: Illegal immigration, undocumented immigrants, human trafficking, *Coyotes*.

Introduction

From 2005 to 2013, an average of 450 immigrants died each year trying to cross the border without authorization from Mexico into the United States (Santos & Zemansky, 2013). The chief forensic anthropologist at the Arizona Medical Examiner's Office, Bruce Anderson, found, "Less people are coming across, but a greater fraction of them are dying" (Santos & Zemansky, 2013). This is due to an increase in border security necessitating immigrants to find and attempt more treacherous routes with the most dangerous stretches

including the Arizona desert south of Tucson and the Rio Grande Valley region in Texas (Santos & Zemansky, 2013) where the participant of this research crossed the border.

This narrative inquiry considers one man's journey across the Mexico/U.S. border while shedding light on the issue of human trafficking and the perils that occur to immigrants entering the United States without authorization. The voice of the primary participant is highlighted throughout the narrative to illustrate the personal trials he faced and his understanding that the way he entered the country was not the right way to gain citizenship. However, once here, his life changed unexpectedly where he could not return to his native country for years to pursue legal entrance. His narrative is then juxtaposed to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory concerning human needs to illustrate the findings and implications of this study.

Literature Review

The term "undocumented immigrants" refers to foreign nationals who reside in the United States (U.S.) without legal immigration status (U.S. Legal Definitions). This definition is inclusive of persons who enter the U.S. without inspection and proper permission from the U.S. government and/or who have entered the U.S. with legal visas that are no longer valid (U.S. Legal Definitions). Amended numerous times with the most significant being the establishment of a new quota system in 1965, the *Immigration and Nationality Act* of 1952 (*INA*) also known as the *McCarran-Walter Act* is the main legislation governing immigration in the U.S. For *INA* purposes, there are different legal definitions or categories of "aliens": resident and nonresident, immigrant and nonimmigrant, documented and undocumented (Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996).

A selective review of the literature on undocumented immigrants and illegal immigration encompassed related literature of sociopolitical attitudes and the impact of illegal immigration on the social, moral, political, and economic mores of current American society. The scope of this review intentionally excluded an exhaustive exploration of the widening effects of immigration and U.S. immigration policy on today's society, but presents a selective review of relevant literature of undocumented immigrants crossing over from Mexico to the U.S in light of increased employment opportunities through the American Dream.

In search of the American Dream, the general findings of the sources reviewed concluded that increased employment opportunities allowed undocumented immigrants the unique chance to create better lives for themselves and their families by crossing over to the U.S. As a driving force, economics caused many immigrants to decide to come to the U.S., albeit illegally, to ensure a better, safer, and more secure life. The. U.S. Department

of Homeland Security reported a 203 percent increase of illegal crossings on the Southwest border from March 2017 to March 2018, tripling the crossings up 37 percent with the largest growth since 2011 (Daniels, 2018) General findings of the review for employment opportunities for undocumented workers concluded this influx of foreign-born laborers would reduce the economic opportunities for all laborers and would create stiffer competition in the labor market. Borjas (2013) surmised "theory also suggests that over time, as the economy adjusts to the immigrant influx, these wage effects will be attenuated" (p. 4). Having experienced numerous iterations and adopted various distinct methodological approaches over time, the academic literature approaches present dual claims "that immigrants have little impact on the wages of native-born workers, while other approaches conclude that such an effect exists and may be sizable" (Borjas, 2013, p. 4).

Recurring themes in the literature reflect current attitudes about immigration toward the effect(s) of illegal immigration on the economy; the support of, or opposition to, expanding enforcement measures; and immigration policy (Bean, Telles, & Lowell, 1987; Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996; Harwood, 1986; Wilson, 2001). Other emergent themes in the review were the dire need for comprehensive immigration reform and the profound impact of illegal immigration upon American society. Sources on illegal immigration and undocumented immigrants are readily and increasingly available in today's heightened political climate.

According to the most recent estimate from the Department of Homeland Security, "[t]here were 12.1 million immigrants living in the country illegally as of January 2014" (Robertson, 2018, p. 1). The Pew Research Center "estimates the number at 11.1 million in 2014, and the Center for Migration Studies says there were 11 million people in 2015 living in the U.S. illegally" (Robertson, 2018, p. 1). Since the census of 2010, U. S. Census Bureau Data reports, the undocumented population is approximately about eleven million out of 43 million immigrants that comprise about 14 percent of the total U.S. population of 323 million people." (Robertson, 2018, p. 1).

More than half of the undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. have resided there for more than a decade and nearly one-third are the parents of U.S.-born children according to the Pew Research Center (Lop**é**z & Bialik, 2017). Central American asylum seekers, many of whom are minors who have fled violence in their home countries, make up a growing share of those who cross the U.S.-Mexico border. Under the 2008 anti-human trafficking law, these immigrants have different legal rights from Mexican nationals in the U.S. Minors from noncontiguous countries have the right to a deportation hearing before being returned to their home countries (Felter & Renwick, 2018).

In 2015, the Center for Migration Studies reported that although the aim of policies to reduce unlawful immigration focus upon enforced border security, individuals who arrive to the U.S. legally and overstay their visas comprise a significant portion of the undocumented population, outnumbering those who crossed the border illegally by six hundred thousand since 2007 (Felter & Renwick, 2018).

The profound impact of illegal immigration has never been more apparent than in workplace employment. As America's leading immigration economist, Professor George Borjas (2013) contends in his study *Immigration and the American Worker: A Review of the Academic Literature* "[o]ne of the most contentious issues in the debate over immigration policy, both in the United States and abroad, is the question of what happens to the employment opportunities of native-born workers after immigrants enter the labor market" (p. 4). Borjas believes that "[e]conomic theory has straightforward and intuitive implications about what we should expect: Immigration should lower the wage of competing workers and increase the wage of complementary workers, at least in the short run" (p. 4).

Early studies of the economic impact of immigration upon the economy ignited the growth of a vast academic literature that attempted to "detect the presence and measure the size of the presumed wage effects" (Borjas, 2013, p. 4). The sociopolitical attitudes of the social, moral, political, and economic mores of current American society were evident in most of the sources of the literature review. The available sources of undocumented residents summarily concluded that undocumented residents of the U.S. have made a profound impact upon American society. The impact of this specific group of people within American society has produced extensive, valid, and often contentious discourse in the body politic of our country.

Methodology

Narrative Inquiry

This study was conducted as a qualitative, narrative inquiry where the researchers explored on a deep level the feelings and beliefs of the participants involved. The participants' voices were the strongest form of empirical evidence in this study. The researchers "considered 'real world measures' that are appropriate when 'real life problems' are investigated" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 5). Connelly and Clandinin (2000) succinctly defined narrative inquiry by stating,

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving, and retelling, the stories of the

experience that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated…narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (p. 20)

The researchers used discourse analysis within the narrative framework. Merriam (2002) suggested this as one possible strategy to use when engaged in narrative analysis. Gee (1991) suggested that "Discourse analysis examines the written text of the story for its component parts or assesses the spoken words by looking for intonation, pitch, and pauses as lens to the meaning of the text" (Merriam, 2002, p. 9).

Participants. There was one main participant included in this study and two secondary participants. Martin (pseudonym), the primary participant is an undocumented immigrant who entered the U.S. over twenty years ago. He was included as the primary participant due to his experience of crossing the Mexico/U.S. border illegally, and his narrative of this event was considered to be the primary data source within the research. The secondary participants included the immigrant's wife, Maria (pseudonym), and his immigration sponsor, Graciela (pseudonym). Their perspectives and roles were also integral components to this research as each played a significant part in the immigration procedures.

Data Collection

Data sources included an in-depth interview with each participant, prolonged engagement and observations of the participants for one year, and documents and records. The observations were collected as field notes; the documents included letters written on behalf of the participants to the U.S. Immigration authority; records included the main participant's immigration application and corresponding records from Homeland Security.

Interviews. In adherence to the sociocultural perspective through the lens of discourse analysis (Gee, 2001), the researchers conducted the interviews as socio-communication interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) to gain insight into the participants' stories that pertain to the research project at hand. To gain this insight, the researchers interviewed the immigrant who entered the U.S., his wife, and his sponsor. The interviews lasted two-three hours each.

Observations. Observations also revealed intricate parts of this story. "Observations lead researchers to interviews, suggest questions they had not anticipated and yield topics they might want to explore" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 173). The researchers used prolonged engagement with the participants and conducted multiple informal observations throughout the course of one calendar year. They recorded observations using thick, rich description in a researcher's journal. "Thick description details physical surroundings, time and place, actions, events, words, and people on the scene" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 175).

Documents and records. Records included the lawyers' affidavits, applications for a visa and Green Card, and financial statements of the immigrant man and his wife that showed the process they encountered while filing for legal immigration status.

Data Analysis

Because the researchers were concerned with the participant's story concerning crossing the Mexico/U.S. border, the researchers used a narrative inquiry design for data analysis. Data analysis began immediately and continued throughout the entire research process. Erlandson (1993) stated, "The analysis of qualitative data is best described as a progression, not a stage; an ongoing process, not a one-time event" (p. 111). The researchers used the constant comparative method as suggested by Glaser and Strauss to produce grounded theory (1967).-The researchers began coding the data by having each of the three researchers complete a data analysis chart indicating the overarching themes and subthemes they found within the raw data. Then the researchers color-coded each of these categories. The researchers used open coding and the constant comparison method to code the data as they considered the information found in the interviews, researcher's journal, and field notes. The researchers then compared data analysis charts to indicate similar ideas that emerged in each chart; the researchers coded these until they found commonalities that produced themes.

As the researchers coded the data, they began to notice categories emerge as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described coding categories as "terms and phrases developed to be used to sort and analyze qualitative data" (p. 271). The researchers highlighted each pattern in a different color, which helped them differentiate between the ideas. From these categories, they determined the themes that occurred within the gathered research.

Transferability. While the onus of transferability comes from the reader, the researchers made transferability more likely by providing thick, rich description of the findings, which will also allow the readers of this study to come to their own conclusions about the data. "It is, in summary, not the naturalist's task to provide an index of transferability; it is his or her responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

Narrative

Martin initially tried to come to the United States using the proper channels and requesting permission to enter the country with permission and legal documentation. Martin served in the Mexican military and put in a request to go to the U.S. filling out the required paperwork and paying exorbitant fees. He put his parents' ranch in his name, so he had ties to Mexico

and assets there; however, the paperwork was never sent through, and he never heard anything back after completing the process and paying the fees. His wife Maria shared,

He tried to do it the right way, the legal way and tried to get the right paperwork; he paid them money, but because they are so corrupt, they messed up his paperwork and sabotaged him, so he could not come in the 'right,' legal way. I feel like all the time people think it is so easy, but it's not.

After attempting to seek legal means of entering the United States, Martin decided he was left with no other choice but to enter illegally if he was going to make it into a country he saw as a place he might escape a life of poverty. Martin shared his story of crossing the Mexico-United States border and the perilous situations he endured to make it into the U.S. He shared, "It is really dangerous trying to cross the border. On those days, you come three to four people or maybe more, but when you get to the border, people know you have a little money to pay the C*oyote*." *Coyotes* are individuals involved in human trafficking and assist immigrants in crossing borders without legal authorization to do so (Walters & Davis, 2011). These individuals, usually men, insist upon extortionate fees to provide forged papers, transportation, or passage across a border into a new country. In many cases, the *Coyote* will take the money and leave the immigrant stranded left with nothing (Walters & Davis, 2011). Martin stated that people in the border towns know that they have some money when they get there, so there is a high probability of being robbed. He shared,

They are going to tell you, give me your money, give me your wallet, give me your shoes, and by the way, I like the shirt you have on, take that off too. That is lucky, someone else might leave you with no clothes and kick (beat) you on the street.

Martin then explained the process of leaving his home country and the journey he took to enter the United States. He indicated that the first step was to get to the bus station in a border town and then connect with someone who knew the *Coyote*. Sometimes immigrants attempting to cross the border may need to get on the bus again and travel to another town thirty to forty-five minutes away. The person who knows how to locate the *Coyote* will tell the small group where to stop and wait. Once the group is connected to the *Coyote*, money and property are exchanged; however, that is not the end of the transaction for the assistance in crossing the border. In many cases, the *Coyote* will deliver the immigrants crossing into the hands of his partner where an indentured servitude situation is prevalent. If the immigrants survive the journey and are not caught, they must work for the *Coyote's* partner in the U.S. to pay off the rest of their debt.

Once Martin's small group connected with the *Coyote*, they began walking on the Mexican side of the border close to the river. Before leaving, Martin was told to take a plastic bag and an extra pair of socks and underwear. The group hid until they had a chance to cross the river; when all was clear, they stripped down to their underwear placed their clothes in the plastic bags, and crossed the river. Martin shared, "When you cross the river, the water is cold (emphasizes cold); you make it to the U.S., get on your dry clothes from the bag, and start walking with the *Coyote*, because the *Coyote* knows the trails." When questioned about how far and long his group walked, Martin responded that they walked for three full days and mostly at night. He described fields filled with rattlesnakes and not being able to see them, but they could hear a chorus of rattles surrounding them. He described the fear of walking through these fields in the dark, as they never knew how close they were to being bitten and dying. Dying was a real possibility for Martin and the small group that crossed with him. They faced countless dangers beyond being caught and sent back to Mexico. They all placed their lives on the line to make it into the United States. In another dangerous encounter, Martin described a field filled with one thousand bulls; as soon as they entered, this entire herd began to chase them, pawing the ground, snorting, and ready to gore any man they could catch. Martin and his group ran to escape them. Once they made it to safety, the *Coyote* informed them that these bulls had never chased his groups before, so he knew that they were there and that it could have been a dangerous situation, but decided to lead Martin and the other men through this path anyway.

Martin also described the discomfort of the journey and what he endured during this three-day trek. With a disgusted look on his face, Martin relayed, "We run out of water; we find this pond with green water; they cows pee and shit in it." He shakes his head and continues, "Right there was horrible; the cows pee and shit, but you are thirsty and drink right there. We started to get dehydrated, and it starts with a headache, but we found this water, so that was good." Martin described the emotions that went through him during this travel. He was afraid of being caught, he worried about having food, but the main thing that concerned him was the water. Beyond hunger, exhaustion, and thirst, Martin and his group suffered from physical ailments such as blisters that hindered their walking such a far distance. "I have blisters on my feet (showing the size with his fingers making a circle) about two inches around. When we hid right there (in a hunter's deer blind), this place have some carpet, so I take my knife and make a sole for my tennis shoes from the carpet." After securing his shoes that were physically falling apart from the rough terrain and sheer distance the group had travelled, Martin described the pain he endured.

Then my blisters, they were open already, and the skin was folded to the side. What I did, I grab a needle with a sewing string because that was one of the main things they told to bring with us—cream, needle, and sewing string. I pulled the skin back and sewed it together, so I didn't walk on bare meat.

Martin relayed that the small group rested after this; however, they had begun to run out of water again. When they had stopped at the cow pond, they had filled canteens and bottles with the nasty, green water, but even that ran dry very quickly. The Coyote encouraged this group by telling them that they just had one more day and night in the wilderness; then they would meet up with one of his associates who would bring a car and drive them into a city. Martin got a rash that covered his body and made it painful for him to move much less walk and climb over barriers. On their last night of travel, a powerful cold front moved into Texas, "and we just pull up body to body to try to keep us warm at night. The coyotes (the animals) howl close to us, wild hogs, but we made it." Each of the men suffered extreme discomfort; Martin conveyed, "That night was horrible; was freezing. I don't know what to do. If I put my shoes on, I can't handle the pain with them on or the cold with them off." The next day when the sun came up, Martin and his group knew they just had to travel seven more miles to a small Texas town where someone would bring them a car.

Martin and his small group made it to a little town around nine that evening; when they got there, the *Coyote* demanded that Martin give the *Coyote* his shirt because it looked the best out of everyone's in the group. The *Coyote* had to walk to a gas station and pick up a car that had been left for them with the keys hidden in the gas cap. Martin remembered that the weather was very bad, and they had to hide in a ditch and wait for the *Coyote* to come back for them. The *Coyote* informed Martin and the rest of the men that he would flash the lights three times when he came back so that they would know it was him. This would be their signal to run from the ditch and jump into the running car. It took a long time for the *Coyote* to return with the car; in fact, Martin admitted to thoughts running through his head where he wondered if they had been double-crossed and abandoned. Finally, a car pulled up close to where the men were hiding in the ditch; however, it did not flash its lights. Martin and the rest of the men did not know what to do, but then the *Coyote* opened the driver's door and yelled out, "Let's go, *vamanos*!"

That night, the *Coyote* drove past San Antonio; then they headed towards Houston. This is the first time that Martin shared actual names of cities in which his group passed through. Up until this point, he would only give vague descriptions of towns and landmarks. As they were heading towards Houston, Martin recalls that the water pump on the car failed. The *Coyote* kept driving until he could pull into a rest area along the highway.

Once they got to the rest area, the *Coyote* told them to get out of the car and go hide again. The *Coyote* walked to a gas station somewhere in the area and made a phone call to his associates who promised they would send another car, but it took about three hours to accomplish this. During this entire time, Martin and the other men with him were hiding with wild thoughts running through their heads. "We don't know this country, we don't speak English, and it had been four days since any of us had a shower; it was horrible." Finally, the *Coyote* returned with another car and took Martin and the other men to Houston.

When asked why he endured so much to enter a country without authorization, Martin responded,

There are two reasons. One of them is because where I come from, is a lot of poor people. I saw them suffer for a meal. They don't have shoes; they don't have clothes. The poverty is the main thing; it doesn't matter if we get paid under the table, it is still more than we ever had.

Besides poverty, Martin discussed safety as another reason that immigrants enter the U.S. by sharing, "The cartels and the violence make people scared to stay. I saw many friend and family hurt or killed, so they leave to protect their family." Once the men reached Houston, their journey was not over. They each still owed the *Coyote* and had to work as indentured servants until the debt was paid. Martin remembered, "When I get here and started working roofing, I need to be up at 5:30 in the morning; I live with twelve other people in one apartment with two bedrooms and one bathroom. To take a shower, you need to hang your towel on the wall to get in line for it." Martin stated that he worked as a roofer with a crew that all came into the United States in relatively the same manner and all owed a *Coyote* money; their boss and foreman of this crew, loaned each of the men in this crew money to pay the *Coyote* when they reached Houston for their passage. The men worked fourteen-hour days and were paid roughly sixty dollars a day, which equals about four dollars per hour. This was before the foreman took out his fees for paying off the *Coyote*. "I worked for the guy who loaned me the money to pay the *Coyote*, so I was stuck with him." He asked, "What was I supposed to do? So I work for him until I finished pay the *Coyote*. And he (the foreman of the roofing crew) kept taking the money out of my pay because I still owe him." When asked how long it took to pay this debt and be able to leave the crew, Martin replied, "It took six months of this work to pay him off. I left after I paid him off and then came to West Texas. I knew some people who went there."

Martin did not have any friends or family in West Texas, but he knew some other people who had immigrated to the region. Once he paid his debt for crossing the border, Martin made his way to West Texas. There, he began to work on a construction crew, and again, he was paid little and had no

benefits due to his immigration status. After a few months, he met a girl named Maria at a friend's house. They struck up a friendship and began talking. After a few months the couple began dating and fell in love. Martin and Maria have now been married for thirteen years and have three children. She is a U.S. born citizen, and so are their three children, but this was not enough for Martin to gain legal, permanent residency.

Undocumented citizens have to go through a process of receiving a visa and green card before receiving citizenship. Citizenship is not automatically granted to undocumented immigrants who marry U.S. citizens (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration services, 2017). According to the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, undocumented immigrants have to return to their home country for six months to ten years, before applying for legal status. This process would have been difficulty for Martin since he would have had to travel back to Mexico, leaving his wife and children behind.

Therefore, Martin ended up waiting ten years for the laws to change so that he could apply for permanent, legal residency without having to return to his home country for years. He and his family employed a local lawyer who specializes in immigration law and has to date paid over $10,000 U.S. dollars. This is a substantial sum of money for a family of five living on one income. Martin and his wife, Maria, had to complete extensive background, psychological, and health checks to even apply for an Immediate Relative Visa (IR1).

Martin had to return to Mexico for a two week period to initiate the immigration process. Martin reminisced about the day he pleaded to be allowed to re-enter the United States but this time as a documented immigrant.

When it was my turn, I remember being in line praying to God, let me come back home with my family. The man yells, "Next!" He then asks my name, so I tell him. This man at the consulate then asks me, "how you cross" (the border), and I told him the field; they call it the *Monte*. He told me, "Look me straight in the eyes and tell me have you had problems with the law in the U.S.", and I told him "no". The man asked, "have you ever

been arrested," and I told him "no." "Who is your sponsor," and I told him "Graciela Jimenez, a good friend of the family;" I told him, "We just call her Gracie." So this man, he have my Mexican passport, and I still remember he grab the seal and stamped on my passport and say "you can pick up your package in four to eight days…Welcome."

Martin tears up at the recalling of this story. He told the man at the consulate,

Thank you so much. You don't even know how you changed my life and my family's life today, and he just smile. I remember walking out of that place; I can't wait to get to the hotel to tell my wife and my kids we get to go back together to Texas. I returned to the consulate five days later

to pick up the package with my visa and my legal residency papers, so we can go back across the border to the United Sates. The traffic was horrible, so I told my wife, I am just going to walk and wait for you on the other side.

Martin again walked across the Mexico/U.S. border, but this time legally with the proper documentation. When asked how he felt entering the U.S. legally, Martin looked up at the ceiling and sighed. He replied, "Freedom. I walked across the border with my arms lifted to the sky, and I raise my hands and say, Thank you God; we all go back together (he begins sobbing as he shares this memory); it's a feeling that is hard to explain."

Theoretical Framework

The theory guiding this research stems from Abraham Maslow, an expert in the field of psychology. Bearing in mind the seminal work of Maslow (1943) concerning humans' hierarchy of needs, the researchers considered the effects of undocumented immigration from the participant's perspective paralleled to Maslow's hierarchy of needs that include physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow (1943) said that there are goals that each individual needed to meet to move to the highest level of the hierarchy. Goals help create motivation and these focus on more long-term issues rather than partial issues (Maslow, 1943). The goals are supposed to be an "end rather than the means to an end" (Maslow, 1943, p. 370). The individual needs to fulfill some prerequisites before working on their basic needs, like

…freedom to speak, freedom to do what one wishes so long as no harm is done to others, freedom to express one's self, freedom to investigate and seek for information, freedom to defend one's self, justice, fairness, honesty, orderliness in the group (Maslow, 1943, p. 383).

After fulfilling the prerequisites, Maslow (1943) reported that individuals need to fulfill their physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, and esteem needs, leading them to reach self-actualization. The physiological needs include the need for food and water and are amongst the most basic needs for individuals. The safety needs amongst adults includes the need to feel safe in their environment from "wild animals, extremes of weather, criminals, assaults and murder, and tyranny" (p. 379) and financially such as having a job, a positive bank balance, and insurance (Maslow, 1943). The love needs arise when individual hungers for affection and make it a goal to receive it (Maslow, 1943). The love to satisfy this need could be received through friends, romantic relationships, and/or family by both receiving and giving love (Maslow, 1943). The next part of the hierarchy is the esteem needs of an individual. All individuals in the society have the need to achieve and be respected by one's self and others (Maslow, 1943). As individuals meet all

their needs they reach, self-actualization, which is a term coined by Kurt Goldstein (1939). Maslow (1943) reported that it means, "What a man can be, he must be" (p. 382). Self-actualization is the need for an individual to achieve one's utmost potential and become what they are capable of becoming (Maslow, 1943).

Findings and Implications

The impact of immigration and the laws on undocumented immigrants, their families, and friends can be extensive. The process of moving to a new country and building a life can be stressful and when one adds the immigration laws and its impacts, this can put a strain in the immigrant's personal and familial life as seen in Martin's narrative.

Personal – Safety and Physiological

According to Maslow's (1943) theory, personal actualization stems from the person being safe and having physiological needs met. On a personal level, there were significant implications for the participants of this study. They faced the fear of being torn apart as a family. In this situation, Martin and his family had no control over the situation, which caused extreme emotions and high anxiety. Personally, for the participants, their safety needs were impacted. The participant, while undocumented and in the process of immigration, was in fear of being deported. This shows in the sponsor's interview who said "…I was driving once and speeding, and he (Martin) asked me to slow down to the speed limit as he was afraid if we were pulled over that he would be deported."

This constant fear of deportation and not being able to provide for one's family can affect an individual's physiological and safety needs. Martin shared, "If I was deported, her (his wife, Maria) and my kids would live on the street; she would never go over there (Mexico)." Inability to meet these needs can cause an individual to feel unstable and insecure. In her interview, Martin's wife, Maria, shared, "…I have night trembles and wake up with my heart racing; there is a lot of stress not knowing what is going to happen in my life." Every individual has a right to feel safe and secure and as the sponsor relayed, "… a place where they can raise a family without fear of starving or genocide."

Familial – Safety, Love, and Belongingness

In today's world, the feeling of belonging to a family can make an individual feel safe and centered. The fear of being separated from their family at any time can be difficult for both the undocumented citizen and their family. In this narrative inquiry, Maria stated, "If he (Martin) was deported for his immigration status, the family would either have to go to a country that they

have no ties to, no relatives in, no support, and the children would not receive the same type of education.

Maria, a US citizen, stated that if her husband was deported, she would lose any kind of monetary support and most importantly lose the emotional support that she currently has. Maria shared from her letter to petition for Martin's permanent legal residency visa,

Any separation would cause my children and me great emotional stress that would definitely affect our mental health in a very negative way. I would be extremely depressed if we were separated. I would have to deal with the mental anguish of having no support or help with the household, childcare, or financial responsibilities. Most importantly, I would be devastated by the separation from my husband; he is more than just my spouse, he is my life partner, confidant, and best friend.

Fearing that their loved one can be removed from their life at any time can make a person feel that their love and belongingness needs may hang in the balance. Alongside that, the fear of being removed from one's own country and be moved to another can be very stressful as well. A person who is scared for their love and belongingness needs will never be able to reach their full potential, be it the U.S. citizen or the undocumented citizen.

Additionally, if there are family/friends who are willing to spend their time and help the immigrant seek legal, permanent residency, that can cause an individual to feel loved. In her interview, the sponsor stated, "It has cost me some time; I have spent many hours gathering documents and writing letters on Martin's behalf, but I believe it is my responsibility to help him attain his citizenship." In a political environment that is focused on deporting undocumented citizens, having one person's support and help, can make an individual feel loved and supported; this is evidenced again by the sponsor who stated,

I am scared for immigrants and refugees coming to the United States. I know what the process is like, and it is difficult and many times unfair and expensive. Many times refugees and immigrants try to get to a country like the U.S. in the hopes of creating a better life and leading a safe life. A place where they can raise a family without the fear of starvation or genocide. Today's political climate has taken ten steps back from where we were during the era of Civil Rights.

Financial/Medical - Physiological

As evidenced in the narrative concerning Martin's crossing the border, he lacked basic physiological needs such as shelter, food, shoes, safety, and clean water. During the course of the immigration process, the family as a whole won and lost some battles concerning basic physiological needs as well. One of the battles that proved difficult was the issue of health insurance. The

family was removed from Medicaid because once Martin attained a sponsor, the sponsor's income was considered as part of the family's assets. This is a stipulation so that Martin can prove that he will not take government assistance as he engages in the process of citizenship. This necessitated that the family had to pay out of pocket for the children's insurance, something they had not had to do before. Before Martin was a documented citizen, Maria was able to file and qualify for Medicaid for their three children. Graciela reminisced about this issue in her interview by sharing,

Maria called me crying one afternoon; she was completely distraught. She told me that Medicaid cancelled her children's health coverage because they were basing eligibility on my income. She really needed health care for her children. I just felt so badly for her when she called me. I felt like it was my fault. I was frustrated because my insurance wouldn't allow me to put them under my coverage, yet the government stated I was responsible for them. It was like a Catch 22 where I am responsible, but I can't do anything about it. The system seems to be set up where it makes it so difficult for undocumented immigrants to seek and receive legal status that they just give up.

By having to pay for the immigration process and then pay for health insurance, it put a great strain a financial strain on this family. Maria stated that the legal and immigration fee cost about $10,000 and eventually they had to travel to Mexico, which was a separate cost. Over the course of time, a person who is unable to afford this but has to complete the process would have a hard time providing the basic needs or physiological needs to their family like food and shelter.

Maria shared, "I feel like if he would have been deported, I would have been a single mom trying to raise three kids by myself," which means Maria, who was a stay at home mom would have had to work while taking care of the three children and meeting all their physiological needs. During the interview, Maria did state how difficult she envisioned that being and that she might lose the house if her husband was deported. If one's basic needs of food and water are not met, s/he is not able to move up the hierarchical pyramid to reach his/her full potential of self-actualization.

Community/Societal – Love and Belongingness

In the current political environment, the word "undocumented" has been replaced with "*illegal*," which comes with its own negative connotations. Individuals might not feel comfortable coming out and saying "I am undocumented" in front of friends or extended family, due to the fear of being ostracized or reported to the U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE). During her interview Maria shared, "Most people like Martin, and I didn't want them (family, friends, and acquaintances) to change their opinions of him because of his status here." She felt that her husband would be judged

not for who he is but because of his status in the country. Hiding a big part of your life with close family and friends just to keep them in one's life can be difficult. This takes away from an individual's basic needs of freedom to speak and express themselves; since people already have negative impressions of undocumented citizens, they are concerned about being treated fairly and justly. When asked how the term "*illegal*" made the participants feel, each shared their perspective. Graciela commented,

That term makes me feel furious. I cannot tell you how many U.S. citizens I have heard say things like, "go back to your country," "those people are not wanted here," "we don't have enough resources for them," "they are ruining our country," and my all-time favorite, (rolls her eyes) "You are in America, learn English." I wish we as Americans would base our statements and judgments on more facts than demagoguery.

Maria relayed,

Some things don't bother me, some things do. I feel like we have our own lives as individuals, and we don't know the lives of others, and we don't know what brought them here. I am not saying every person who comes over illegally is a good person or should stay, there are good and bad, but don't judge them on the action. Judge them on the person they are.

Martin shared that he has been called all kinds of names and that these are hurtful and defamatory; in fact, he even refers to himself as some of these names from hearing them so often.

I am a *wetback*; that's what they call me. It makes me feel sad. When they say to me *illegal* because we don't have one ID and we don't have a social security, make me feel sad. I think that everybody deserve a chance for this life; this country is made with immigrants, and I can't wait to become a U.S.A citizen.

Conclusion

Through the qualitative paradigm, the narrative inquiry approach helped the researchers of this study understand the process of crossing into the United States without documentation and the enduring immigration process as an undocumented citizen. Martin faced a plethora of problems crossing over the U.S./Mexico border and entering the U.S.**,** which included dangerous and grueling physical exertion hiking through the wilderness, paying the *Coyotes,* and struggling to make ends meet and find acceptance once inside the U.S. to make a better life for himself and his family. As Martin relays in his letters to the immigration authority, he realizes that he did not follow the proper procedures to enter the country; however, once inside the country, his life took unexpected and permanent turns. As he was working on his new life as an undocumented citizen, he became a husband and father. He created friendships

that produced friends such as Graciela who vouched for him as he went through the immigration process, which was emotionally and financially draining on him and his family. Ultimately, this narrative inquiry illustrated the connection between Maslow's hierarch of needs and the journey that one undocumented immigrant embarked upon to first cross over into the United Sates and then to go back to his home country to re-enter with proper documentation. His narrative is a powerful story of determination and the undying human spirit seeking a better life and the American Dream. It is the researcher's hope that this article sheds light on the difficulties of the immigration process and humanizes the act of illegal immigration so that laws are more standardized and more attainable for those wanting to enter using the appropriate channels.

References:

1. Bean, F.D., Telles, E.E. & Lowell, B. L. (1987). Undocumented migration to the United States: Perceptions and evidence. *Population and Development Review* 13(4): 671. December 1987.
2. Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to Theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
3. Borjas, G. (2013, April). Immigration and the American worker: A review of the academic literature. Center for Immigration Studies.
4. Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2000). *Narrative inquiry*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Inc.
5. Daniels, J. (2018, April). ""Illegal' crossings at the U.S. southwest border triple in march from a year ago." Retrieved on September 3, 2018 from
6. https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/05/crossing-attempts-at-us-southwest-border-triple-in-march-from-year-ago.html.
7. Espenshade, T.J., & Hempstead, K. (1996). Contemporary American attitudes toward U.S. immigration. *International Migration Review.* Summer 30(2): 535-570.
8. Erlandson, D., Harris, E., Skipper, B., & Allen, S. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
9. Felter, C., & Renwick, D. (2018, March). The U.S. immigration debate. *Renewing America*: *Council on foreign relations.* Retrieved on September 3, 2018 from https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-immigration-debate-0.

10. Gee, J. P. (1991). What is literacy? In C. Mitchell, & K. Weiler (Eds.), *Rewriting literacy: Culture and the discourse of the other* (pp. 3-11). New York: Bergin & Garvey.
11. Gee, J. P. (2001). Reading as situated language: A sociocognitive perspective. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 44(8), 714-725.
12. Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing.
13. Goldstein, K. (1939). The organism: A holistic approach to biology derived from pathological data in man. New York, NY: American Book Company.
14. Harwood, E. (1986). American public opinion and U.S. immigration policy. *The Annals of theAmerican Academy of Political and Social Science*, 487, 201-212.
15. Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, Public Law 104-208, 104th Cong. 1st sess. (September 30, 1996). Retrieved from https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW104publ208/ html/PLAW-104publ208.htm.
16. Lop**é**z, G., & Bialik, K. (2017, May). Key findings about U.S. immigrants. *Pew Research Center: Facttank.* Retrieved on September 3, 2018 from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/03/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/.
17. Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading analysis and interpretation* (Vol. 47). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
18. Lincoln, Y. S & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
19. Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review, 50(4),* 370-96.
20. Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers.
21. Robertson, L. (2018, June). Illegal immigration statistics. *The Wire.* Retrieved on September 3, 2018 from https://www.factcheck.org/2018/06/illegal-immigration-statistics/.
22. Rossman, G., & Rallis, S. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
23. Santos, F. and Zemansky, R. (2013, May 20). Arizona desert swallows migrants on riskier paths.

24. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/21/us/immigrant-death-raterises-on-illegal-crossings.html.
25. Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures And Techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
26. U.S. Legal Definitions. Illegal immigrant. Retrieved on September 3, 2018 from https://definitions.uslegal.com/u/undocumented-immigrant/.
27. Walters, J. & Davis, P.H. (2011). Human trafficking, sex tourism, and child exploitation on the southern border. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk*, 2(1), 1-17.
28. Wilson, T. C. (2001). America's views on immigration policy: Testing the role of threatened group interests. *Sociological Perspectives*, 44(4). 485-501

Migration and Religion: A Case of Healing Arabic Amulets among Syriac Orthodox Immigrants in Canada

Guita Hourani
Notre Dame University-Louaize, Lebanon

Doi: 10.19044/llc.v6no3a3 URL:http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/llc.v6no3a3

Abstract

Religious beliefs and customs migrate transnationally with the immigrants who carry them from their countries of origin into their new countries of settlement. Among these religious beliefs are those that concern health and sickness, and more specifically, preventatives and cures. This article presents a case study of medical beliefs within the Christian Syriac Community of Sherbrooke in Canada, as witnessed through two amulets that contain two Psalmic invocations handwritten in Arabic, which were kept as heirlooms of the Batrie family. This article explores the way first generation immigrants transplanted homeland religious beliefs and practices in a new social environment, with the use of amulets as a conduit between man and the supernatural, and, more pragmatically, the use of Psalmic verses as healing medium with miraculous power.

Keywords: Syriac Orthodox Christian, Psalms, Arabic, Amulets, Immigration, Religion.

Introduction

A hand embroidered pouch containing two handwritten Arabic amulets were kept among the heirloom of the Batrie family of Sherbrook, Québec, Canada. The amulets were made, according to the name mentioned in one of them, for Norman -- son of Yacoub (Jacob) Batrie (1890-1969) who migrated to Canada in 1907 and Jamilla Abdalla (1903-1974). Yacoub and Jamilla were married in Canada in August 1923. Norman was born on November 9, 1924; he seems to have been ill enough as a child that his parents had healing amulets made in his name.

First generation immigrant families carry with them their religious and cultural beliefs, as well as their practices, and they tend to rely on practices of belief and healing that invoke the power of the supernatural as they were taught to in their places of origin. At this time and place, it wasn't unusual

that "deep religious convictions and belief in the power of God often coincided with a fear of witches and evil spirits committed to carrying out the Devil's work. Magical practices offered a means to exert some control of the unknown and assuage their fears" (Rouse, 2017, p.21). The pressure to fall back on traditional medicine was no doubt amplified by problems in seeking medical assistance in the counties to which they migrated, where language and cultural barriers, cost of treatments, accessibility to healthcare providers, lack of awareness of healthcare services, and discrimination or racism often formed barriers to accessing other forms of therapy (Vaughn, 2009, p.67).

The two amulets subject of this article was discovered by the author in 2000 during a visit to the Batrie family in Sherbrook, Canada. Pauline Batrie (1930-2016), Norman's sister brought out a box filled with family heirlooms and told the author that there were also letters and documents in Arabic that neither she nor her siblings could read, since none of them had been taught to read Arabic.

Preserved among other inherited material – a Bible, Ottoman identification cards, marriage affidavits and baptism certificates, the objects remained a puzzling mystery until the author unfolded and read its contents. From inquiries about Norman, the author estimated that the amulets were made somewhere between 1924 and 1928, the critical years of his infancy and early childhood. None of Norman's siblings remembered any mention being made by their parents of some grave childhood sickness in his case, nor had it been mentioned by either his brother Roger (1927-1989) or his sisters Pauline, or Patricia (1943-2012). Norman died on his birthday, November 9, 1998, of cardiac problems related to sugar diabetes as his death certificate indicates.

In their spiritual purpose and physical characteristics, the Batrie amulets are typical of those that have been in use for centuries among the Christians of the East. In fact, such written amulets are indigenous to all Eastern Mediterranean cultures; their use was widespread throughout the prehistoric, primitive, and Jewish traditions and continued into Christianity with the adaptation of Christian inscriptions and symbols. Other cultures have also commonly sought out the use of amulets or objects "which [they] considered holy or otherwise potent" to protect themselves against hostile natural and supernatural forces, unexplainable and painful situations, unforeseeable powers, or the malice of enemies (Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007, p.121).

An amulet is only one type of apotropaic; it is by definition "any object which by its contact or its close proximity to the person who owns it, or to any possession of his, exerts power for his good, either by keeping evil from him and his property or by endowing him with positive advantages" (Bonner, 1950, p.2). Among common amulets in the Eastern Mediterranean are "pieces of paper, parchment, or metal discs inscribed with various formulae which

would protect the bearer from sickness, the "evil eye," and other troubles" (Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007, p.121).

As part of "the spell," the amulet pouches or compacts contained organic material, from the ordinary to the bizarre. Most of the amulets of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, for example, contain "simple, organic materials – animal skins, or other animal parts, pottery bits or shells, and plant matter…." In China, amulet contents include a tiger's claw; in Nepal, teeth; in El Salvador, cowrie shells; in Lithuania, amber; in Egypt and Palestine, green beads….[1] Other types of amulets contain charms and incantations written on a small piece of papyrus or paper, which is then rolled or folded and placed in a compact or pouch of some sort and bound to or hung on the person (Bonner, 1950, p.2).

It is worth noting that since Hermann Gollancz presented his paper, "A Selection of Charms from Syriac Manuscripts," at the Eleventh International Congress of Orientalists in Paris in 1897 and it was published in the *Actes du Onzième Congrès International des Orientalistes* interest in this field considerably increased, resulting in the publication of a good number of articles and books on the subject.

There are many examples of Christian amulets that use Biblical quotations – Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, God or Christ's name, and verses from the Bible -- for healing and protection. In his book *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power,* Meyer and Smith provide ample models of these amulets: Oxyrhynchus 1077 uses the Gospel of Matthew, Egyptian Museum 10263 invokes the name of Christ, and Amulet Ianda 14 employs the Lord's prayer. The Berlin 9096 invokes texts from Psalm 91:1; Psalm 118:6-7; Psalm 18:2 and several New Testament texts to protect and heal (Meyer and Smith, 1999, pp.34-35)

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia *New Advent*, "The reliance placed upon amulets, like other forms of superstition, grew out of popular ignorance and fear. With the coming of the Christian religion therefore, it was destined to disappear. It would have been too much, however, to have expected the victory of Christianity in this matter to have been an easy and instantaneous one" (Delany, 1907, n.p.). The new converts continued the use of amulets using Christian creeds and symbols instead of heathen ones. Crow posited that "the Church Fathers and intellectuals made the distinction between the miracle of the relics and sacred words of the Bible, *verba sacra*, versus condemned amulets labeled as superstitious magic, a term used to delegitimize their use and imply demonic association" (Crow, 2009, p.97).

1 Examples of written amulets are available at places such as the Bodleian Library in Oxford University and the Hourghton Library of Harvard University. Amulets that contain organic material can be found for instance at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan in Detroit.

Crow also states that "during the Middle Ages, only members of the clergy were educated enough to make the amulets and thus, were the primary supplier of them to their parishioners—although there were non-clergy who sold them too." Furthermore, to Crow, "to the illiterate and uneducated, the distinctions between magic amulets and church-approved amulets were hardly discernable (Crow, 2009, p.98).

Babies and children were considered especially vulnerable to the evil eye. Newborn, beautiful or healthy babies were believed to be at higher risk because they seem to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of the evil eye" (Lykiardopoulos, 1981, p.224). Fear of envy and its consequences led people to "use symbolic and non symbolic cultural forms whose function is to neutralize, or reduce, or otherwise control the dangers they see stemming from envy, and especially their fear of envy (Foster, 1972, p.165).

Apotropaic symbols were made of various materials – wood, metal, papyrus, parchment, stones, bones, precious gems, and leather. They were inscribed with written expressions, incantations, words, cryptic phrases, signs, magical formulas, numeric combinations, symbols, anagrams or geometrical designs. They were carried by or pinned to the person as a sign of devotion; as a remedy for sickness or as protection against the evil eye (Kontansky, 1991, p.107).

As part of "the spell," the amulet pouches or compacts often contained organic material, from the ordinary to the bizarre. Examples of written amulets are available at places such as the Bodleian Library in Oxford University, the University of Michigan Papyrology Collection, and the Houghton Library of Harvard University. Amulets that contain organic material can be found for instance at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan in Detroit.

The birth of a male heir in Middle Eastern culture is eagerly awaited, with the heir being responsible for carrying on the family name. The more valuable the child, the more susceptible it is to the evil eye, and the more necessary it is to employ a contravening power, as well as a set of protective behaviors. Parents and/or family members use amulets to enable a child to shield himself from visible and invisible antagonists, especially the Evil Eye. Naff's research on belief in the evil eye among the Syrian and Lebanese immigrants in the US found that "a prayer sealed in leather or wax may also be worn or carried in the manner of phylactery as a shield against the evil eye"(Naff, 1965, p.49).

Origin of the Batrie Family and the Journey to Canada

The town of Mardin in the 19th century, from whence the Batrie family came, is located in present day Turkey. Mardin was Christianized in 300 AD and became part of the region that "played an exceptionally important part in

the development of Eastern Christianity" (Bosworth, 1989, p.542).

Between 1914 and 1918, the Young Turks which governed Turkey following the demise of the Ottoman Empire fought against Christian minorities under the banner of 'radical ideology of ethnic exclusivity', 'ethnic-national independence', and 'consolidate the existence of the empire' (Bloxham, 2003, .p.142). This led to a violent act of historic proportions: the genocide of the Armenians, the Syriac Orthodox and others. Those who survived the massacres headed to nearby Lebanon and Syria and from there a high percentage of them migrated to Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, the United States, and Australia.

In his four-page unpublished memoirs, Carim Jarjour writes about his family's journey from Mardin to Canada,[2] a typical journey for those who hailed from the same area. Carim's mother, his brother Elias, his married sister Selma Bogos, his maternal grandmother Mary Anto, and the bride-to-be to his brother George Nazlie Abdalla left Mardin in 1902, intending ultimately to reach Canada. Oral history of the community has it that George Jarjour, Carim's brother, was the first Syriac Orthodox to arrive in Canada. He settled in the Dominion in 1895.

Here is what Carim wrote:

"The trip from Mardin to Aleppo took 10 days by horseback, and the remainder of the trip was done by carriage and train to Beirut. […] the voyage by boat from Beirut to Marseilles, France took six days. [There] they were met by a travel agent who took them to a tourist hotel. From Marseilles, they crossed France to Calais, across the English Channel to Dover and then to Liverpool, England. Early in November 1902, they sailed from Liverpool on the SS Victorian of the Allan Lines and reached Halifax in six days. They then took a train to Montreal where they were met by George..."

Based on an entry in the family Bible, Aziz, Yacoub, and Georges Batrie migrated to Canada in 1905, 1907, and 1911 respectively. Their parents Hanna Batrie and his wife Prima Selmo (1861-1961), had migrated with other members of their family from Mardin, Turkey to Québec to join their sons; they arrived in Canada on August 7, 1925, aboard the SS Malta.

The Batries joined their kin in the burgeoning city of Sherbrooke, where the Syriac Orthodox immigrants had settled and spread out in the environs, finding residences in villages such as Magog, Disraeli, East Angus, Victoriaville, Lac Mégantic and Thedford Mines. According to Pauline, the region offered work opportunities due to its extensive infrastructure development (e.g. rail and electricity), and the flourishing economy that centered on the booming timber industry. Pauline added that to further lure

2 The author was granted permission by the Jarjour family to cite the memoirs.

businesses and settlers, the government of Sherbrooke gave attractive incentives such as tax exemptions, reductions in electricity costs, and allotting land lots cheaply to new industries.

Sherbrooke and its environs, rural and urban, presented a good base for the Syriac Orthodox people. Although, as Pauline put it, they were merchants, masons, tanners, and farmers by trade when they arrived, they all became peddlers in Canada. It is in the midst of these larger, macro social and economic changes that we find a continuing belief in amulets.

The Batrie Amulets

Characteristics of the Batrie Amulets

The Batrie amulets are written prayers which were carefully and tightly folded in squares and placed in a pouch similar to a rosary sack (see photograph A). The pouch itself is made of a blue gabardine textile lined with a red satin fabric. The two sides of the pouch are decorated with a flower symbol that is hand-embroidered in golden threads, and three of its outside edges are adorned with hand-crocheted red festoons; the pouch, which is approximately three centimeters in width and four centimeters in length, served as a holster within which the amulets were enclosed.

The pouch which held the two amulets

No cord or similar hanging device has been passed down to us; but based on knowledge of traditional practices, we can assume that the pouch was either attached to the child's clothing or tucked under his pillow. The choice of the colors blue and red was determined by the symbolic meaning of the pouch. Both colors are traditionally used as protection against the evil eye in the Near East. It is believed that blue and red will deflect the glance of the evil eye and thus deter or blight it (Abbasi, 2017, pp. 137-140).

Both amulets are hand-inscribed with black ink on parchment paper. Amulet A is inscribed with a personal supplication and with a Psalmic prayer, while amulet B contains only a Psalmic prayer. Neither of the amulets contains symbols, numbers or magical formulas. The supplication in Amulet A makes it clear that both amulets are intercessions for the cure and protection of an infant named Norman. Amulets are worn to bring about either preventive or counteractive intervention. In the case of Norman, it was both, although the emphasis is on the counteractive, since the amulet was made to drive away the child's illness.

Amulets inscribed with or containing manuscripts with written words are very common. The use of words emanates from "a belief in early times in the holiness and the power of words" (Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007, p.121). The value of the words is considered more effective if it emanates from a holy source, such as passages from the Scriptures, special prayers, Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, or special supplications to saints (Encyclopedia of the Early Church, 1992, p.32). The oldest surviving Christian amulets are those which were written on papyrus in the sixth and seventh centuries (Wessely, 1924, pp. 399-400). These amulets from the 20th century often cite the same passages.

The Batrie amulets are clearly Christian objects. Amulet A invokes the name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and both amulets A and B use Psalm 51 and 61 respectively.

There is no indication of who made the amulets or when the writing took place, although they were probably made during the first four years of Norman's life, i.e., between 1924 and 1928. The writers or scribes could have been members of the Syriac Orthodox ecclesiastical corps. In her book, *Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun*, which was published in London in 1920, Surma d'Bait Mar Shimun clearly records that the clergy in Nestorian communities, particularly in the Hakkari region of Turkish Kurdistan, administered amulets to the people. Reverend Justin Perkins, an American missionary who lived among the Nestorians in Persia for eight years, recounted the following incident which he witnessed: "A Moslem villager came asking for a remedy to cure his sick cow. Without further ado, the priest (Mar Yohanna, a Nestorian priest) wrote an amulet on the spot…" (Hunter, 1995, p. 25). In rudimentary societies, physicians were not readily available and if they were, not many people could afford them, and priests often assumed the role of "physicians" (Hunter, 1995, p. 25).

The Batrie amulets are of a personal nature, meaning that they were written for a specific person – in this case, for Norman Batrie, although no doubt on the orders of Norman's parents, Yacoub and Jamilla. It is not often that such amulets can be found or obtained outside of the families which own them, where they are considered "sacred" and are treasured by the family as part of its heritage. For many reasons – fear, for instance, of being thought

'ignorant' or 'superstitious' – many people would be reluctant to show these objects to strangers, let alone part with them. For this reason, the author is extremely grateful to Pauline and Patricia Batrie, the present owners of the amulets, for sharing their revered family heirloom and allowing the publication of this study.

Psalms 51 and 61, which are invoked in the Batrie amulets, are considered as the lamentation genre of the Psalms, nevertheless with a prevailing theme of trust in God's deliverance.

The scribes of Amulets among the Christian immigrants from the Eastern Mediterranean were mainly priests, either the parish priests (if there was a parish) or itinerant priests who used to travel around the provinces to provide services to the members of a given ethnoreligious group, or to respond to requests by a member of the group for a service. These itinerant priests performed a variety of ritual services. During their journey to a community, they carried sacramental elements and chrism for anointing baptized infants, the sick, and the dying. They heard confessions and pronounced absolution; they celebrated mass at one of the member's home, preached a sermon, catechized the children, performed requiem services, and officiated at Holy Matrimony.

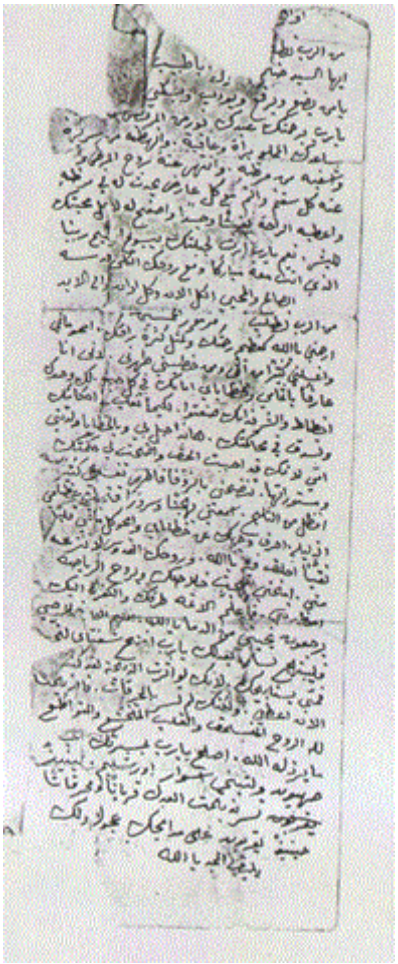
These itinerant priests were mainly priests from the homeland; particularly favored were those from the village, from which the immigrants hailed, or parish priests of a similar congregation in the country or traveling priests who were ordered by the bishop of the congregation to travel to the believers' whereabouts and perform these services. Christian priests and monks functioned as ritual experts to prohibit the use of magic and to intervene in cases where parishioners were found to be using sorcerers and charlatans. For believers, only members of the clergy were qualified enough to make religious amulets and thus, were the primary suppliers of them.

Syriac Orthodox priests from Mardin, Syria, or from the United States, would sporadically visit the Sherbrooke region, which remained without a permanent priest until 1952. According to Pauline Batrie, itinerant priests used to visit members of the coreligionists, which give us a possible provenance for Norman's amulet.

Description and Formulas of the Batrie Amulets

Amulet A

Amulet A measures 20.5 cm (length) and 7 cm (wide) and has been folded at least six times horizontally and two times vertically. It is handwritten in black ink in Arabic script on the verso of a strip of paper, blank on the recto. The bottom and right edges are preserved, but the top edge is torn, and about three lines are partially or completely missing. Otherwise, the manuscript is in good condition. It is composed of 14 lines of personal supplication and 21 lines from Psalm 51. The writing runs up to the left edge. There is hardly any free space above and below the text.



Amulet A

Amulet A has two sections: a personal supplication to God, which could be regarded as a "spell" to help cure Norman of his ailment; and a Psalmic prayer, Psalm 51:1-21. There is an example of a similar two-section inscription in manuscript Vienna K 8302 (Rainer, AN 191) where the text

intends to "provide protection against illness and the power of evil. The first section of the text bases its plea upon the correspondence between Abgar of Edessa[3] and Jesus…. and the second section presents a fairly enigmatic prayer of Elijah the Tishbite[4]…" (Meyer and Smith, 1999, p.113).

Translated Text

Section A (a): The Plea

"[…] *From God, we ask… O Lord …… O Physician… You who raises and abases who punishes and cures… God by Your mercy cure Your servant Norman who is sick…By Your hand which contains cure and health. Raise him from his sick bed. Cure him from his illness, take away the spirit of ailment and … Keep away any sickness and pain in every health crisis he undergoes. Grant him peace, in soul and body, and forgive him for Your love of humanity. Yes, O God have mercy on Your creation in the name of Jesus Christ, our God, with whom You are blessed with Your most Holy Spirit, the Good and the Giver of Life, now and forever. From God we ask*."

Section A (b): The Psalmic Text – Psalm 51

"*Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love; in your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions. Thoroughly wash away my guilt; and from my sin cleanse me. For I know my transgressions; my sin is always before me. Against you, you alone have I sinned; I have done such evil in your eyes. So that you are just in your word, and without reproach in your judgment. Behold, I was born guilty, in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, you desire true sincerity; and secretly you teach me wisdom. Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. You will let me hear gladness and joy; the bones you have crushed will rejoice. Turn away your face from my sins; blot out all my iniquities. A clean heart create for me, God; renew in me a steadfast spirit. Do not drive me from before your face, nor take from me your holy spirit. Restore to me the gladness of your salvation; uphold me with a willing spirit. I will teach the wicked your ways that sinners may return to you. Rescue me from violent bloodshed, God, my saving God, and my tongue will sing joyfully of your justice. Lord, you will open my lips; and my mouth will proclaim your praise. For you do not desire sacrifice or I*

3 Abgar was a common name of the kings of Edessa. Legend has it that Abgard V (9-46 A.D.) corresponded with Jesus. "Eusebius claims to have translated from the archives of Edessa a letter sent by the sick king to Jesus requesting that he come to heal him, and a reply from Jesus explaining that after his ascension he would send a disciple to cure him. According to Eusebius, Thomas sent Thaddeus (Addai) to Edessa [as a disciple]" ("Abgar" (1997), Encyclopedia of Early Christianity, Second Edition, Vol. I, New York London: Garland Publishing, Inc., p. 6).

4 Elijah of Tishbite, a Jewish prophet, who was active in Israel during the reigns of Ahab and Ahaziah in the ninth century B.C. (Encyclopedia Judaica (1982), col. 632, Vol. 6).

would give it; a burnt offering you would not accept. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a contrite, humbled heart, O God, you will not scorn. Treat Zion kindly according to your good will; build up the wall of Jerusalem. Then you will desire the sacrifices of the just, burnt offering and whole offerings; then they will offer up young bulls on your altar" (New American Bible, 2008, p.409).

Amulet B

Amulet B measures 16cm (wide) and 9.5cm (long). It is handwritten in black ink in Arabic script on the verso, blank on the recto. All edges are preserved. The manuscript, which is composed of 8 lines, is in good condition. The penmanship of this amulet is different from that of amulet A; it is clearly written by a different person.

Amulet B is a transcription of Psalm 61 "Prayer of the King in Time of Danger." It is "A lament of the king who feels himself at the brink of death (Ps 61:3) and cries out for the strong and saving presence of God (Ps61:3b-5)" (New American Bible, 2008, p.721). This amulet seems to have been made for Norman as a consequence of his deteriorating health with stronger supplication for the intervention of God to save him.

Amulet B

The prayer is Psalm 61: 2-9

Translated Text: The Psalmic Text – Psalm 61

"*For the leader; with stringed instruments by David: Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer! From the ends of the earth I call; my heart grows faint. Raise me up, set me on a rock, for you are my refuge, a tower of strength against the foe. Let me dwell in your tent forever, take refuge in the shelter of your wings. For you, O God, have heard my vows, you have granted me the heritage of those who revere your name. Add days to the life of the king; may*

his years be as from generation to generation. May he reign before God forever; send your love and fidelity prevents him. I will duly sing to your name forever, fulfill my vows day after day" (New American Bible, 2008, pp.721-722).

Amulets and the Psalms

As mentioned earlier, there are many examples of Christian amulets that use Psalmic quotations – Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, God or Christ's name, and verses from the Bible -- for healing and protection (Meyer and Smith, 1999).

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia New Advent, "The reliance placed upon amulets, like other forms of superstition, grew out of popular ignorance and fear. With the coming of the Christian religion, therefore, it was destined to disappear. It would have been too much, however, to have expected the victory of Christianity in this matter to have been an easy and instantaneous one" (Delany, 1907, n.p.). The new converts continued the use of amulets, substituting Christian creeds and symbols for older, heathen writing. Crow posited that "the Church Fathers and intellectuals made the distinction between the miracle of the relics and sacred words of the Bible, *verba sacra*, versus condemned amulets labeled as superstitious magic, a term used to delegitimize their use and imply demonic association" (Crow, 2009, p.97).

Crow also states that "during the Middle Ages, only members of the clergy were educated enough to make the amulets and thus, were the primary supplier of them to their parishioners—although there were non-clergy who sold them too." Furthermore, to Crow, "to the illiterate and uneducated, the distinctions between magic amulets and church-approved amulets were hardly discernable" (Crow, 2009, p.97).

Biblical verses were written down on parchment or paper, which allowed people to carry their power on their body. The use of inscription as a means to protect or ward off evil spirits "stemmed from a belief in early times in the holiness and in the power of words" (Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007, p.121). Children amulets are pinned to the children's clothes and are not to be shown. The book of Psalms, in particular, was a source of protective amulets.

In the Batrie amulet A, Psalm 51 is used. This Psalm is known as "The Miserere: Prayer of Repentance." In the same amulet, the first two verses, which are not popularly known, are not included. They are: "1. For the leader; A Psalm of David" and "2. When Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba" (New American Bible, 2008, p.714).

Inscribed in Batrie amulet B is Psalm 61, a "Prayer of the King in Time of Danger." The first verse of this Psalm, also commonly deleted, is "1. For the leader; with stringed instruments. Amulet of David." Psalm 61 is submission to the will of God and is invoked when protection from evil is

needed.

Amulet A, Section a, consists of a personal prayer that beseeches God to take action, to banish and heal an illness, and to protect from future sicknesses. The prayer is both a plea for deliverance from the current sickness and for the prevention of future illness. Although it does not tell us what kind of disease or ailment Norman had, its use of imperative words such as “heal,” “lift,” “cure,” “turn away,” and “protect,” suggests the existence of a critical illness.

The supplication invokes the name of God in His essence (God, Lord) and God’s qualities (Abaser, Raiser, Chastiser, Healer, Compassionate/Merciful One, Comforter, and Forgiver). It also employs the Christian image of God as "The Physician," and of the Holy Spirit as "the Giver of life." These names and qualities are very common among amulet inscriptions.

The personal supplication reveals a fellowship with God. It also shows faith; trust in the power of prayers, and certitude in the power of the name of Christ: ""Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (New American Bible, 2008, p.1309) “Ask, and you shall receive” (New American Bible, 2008, p.1459); and “Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive” (New American Bible, 2008, p.1336). The personal supplication and the use of the Psalms in both amulets A and B indicate a strong belief by the Batrie family that God exists, hears, and answers.

Commentary

There are many examples of Christian amulets that use Biblical quotations – Psalms, the Lord’s Prayer, God or Christ’s name, and verses from the Bible -- for healing and protection. The Psalms have sacred characters but people who use them for protection believe that they have magic characters as well.

The use of amulets as a conduit between man and the supernatural power and the use of Psalmic verses as healing medium with miraculous power are evident in the use of the Psalmic prayers in the Batrie amulets.

The personal supplication and the use of the Psalms in both amulets, A and B, indicate a strong belief in amulets and their power. The Batrie family, as well as many other immigrants, did not give up the beliefs that they were brought up with in their native land. Health and healthcare beliefs are culturally developed constructs; as such immigrant groups carry with them their own array of notions, superstitions, and practices into territories where there may be other and even contrary healthcare beliefs. Immigrant generations continued to cope with sickness in a strange land and society using their traditional beliefs and practices.

Commonly, the immigrant experience exhibits a generational pattern of assimilation to host country practices and beliefs. First generation immigrants, who maintain their beliefs and customs with little religious transformation, give way to second and third generations, who adapt certain frameworks of belief in their birth country and many no longer, practice the types of beliefs practiced by their parents or grandparents. Acculturation and upward socioeconomic mobility lead to a deeper integration of the Batrie Canada born generation into the normative structures of the hostland.

The use of amulets demonstrates the first generation immigrants' continuity of homeland religious beliefs and practices; but the puzzled reception of these amulets when they were re-discovered, and the evident forgetting of their use among the present day Batries, shows that these practices did not filter down to the Canadian born generations.

Amulets and other religious beliefs, customs and material culture need to be more fully studied from an inter-disciplinary viewpoint and incorporated into our larger historical reconstruction of the experience of first-generation immigrants as they navigated their new home spaces with the religious beliefs and practices they brought with them.

References:

1. Amulet (2007), *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition, Macmillan Reference USA, Vol. 2, 2007, pp. 121-123.
2. Abbasi, S. M. (2017), "A Study of the Evil Eye Phenomenon and How It Is Translated Into Modern Fashion, Textiles, and Accessories," *Indian Journal of Scientific Research* (IJSR), 13 (1), pp. 137-143.
3. Bloxham, B. (2003), "The Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916: Cumulative Radicalization and the Development of a Destruction Policy, Past & Present," No. 181 (1), pp. 141-191.
4. Bonner, C. (1950), *Studies in Magical Amulets: Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 1950.
5. Bosworth, C.E. (1989), "Mardin". The Encyclopedia of Islam, Volume 6, Leiden: E. J. Brill, p. 542.
6. Crow, J. (2009), "Miracle or Magic? The Problematic Status of Christian Amulets," in *Van Discussie tot Beleving: Religiestudies aan de UvA*, ed. Jacqueline Braak and Deirdre Malone, Amsterdam: Ars Notoria, University of Amsterdam, pp. 97-112.
7. Delany, J. (1907), "Use and Abuse of Amulets," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company.
8. Foster, G. (1972), "The Anatomy of Envy: A Study in Symbolic Behavior," *Current Anthropology*, XII (2), pp. 165-202.
9. Hunter, E. (1995), "Amulets and the Assyrians of Kurdistan." *Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society*, IX (2), pp. 25-39.

10. Kontansky, R. (1991), "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Ch. Faraone, New York: Oxford University Press.
11. Lykiardopoulos, A. (1981), "The Evil Eye: Towards an Exhaustive Study," *Folklore*, Vol. 92, No.2, pp. 221-230.
12. Meyer, M., and Richard Smith (Eds.) (1999), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
13. Naff, Alexa (1965), "Belief in the Evil Eye among the Christian Syrian-Lebanese in America", *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 78, No. 307 (Jan. - Mar., pp. 46-51.
14. New American Bible (2008), Psalm 51, Revised Edition, Saint Benedict Press, pp. 714-715.
15. New American Bible (2008), Psalm 61, Revised Edition, Saint Benedict Press, p. 721-722.
16. Rouse, W. L. (2017), "Charmed Lives: Charms, Amulets, and Childhood in Urban America, 1870-1940," *The Journal of American Culture*, 40:1, pp. 21-33.
17. Vaughn, Lisa M. et al. (2009), "Cultural Health Attributions, Beliefs, and Practices: Effects on Healthcare and Medical Education," *The Open Medical Education Journal*, 2, pp. 64-74.
18. Wessely, C. (1924), "Les Plus Anciens Monuments du Christianisme Ecrits sur Papyrus," *Patrologia Orientalis*, 18, pp. 399-400.