Stewarding Collections of Trauma: Plurality, Responsibility, and Questions of Action

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RÉSUMÉ Des efforts consciencieux sont faits à travers le monde pour préserver la documentation liée aux atrocités humaines, dans le but de les reconnaître, d'en apprendre, et peut-être aussi de diminuer la probabilité de futurs torts. Pourtant, pour les archivistes chargés de sauvegarder ces collections, il demeure des questions épineuses sur le plan éthique par rapport aux façons d'accomplir ce travail. Dans cet article nous identifions des défis systémiques et structurels qui entravent les efforts de préserver éthiquement ces collections de trauma. Nos réflexions critiques sont ancrées dans le contexte d'une institution qui se constitue pour conserver le matériel lié à la Commission de vérité et réconciliation (CVR) du Canada. Nous examinons les discussions qui se poursuivent avec les personnes impliquées dans la création et le développement du Centre national pour la vérité et la réconciliation (CNVR), ainsi que notre étude des documents présentés en cour et des reportages des médias portant sur la CVR et le développement du CNVR. Nous signalons l'assemblage de forces socio-techniques, politiques et légales qui ont eu une influence sur les agissements des personnes qui gèrent des collections de trauma. Nous accentuons comment les personnes impliquées dans le développement du CNVR sont des participants dans les initiatives de colonisation du Canada, tout en étant les descendants de cet héritage colonisateur (comme nous le sommes aussi en tant que chercheurs étudiant le développement du CNVR). Afin d'appuyer celles et ceux qui sont confrontés aux questions d'action dans cet espace compliqué, nous nous inspirons du travail d'Iris Marion Young pour éclairer les pratiques des archivistes face aux questions de conflit, de pluralité, de l'exercice du pouvoir personnel et de méfiance qui sont sous-jacentes à la conceptualisation et à la gestion des collections de trauma.

ABSTRACT There are dedicated efforts around the world to steward material related to human atrocities, with aspirations to acknowledge, learn from, and perhaps lessen the probability of further harm. Yet for the archivists charged with stewarding these collections, there remain ethically fraught questions of how to do this work. Through this article, we identify systemic, structural challenges that confront efforts to ethically steward collections of trauma. Our scholarly reflections are grounded in the context of an institution being created to hold materials related to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). We reflect on ongoing discussions with those involved in the inception and development of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) and our review of court documents and media accounts related

to the TRC and development of the NCTR. We call attention to the assemblage of socio-technical, political, and legal forces that influence the actions of those managing collections of trauma. We highlight how those involved in the NCTR's development are participants in and descendants of Canada's legacy of colonizing initiatives (as are we, researchers studying the NCTR's development). To support those facing questions of action in this complicated space, we draw on the work of Iris Marion Young to inform archivists' practice related to the issues of conflict, plurality, agency, and distrust that underlie the design and management of collections of trauma.

Introduction

There are dedicated efforts around the world to steward materials related to human atrocities, with aspirations to document, learn from, and perhaps lessen the probability of further harm. Still, there remain ethically fraught questions of how to do this work. Understanding of the potentiality of the material within the collections (e.g., records, images, testimonials) and the information systems that hold them is shifting, in part because professionals are acknowledging "the tacit narratives of the archive"[1] and attempting to develop practices that better account for pluralistic understandings of these materials, recognizing significant inequalities, silences, and absences in previous professional approaches.[2]

Such calls often reference the post-modernist turn in archival studies, which challenges historical positivist approaches, citing archival scholars who have stressed the need to develop more representative and diverse collections to challenge dominant accounts of history, and to include materials that have been neglected or to reframe materials misrepresented by

1   Eric Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives," *Archival Science* 1, no. 2 (June 2001): 132. Understanding the tacit narrative of the archive is further supported by the work of Terry Cook and Tom Nesmith; see Terry Cook, "Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts," *Archival Science* 1, no. 1 (March 2001): 3–24; and Tom Nesmith, "Seeing with Archives: The Changing Intellectual Place of Archives" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Canadian Archivists, Ottawa, 6 June 1997), cited in "Tacit Narratives," 132.
2   See, for example, Michelle Caswell, "Khmer Rouge Archives: Accountability, Truth, and Memory in Cambodia," *Archival Science* 10, no. 1 (March 2010): 25–44; Michelle Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3–4 (October 2014): 307–22; Sue McKemmish, Shannon Faulkhead, and Lynette Russell, "Distrust in the Archive: Reconciling Records," *Archival Science* 11, no. 3–4 (November 2011): 211–39; Alana Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material: Queering the Archive* (Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books, 2014); Ricardo L. Punzalan, "Cultural Diversity and Post-Colonial Realities: Challenge of Archival Training in the Philippines," *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 1 (2005): 289–93; Kevin L. White, "*Meztizaje* and Remembering in Afro-Mexican Communities of the Costa Chica: Implications for Archival Education in Mexico," *Archival Science* 9, no. 1–2 (June 2009): 43–55.

mainstream repositories.[3] More recent works continue to expand on these arguments, demonstrating how predominant Western European approaches to archival practices are aligned with dominant power structures and negate alternative socio-political narratives.[4] Archival pluralism is increasingly held up as an objective,[5] a compelling goal when combined with the capacities of contemporary digital technologies to provide multiple pathways through a collection.[6]

While digital tools increase the potential for diverse audiences to engage meaningfully with these collections, scholarship in the areas of multi-lifespan information system design,[7] post-colonial computing,[8] traumatic collections,[9] and community archives[10] highlight the difficulties of doing so in ways that avoid reifying and perpetuating past injustices and that lead to different

3   See Terry Cook, "'The Imperative of Challenging Absolutes' in Graduate Archival Education Programs: Issues for Educators and the Profession," *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2000): 380–391; Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3–4 (September 2002): 171–85; Eric Ketelaar, "Archivalisation and Archiving," *Archives and Manuscripts* 27, no. 1 (1999): 54–61; and Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives," 131–41.

4   See Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach"; Andrew Flinn, "Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of the Society of Archives* 28, no. 2 (October 2007): 151–76; Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream," *Archival Science* 9, no. 1–2 (June 2009): 71–86.

5   See Caswell's article with the same phrase: Michelle Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism: What Religious Pluralism (and Its Critics) Can Teach Us about Archives," *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (December 2013): 273–92; Archival Education and Research Institute (AERI), Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group (PACG), "Educating for the Archival Multiverse," *American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2011): 69–101.

6   While this goal is nascent in the archival literature, supporting a wider range of perspectives is not new to individuals who may not self-identify as archivists but have built collections within and for marginalized communities; see Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material*.

7   See, for example, Batya Friedman and Lisa P. Nathan, "Multi-Lifespan Information System Design: A Research Initiative for the HCI Community," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '10)* (New York: ACM, 2010), 2243–46.

8   See Paul Dourish and Scott D. Mainwaring, "Ubicomp's Colonial Impulse," in *Proceedings of the 2012 ACM Conference on Ubiquitous Computing (Ubicomp '12)* (New York: ACM, 2012), 133–42.

9   See, for example, Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism"; Trudy Huskamp-Peterson, *Temporary Courts, Permanent Records* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006); Annette Wierviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

10 See Jeannette Allis Bastian and Ben Alexander, *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory* (London: Facet Publishing, 2009); Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach," 307–22; Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms," *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2013): 95–120; Andrew Flinn, "Independent Community Archives and Community-Generated Content: Writing, Saving, and Sharing Our Histories," *Convergence* 16, no. 1 (2010): 39–51; and Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material*.

systems of inequalities. For example, we argue in this article that interpreting pluralism as needing to show multiple (not even all) perspectives on an issue, particularly when dealing with collections of trauma, is not only impossible but can also do significant harm. Within this scholarly and practitioner landscape, we ask the following: How do those tasked with designing and stewarding information systems that document horrific events guide their actions when working within the limitations of individual capacities, available resources, and institutional and legal structures?

Our research is situated in the context of the emerging National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (hereafter NCTR) at the University of Manitoba, which holds records related to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).[11] The focus of our inquiry in this context is on the institutional and policy infrastructures that will influence the collection, recognizing that these are critical forces in an ever-shifting information ecosystem.[12] To engage this inquiry, we join a growing body of international and Canadian scholars, drawing on the work of political philosopher Iris Marion Young[13] to assist us in identifying and discussing areas of tension that create possible spaces for new understandings to guide action; in particular, we apply her work to the context of our research as those developing the NCTR progress in their work to document unjust events in an inequitable national landscape. We contribute to the ongoing discussion of responsibilities among archivists tasked with designing and managing information systems that document horrific events in human history.[14]

11 John Milloy, "Doing Public History in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *The Public Historian* 35, no. 4 (November 2013): 10–19.

12 Sandra Braman, *Change of State: Information, Policy, and Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

13 In the introduction to the collection *Political Responsibility Refocused: Thinking Justice after Iris Marion Young*, Canadian scholars Loralea Michaelis and Genevieve Fuji Johnson emphasize Young's relevance to those concerned with acting for justice. They note, "To raise questions about political responsibility is to ask not simply whether and how we should act but also whether and in what way we are capable of acting." Thus, our engagement with Young productively situates our work within international and local conversations critically concerned with questions of action. See Loralea Michaelis and Genevieve Fuji Johnson, "Political Responsibility Refocused," in *Political Responsibility Refocused: Thinking Justice after Iris Marion Young*, ed. Johnson and Michaelis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 5.

14 There are many scholars working in this space, including (but not limited to) Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach," 307–22; Abigail C. Durrant, David S. Kirk, and Stuart Reeves, "Human Values in Curating a Human Rights Media Archive," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '14)* (New York: ACM, 2014), 2685–94; Anne Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, "Pluralising the Archives in the Multiverse: A Report on Work in Progress," *Atlantic: Review for Modern Archival Theory and Practice* 21 (2011): 177–85.

First, we position the authors of this piece in order to orient readers as they navigate our argument. We continue by exploring the concept of traumatic collections through the juxtaposition of two examples that appear to be similar in content until closer inspection reveals differences in how they were developed and are managed. As a result, the collections demonstrate the impact of archival design in relation to access. Then we build connections with scholarship on plurality, acknowledging the archivists, technologists, and critical thinkers who inform our work. In particular, we are indebted to the archival scholars who have brought forward pluralism as a way to address Western European domination in archival theory and practice.[15] We argue, however, that pluralism as an archival concept has (not surprisingly) conflicting interpretations and provides little pragmatic guidance to archivists faced with daunting workloads, limited resources, and bounded social, political, and technical infrastructures. At this point, we proceed to outline Canada's recently established NCTR, which houses digital and digitized materials related to the TRC, to ground and contextualize our thinking. To do so, we introduce the material we draw on as data to inform our inquiry, including a description of how it was collected and analyzed. We then engage political philosopher Iris Marion Young's social connection model as our guide for attending to the pragmatic questions of action. Finally, we identify and discuss four related areas of tension that face those working to develop the NCTR, and we connect them with ideas related to Young's social connection model, which we argue is particularly generative for those engaged in this work. These ideas will inform the next phase of our project as we continue to investigate questions related to the management of collections that document unjust events in a conflict-ridden world.

Positioning the Research Team

Reflecting the breadth of scholarship that informs contemporary archival studies, we, the authors of this article, have roots in distinct but cognate scholarly traditions. We draw on our disciplinary backgrounds: information studies and human–computer interaction, archival studies, and socio-political philosophy. We are non-Indigenous people, each of different heritage, living in the nation-state of Canada. As settlers, we have direct experiences with the ongoing, multi-faceted legacy of colonization in Canada.[16] We take care to avoid claims

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15 These include but are not limited to Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism"; AERI/PACG, "Educating for the Archival Multiverse"; Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland, and Eric Ketelaar, "'Communities of Memory': Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas," *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 1 (2005): 146–74; and McKemmish, Faulkhead, and Russell, "Distrust in the Archive."

16 We live, study, and work on the unceded, traditional, ancestral land of the Musqueam people.

of holding or being able to fully comprehend Indigenous perspectives. There is scholarship from incisive Indigenous scholars across the globe working in related areas, which we encourage readers to examine.[17] It is not, however, the sole responsibility of Indigenous peoples to address the concerns we take up in this article. As mentioned above and further explicated below, we are inspired by Iris Marion Young,[18] whose scholarship highlights the importance of situated, reflective discussions of, and actions for, justice. As individuals who are a part of society, we take up our responsibilities in solidarity with others to understand the history of, and work related to, alleviating structural injustices.

Traumatic Collections

For the purposes of this inquiry, we define traumatic collections as purposeful gatherings of materials that seek to include the records of disruptive, violent histories; efforts to document these events (e.g., via testimonials); and/or the subsequent activities that engage truth telling, justice, and/or reconciliation. Records of trauma exist in other types of collections, but for the purposes of this inquiry we focus on deliberate assemblages. Beginning in the 20th century and continuing today, there have been attempts to document atrocities and build collections that facilitate inquiry into events for reasons that range from legal redress, reconciliation and healing, scholarly research, pedagogical use, and activities of remembrance and commemoration. While the intentionalities of these projects share a broad, common goal of documenting injustice, the projects vary in content, context, approach, and scope. Each collection carries with it the decisions that were made about selection, documentation, description, and access, which inherently encompass issues of inclusion and exclusion, as well as inevitable bias at all levels. Below, we juxtapose two collections of Holocaust testimonies: the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies and the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Although both collections deal with the Holocaust, and specifically Holocaust survivor testimonies, there are differ-

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The Musqueam Indian Band is the gracious host of the University of British Columbia.

17   For example, Shannon Faulkhead, "Connecting Through Records: Narratives of Koorie Victoria," *Archives and Manuscripts* 37, no. 2 (2010): 60–88; Allison Boucher Krebs, "Native America's Twenty-First-Century Right to Know," *Archival Science* 12, no. 2 (June 2012): 173–90; Kimberley L. Lawson, "Precious Fragments: First Nations Materials in Archives, Libraries and Museums (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2004); Jennifer R. O'Neal, "'The Right to Know': Decolonizing Native American Archives," *Journal of Western Archives* 6, no. 1 (2015): 1–17, accessed 31 July 2015, http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives/vol6/iss1/2.

18   Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

ences in how they address the complexity of issues and diversity of decisions surrounding the stewardship of these traumatic collections in contemporary socio-technical environments.

The Fortunoff Video Archive, housed at the Yale University Library in Princeton, New Jersey, has its roots in the community of New Haven, Connecticut. In 1979, members of the community sought to document the experiences of local Holocaust survivors. The impetus for the collection, "to allow the survivor to speak,"[19] informed its methods of recording testimonies, which developed in stages. The collection includes testimonials from affiliated institutions.[20] Access to the almost 4,500 testimonies is facilitated by a searchable bibliographic database (both online and in-house at Yale University Library). Each entry is catalogued by geographic names and topics discussed in the testimonies.[21] While curated vignettes are viewable online and educational resources are available by request, access to the testimonies in their entirety occurs only on-site. The Fortunoff Video Archive is open to the public by appointment, following a Western European archival access model.

In contrast, the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, established in 1994 by filmmaker Steven Spielberg, "changed the scale of testimony collection."[22] The collection, housed at the University of Southern California in its Shoah Institute of Visual History and Education, contains over 53,000 testimonies. The interview model for the Shoah testimonies differs in regulation from those at Yale vis-à-vis fixed length and structure. At the conclusion of a Shoah testimony interview, the survivor is asked to provide a message indicating "what he or she would hope to leave as a legacy for future generations,"[23] and, unless the survivor opposes it, his or her family is invited to reunite with the survivor on camera. Holocaust historian Annette Wierviorka terms this concluding section of the interview "the equivalent of the epilogue to Schindler's List."[24] The Shoah collection has expanded beyond the Holocaust to include testimonies from the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and 1937–38 Nanjing Massacre, and there are plans to include testimonies from the Armenian Genocide.[25] The USC Shoah collection is indexed to one-minute segments with

19 Wierviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, 108.
20 For a detailed history of the Fortunoff Video Archive, see Joanne Weiner Rudof, "A Yale University and New Haven Community Project: From Local to Global" (October 2012), available via the Yale University Library's Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies "About" section, accessed 31 July 2015, http://web.library.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/local_to_global.pdf.
21 Yale University Library, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, "Edited Programs: Short Testimony Excerpts, Introduction," accessed 31 July 2015, http://web.library.yale.edu/testimonies/excerpts/introduction.
22 Wierviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, 110.
23 Ibid., 114.
24 Ibid., 114.
25 USC Shoah Foundation: The Institute for Visual History and Education, "Visual History

terms covering names, dates, geographic places, and so on, in order to facilitate searching via the web-based software developed for the project, Visual History Archive (VHA). Access to the VHA is through subscriber universities and institutions equipped with Internet2 capability.

The overviews above touch on variances between the collections, which ultimately frame how users interact with the materials they hold. At their core, both collections have the intention of preserving eyewitness testimony to atrocity, but we seek to draw attention to their differences. While both collections facilitate access to the stories of Holocaust survivors, engagement with these collections is informed by how the materials they hold were created, catalogued, and are currently managed – that is, the structuring of content vis-à-vis the questions put to the survivor, the duration of the recording, the cataloguing and indexing of the testimonies based on bibliographic instruments (e.g., customized thesaurus, Library of Congress subject headings, etc.), and the technological infrastructures that facilitate access and engagement. These are only some of the factors that privilege the telling of certain types of narratives and negate others. How users engage with survivor testimonies is shaped curatorially by the decisions made regarding collection, preservation, and access, as well as temporally by the broader social, cultural, and political landscape at the time of their creation.

The distinctive contexts of these collections, and the varied approaches to their management touched on above, provide hints of the complex choices that led to their current manifestations. In part, it is the recognition that such distinctly positioned choices, in any collection, directly influence others' interactions with the holdings, which has led to calls to account for and embody pluralism.[26] We posit that the conflicts and tensions that are an essential part of traumatic collections amplify these calls.

Pluralism and Archival Collections

Cultural theories such as post-colonialism, feminism, and deconstructionism have informed critical scholarship across many fields related to archival studies.[27] In part, these theories challenge notions of neutrality, objectivity, and universalism, and information professionals continue to (re)imagine the

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Archive: About the Visual History Archive," accessed 31 July 2015, http://sfi.usc.edu/vha/about.

26   See, for example, Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism."

27   See Shaowen Bardzell, "Feminist HCI: Taking Stock and Outlining an Agenda for Design," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '10)* (New York: ACM, 2010), 1301–10; Dourish and Mainwaring, "Ubicomp's Colonial Impulse"; and Melanie Feinberg, "Synthetic Ethos: The Believability of Collections at the Intersection of Classification and Curation," *Information Society* 28, no. 5 (October 2012): 329–39.

implications of inter-subjective discourse on the design and management of information systems.[28] Computer scientists Alan Borning and Michael Muller suggest that drawing on theories of pluralism, particularly when engaged in ethical (i.e., value sensitive) information system design, can assist those addressing the challenges of inter-subjectivism.[29]

Similarly, conceptualizations of pluralism have begun to inform archival practice (e.g., theory and education). These conceptualizations are nascent, evolving, and, of course, multiple. As an example, McKemmish and Russell consider Indigenous philosophies of memory and oral recordkeeping in their report "Trust and Technology: Building Archival Systems for Indigenous Archival Memory." The work represents an attempt to foster dialogue between Western and Indigenous practices of memory through collaborative archival practice.[30] The inclusion of both divergent and collaborative voices is meant to account for pluralism, in this case acknowledging multiple perspectives as a force to invigorate rather than stymie a commitment to stewarding records across time and space.

In "Educating for the Archival Multiverse," a document produced by the Archival Education and Research Institute's Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group, the focus is on advocating for a more pluralistic approach to archival education in service to "greater diversity and cultural sensitivity in practice and scholarship."[31] The authors acknowledge the need to address and engage the complexity, "'messiness' and nuance" of pluralism, suggesting that a pluralistic approach recognizes the social norms embedded in decision-making and moves away from imposing professional values on communities, instead recognizing the need for an approach that is self-reflective and alert to the possibility of irreconcilability.[32]

In her article "On Archival Pluralism: What Religious Pluralism (and Its Critics) Can Teach Us about Archives," Caswell presents another interpretation of archival pluralism.[33] Her account develops the aspirational criteria "energetic engagement, understanding, strengthened commitment, and dialog," while also calling for particular attention to avoid "claims of universality, inattention

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28 See Feinberg, "Synthetic Ethos"; Melanie Feinberg, Daniel Carter, and Julia Bullard, "A Story Without End: Writing the Residual into Databases," in *Proceedings of the 2014 Conference on Designing Interactive Systems (DIS '14)* (New York: ACM, 2014), 385–94; and Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material*.

29 Alan Borning and Michael Muller, "Next Steps for Value Sensitive Design," in *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '12)* (New York: ACM, 2012), 1125–34.

30 Sue McKemmish and Lynnette Russell, "Koorie Archiving: Trust and Technology – Final Report" (last updated 23 November 2012), accessed 31 July 2015, http://infotech.monash .edu/research/about/Centres/cosi/projects/trust/final-report/.

31 AERI/PACG, "Educating for the Archival Multiverse," 69.

32 Ibid., 72.

33 Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism."

to power, silencing dissent, and collapsing of difference."[34] Recognizing the significance of Caswell's work in this area, we take up her call to "open up this conceptualization for further development, debate, and disagreement,"[35] in order to critically engage promising, yet arguably problematic, aspects of her account of archival pluralism. In particular, we find that her attempt to avoid universality and embrace multiplicity[36] is unsuccessful and risks re-inscribing what archival pluralism aims to turn away from. In addition, we offer a critique of her articulation of understanding as a principle of archival pluralism, but this arises from a philosophical disagreement between scholars rather than a contradiction found in her work.

We begin by highlighting the contradictions. While Caswell claims that "our evolving notion of archival pluralism must avoid claims of universality ... and the collapsing of difference,"[37] we argue that her reliance on the work of the philosopher William James prevents her from effectively moving away from universalizing tendencies. Examining the aspects of James' work that Caswell draws from demonstrates that, while there is explicit intention to move away from universalism, difference is constructed as distributive. The implication here is that difference is part of a whole that, when united, constitutes a cohesive reality. As a result, the work maintains universalistic implications. This ineffective turn away from universalism is most apparent in a passage from James' writing, cited by Caswell as an influence on her understanding of archival pluralism:

The pluralistic form which I prefer to adopt is willing to believe that there may ultimately never be an all-form at all, that the substance of reality may never get totally collected, that some of it may remain outside of the largest collection of it ever made, and that a distributive form of reality, the each-form, is logically as acceptable and empirically as probable as the all-form.[38]

In our reading of James, the individual "each-forms" depicted work together to constitute a singular, unified understanding of reality, which re-inscribes the universality that the work is trying to move away from, by approaching difference as a part/whole relationship.

As a result, when Caswell discusses how to engage a multiplicity of perspectives in archives, James' influence is present in Caswell's notions of universality. This shows up explicitly in her discussion in "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach" in which she argues, "A conscious effort to document

34   Ibid., 273.
35   Ibid., 288.
36   Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach," 313.
37   Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism," 285.
38   William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909; repr., Seattle: CreateSpace, 2011), 20; Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism," 276.

a multiplicity of perspectives, even those perspectives which we find abhorrent, such as the perspectives of those considered to be perpetrators, allows for a more complete view of the past and helps us to resist the temptation to promote singular crystallized narratives about complicated pasts."[39] Here, Caswell embodies a sense of universality in her aim to capture a complete understanding of reality. This implies that a multitude of perspectives provides different ways of looking at the same phenomena, rather than recognizing that different perspectives can and do experience entirely distinct phenomena as well as the same phenomena differently.

Caswell's contradiction around universality arises not only in her discussion of multiplicity but also within her assertion of a principle of understanding.[40] For Caswell, understanding is achieved through education about those who have different perspectives and epistemologies. She claims, "I must continue the significant work of filling in the gaps in my own education, learning, for example, about indigenous philosophies and transgender politics and postcolonial theory. Increased understanding is the basis on which pluralism rests."[41] Caswell's efforts to understand those who are different from her embody the same part/whole relationship depicted above, whereby it is theoretically possible (if given enough time) to achieve a complete understanding of reality through self-educating efforts. Further, it implies that learning *about* those who are different leads to a sufficient understanding of the perspectives of those who are different from oneself.

This depiction of a principle of understanding, we argue, can only exist with Caswell's implicit universalist approach, precisely because it presumes we always have the potential to understand through education, ignoring the impact of direct experience, which is shaped by context and positionality. To problematize this notion of understanding, we turn to Young's work in "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought." In this article, Young argues that the presupposition of the ability to adequately imagine a reversibility or symmetry of perspectives effectively erases irreconcilable differences because imagining the position of another can only occur through assumptions developed from the position(s) that one actually exists within the world. As Young argues,

the images of symmetry and reversibility suggest that people are able to understand one another's perspective because, while not identical, they are similarly shaped, and for that reason replaceable with one another.... Such images of reflection and

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39 Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach," 317.
40 In fact, it could be the unchecked undertones of universality, combined with her principle of understanding, that produces a universalist approach to multiplicity, when an approach to multiplicity need not have such characteristics.
41 Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism," 286.

substitutability ... support a conceptual project of sameness among people and perspective, at the expense of their differences.[42]

While Young's argument diverges from that of Caswell, who is asking us to come to understand those different from us through self-education – not through imagining ourselves as another – Caswell appears to suggest that education can suffice as a direct replacement for first-hand, context-based, positional experiences.

Rather than reject the notion of understanding those who are different from oneself, however, Young presents another concept of understanding, one more resonant with our approach to archival pluralism, which entails the recognition that one can never fully know positionalities not directly held. Young asserts, "If I assume that there are aspects of where the other person is coming from that I do not understand, I will be more likely to be open to listening to the specific expression of their experience, interests, and claims."[43] In this sense, a notion of understanding entails an openness to listen. It is to understand that asymmetries will not be overcome or lessened, not to understand the content and affects of those who are different. In our own context, we understand that we cannot know as those positioned differently than us, but we can listen and work together to move forward. Reflecting on our experiences working with cultural institutions in British Columbia that are part of a national history of taking belongings from First Nations communities, we are acutely aware of how easily a stance of trying to understand and represent the perspectives of others can slip into practices of appropriation. Social groups may find it problematic, or even harmful, for outsiders to learn about memory practices and other details of the group's culture.

We note that Caswell's depiction of understanding as an archival pluralism principle contradicts her own attempts to address problematic engagements explicitly with those who are positioned differently. For example, she draws on the work of Tracy Neal Leavelle to address potentially problematic engagements:

Indeed, as Leavelle notes, dialog has previously opened up indigenous religious practice to appropriation, misinterpretation, and destruction and has rarely occurred on equal terms. But, rather than disregarding pluralism in totality, Leavelle cautions us to both acknowledge the historical context and political motivations for such pluralism and to leave space for dissent and disruption.[44]

42 Iris Marion Young, "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, and Enlarged Thought," in *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2997), 44.

43 Ibid., 49.

44 Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism," 283.

We take this as evidence that Caswell believes she is addressing what we are critiquing, but we find that her development of the concept of understanding does not leave room for incompatible understandings.

For a framing of pluralism that is not grounded in universalism, we turn to recent work in the field of human–computer interaction. Abigail C. Durrant, David S. Kirk, and Stuart Reeves studied archivists collecting and managing the materials held by the Kigali Memorial Museum in Rwanda.[45] The museum was created as part of a nationwide effort to memorialize the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. Like other memorial sites across Rwanda, the museum holds objects and records, but in addition thousands of bodies are interred on its grounds. As part of their findings, the researchers discuss the importance of voice to museum personnel. The researchers propose that other voices, those who might question or contradict aspects of the museum's storytelling, have no place in this particular museum. Rather than suggest that this is a flaw in the museum or the work of its archivists, Durrant and colleagues claim that this approach arises from the unique context of the collection and is integral to its position and identity.

In the context of handling sensitive materials at the Kigali Memorial Museum, given the relationship between the staff as members of the survivor community, the archival institution and the material it houses, it is problematic, perhaps harmful, to suggest that diverse cultural values should be supported through this institution. The potential for appropriation of materials by those with differing and potentially opposing values is of serious concern to museum personnel. It may also conflict with the mandate of the museum and Rwanda's anti-genocide ideology legislation. Durrant, Kirk, and Reeves argue that outsiders working with this community to develop information- and communication-technology support for the archives need to acknowledge the specificity of the cultural values at play within it.[46]

In the discussion of their work, Durrant, Kirk, and Reeves demonstrate an awareness of and appreciation for pluralism.[47] Here, pluralism refers to designers being aware that they will be working for and with persons with different positionalities, and their work will need to acknowledge and speak to those positions. The collection and the system that houses it are not expected to be all things to all people (i.e., represent all perspectives) nor are the archivists supposed to be able to understand all positions. Rather, an awareness and respect for pluralism orients the professionals working in this space so that they realize different systems hold distinctly different stories based on the world views of those who enact the system. Here, pluralism is evident in the

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45   Durrant, Kirk, and Reeves, "Human Values," 2685–94.
46   Ibid., 2693.
47   For example, Durrant, Kirk, and Reeves cite Borning and Muller, "Next Steps for Value Sensitive Design," 1125–34.

recognition of difference across systems rather than an expectation that all differences can (or should) be represented by one system.[48] Yet awareness of difference alone easily leads to relativism. Relativism is of little help to an archivist left without insight into how to take action and how to evaluate different options.

The examples above demonstrate how pluralism, in all of its multiple representations, can help us in our work to acknowledge different positionalities and our limitations with respect to understanding these positions. It remains a difficult task to incorporate these critical perspectives into the pragmatic work of designing and managing real-world information and records systems.[49] We now return to our motivating question: How do those who are tasked with designing and managing information systems that document horrific events guide their actions when working within the limitations of individual capacities, available resources, and institutional and legal structures? We propose that a significant amount of intellectual and pragmatic work remains in order to deepen our understanding of ethical decision-making concerning archival practice and traumatic collections. It is in this unsettled arena that the collection in the NCTR is taking shape.

Contextual Grounding

For more than 130 years, the Government of Canada, in collaboration with numerous Christian churches, established and operated Indian residential schools for Aboriginal children.[50] These institutions were part of a systemic, multi-pronged effort to address "the Indian Problem" by taking the "Indian out of the child." The schools' explicit purpose was to limit or eliminate parental involvement in the socio-cultural development of Aboriginal children. Besides removal from their loved ones, home, language, and land, additional horrific abuses were committed against many young children sent to these schools.[51] The last residential school was closed in the mid-1990s.

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48 Durrant, Kirk, and Reeves, "Human Values," 2685–94.

49 As demonstrated by Helen Halbert and Lisa P. Nathan, "Designing for Discomfort: Supporting Critical Reflection Through Interactive Tools," in *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW '15)* (New York: ACM, 2015), 349–60.

50 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement between Canada and the Plaintiffs of the National Class Action on Indian Residential Schools (8 May 2006), http://www .residentialschoolsettlement.ca/settlement.html.

51 These abuses are further outlined in Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Report of Canada* ([Winnipeg]: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), accessed 31 July 2015, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/ Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf.

In 2006, after decades of silence and denial from the Canadian government and church entities, survivor groups leveraged federal class-action suits, forcing the government and religious organizations to work with residential school survivor societies to negotiate a settlement.[52] As a direct result of Schedule N of the Settlement Agreement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to investigate and address select portions of Canada's Indian residential school history. For more than five years, TRC commissioners and their staff travelled across Canada to bear witness to survivors' stories, gather statements, write reports, and engage with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians to foster processes of truth telling and reconciliation.[53]

The Settlement Agreement's Schedule N stipulated not only the establishment of the TRC but also the creation of a centre to preserve and make accessible material generated and received by the TRC during its work.[54] This collection is an attempt to collect, preserve, and provide access to materials related to the TRC, including the lives, family, and community experiences of Aboriginal peoples who attended residential schools; the creation, administration, and funding of the schools (including any abuses that occurred); and apologies, litigation, and attempted resolution.[55] Beyond what was determined in the initial settlement agreement, no ongoing funds are set aside by the federal government or the churches for the NCTR's continued development or operational budget.[56] In 2013, the University of Manitoba won the bid to create the NCTR.[57] At the time of writing, we are unable to determine the official opening date for the NCTR. Plans are underway to formalize a series of partners or hubs across Canada to serve as additional access points to the NCTR's digital materials.[58]

52 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.
53 The history of the TRC and Indian residential schools in Canada is far more complicated than this simplified presentation; see Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth*.
54 When describing the role of the TRC in establishing the NCTR, the commissioners state, "The TRC worked tirelessly to discover exactly what it was that formers students of the Residential Schools and all Canadians need to leave behind.... The answers are contained in nearly 7,000 video statements of Survivors and intergenerational Survivors of the schools, and in the millions of documents from government and churches that attest to their experience. These will form the core of the NCTR archive, accessible to all Canadians for all time"; see University of Manitoba, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, "A Message from the Commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)," accessed 31 July 2015, http://umanitoba.ca/centres/nctr/commisioners.html.
55 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Interim Report" (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012), accessed 31 July 2015, http://www.myrobust.com/websites/trcinstitution/File/Interim%20report%20English%20electronic.pdf.
56 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.
57 Mia Rabson, "U of M Picked for National Research Site: To Keep Residential School Papers," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 4 May 2013.
58 Ibid.

As noted earlier, this article is focused on the questions of action for archivists working with traumatic collections, thus the relevance of the NCTR. Yet this focus does not preclude the recognition that distressing materials are currently dispersed throughout and embedded within other institutional collections that do not, as a whole, consider their content traumatic. This, in part, stems from the fact that these collections may be void of a context that acknowledges their potential harms or may exist within a framework that conceals or hides their traumatic implications, which in itself can be a source of trauma.[59] Additionally, in employing pluralism, it is recognized that materials that may be a traumatic resource or collection for some are not for others. By focusing explicitly on entire collections framed as traumatic, it is not presumed that insights gained or practices developed will be directly applicable to instances of trauma that arise in archival contexts where this is not anticipated or acknowledged. Nonetheless, we propose that by engaging the generative frictions discussed below, archivists can develop insights into how to act in situations where trauma arises unexpectedly. Furthermore, the development of more explicitly traumatic collections that, at times, entails the assembling of particular resources (e.g., Aboriginal student ledgers from church archives) and the reframing of them as traumatic when this was previously concealed or unacknowledged, is a part of the process for designing and managing collections of trauma.

Research Approach

To date, the data for this inquiry have been drawn from three strands of investigation: (1) written documents (e.g., scholarly literature, court documents, media accounts); (2) transcripts of oral conversations with those involved in the development of the NCTR's collection; and (3) weekly captures of the NCTR's website[60] for announcements and policy document updates. The research team is engaged in a process of deep, iterative reading of these materials, guided by Charmaz's inclusive, interpretive approach to grounded theory; this "approach explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it."[61] We continue to collect and analyze data, and this work represents our understandings of the data to date.

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59 Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material*.

60 University of Manitoba, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, http://umanitoba .ca/centres/nrCentre/.

61 Kathy C. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 10.

Strand 1

Media articles related to the NCTR were collected through federated searches in Canadian print journalism databases, using the search terms "residential school," "truth and reconciliation," "Indian affairs," and "Independent Assessment Process," to locate articles from 1980 to 2014. This process yielded 200 media articles related to the residential schools up to the August 2014 court case that would determine the fate of nearly 10 years of Independent Assessment Process (IAP) documents.[62] Legal cases (both lawsuits and court cases for civil charges of abuse) mentioned in the articles above were collected through the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) database. We systematically collected reports and updates on the ongoing activities of the NCTR through news media and online blog postings.[63] Scholarship in areas of archival and information studies, law, human–computer interaction, and social theory have been read closely in an ongoing literature review in support of analysis and investigation.

Strand 2

We initiated a series of conversations over the past two years with professionals associated with the development and/or management of the NCTR.[64] These are Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals working to inform and/or build the system(s) that will hold and provide access to the collection, as well as professionals who were stewards of the materials before they were brought forward as part of the TRC process. We do not ask participants to self-identify as survivors or intergenerational survivors, although this information may be shared during the conversation.[65]

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62   We expand on the IAP records in the section below titled "Example: Independent Assessment Process Records."

63   See, for example, Jesse Boiteau, *Jesse's Thesis: Behind the Scenes of the TRC's (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) National Research Centre (NRC)* (blog), https://jesseboiteau .wordpress.com. While it was active from September 2013 to May 2014, we captured the posts to this blog, a public site through which University of Manitoba master's student Jesse Boiteau published reflections on the work of the National Research Centre (as it was then called). These posts were published as part of an in-progress master's thesis.

64   We do not mention specific job roles as these would identify our participants.

65   In recognition of the risk of unintentionally re-traumatizing survivors of residential schools or their family members, we limit recruitment to participants who have (or had) a professional role in the development of the NCTR at the University of Manitoba or one of the NCTR's planned partners (hubs). As individuals who have stepped forward to be involved in the development of the NCTR and/or associated hubs, they hold or have held positions that provide them with first-hand knowledge of the potential for harm in engaging with the materials held by these entities, directly or through discussion. Therefore, they are well positioned to decide whether they want to participate in a research project discussing the development of information policies related to the NCTR. Similarly, we recruit individuals

Once a research participant has been identified and recruited, and their consent granted, a member of the research team has a conversation with her or him regarding opinions on the development of the NCTR's collection, specifically asking for reflections on the policy development process. The interviews take place face to face or through video conferencing applications. Digital audio recordings are made only after the participant has provided consent. After each set of interviews, interviewees are provided with a transcript for corrections and clarification. Approximately every six months, discussions with newly recruited or continuing participants inform our understanding of changes over time.

To date, we have completed two rounds of conversations: round one with 12 participants and round two with five repeat participants and one new person. More discussions are planned in the months ahead. Our conversations with participants have ranged in length from 30 minutes to two hours. In the initial interviews, we asked participants to describe their roles in relation to the TRC and/or the NCTR's activities and to tell us about the goals of the NCTR as they understood them. We also asked them to speak to challenges and opportunities of the NCTR and its work.

Strand 3

Starting in November 2013, we began to capture the pages about the NCTR manually from the University of Manitoba's website. Beginning a year later, we began a more systematic, twice-weekly capture using Adobe Professional to record the growing number of pages devoted to announcements and policy document updates.[66]

Findings: Emergent Complexities

Through our deep reading of material associated with the TRC and the NCTR, and our conversations with those playing a role in the development and/or management of the latter, our understanding of the NCTR is that of a politically fraught entity with staunch supporters, fierce critics, and countless others who fall somewhere in between or outside of these polarizing positions. Conversations[67] included frank assessments of the constraints of the NCTR

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who have taken a role in an organization or institution that holds records related to the TRC (e.g., church or government archivists). These individuals are knowledgeable about the issues, and they are well positioned to determine whether they want to participate in a research project discussing potentially distressing topics.

66 University of Manitoba, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, http://umanitoba .ca/centres/nrCentre/.

67 We have chosen not to use direct quotes from the conversations in this account. Although

(e.g., time, money, personnel, legal jurisdiction, court agreements); individuals' aspirations for the NCTR; and individuals' concerns regarding the need to recognize, give voice to, and care for survivors in the years ahead. Participants shared their optimism and aspirations for the mission, as well as the challenges that face the NCTR, and their frustrations concerning its development.

As we pursued the three strands of inquiry and began to work with the resulting material, we were struck by (1) the many constraints facing those working on the NCTR and (2) the dedication of those involved to do what is right. We do not mean to suggest that there is consensus regarding what is right, but we consistently noted that participants' efforts related to the NCTR were described with passion and we discovered how often difficult, ethical considerations were brought to the forefront.[68]

Some interviewees we approached were deeply committed to and optimistic about the future, while others declined to be interviewed because of their discontent with aspects of the TRC and/or the NCTR; they did not want to be mistaken as supporting these efforts.[69] During the interviews, the areas of complexity that were shared included the structures and processes set out by Schedule N of the Settlement Agreement; actions taken by the TRC; the NCTR's placement as a unit within a provincial university; the valuing of Indigenous law and protocol; and the makeup of the governance structure.

Example: Independent Assessment Process Records

As an example of the deep-seated complexities in this space and the context in which actions and decisions are nested, in this section we provide a brief entry into a particular set of contested records, the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) records.

What is the Independent Assessment Process (IAP)?

As part of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history, the IAP is a federal court–approved adjudication process. Involving representation from Aboriginal groups, churches, the government, and the legal profession, the IAP is a mech-

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it is accepted and expected practice to share direct quotes using the voices of participants in qualitative work to enable readers to evaluate analysis and interpretation, we intentionally avoid this practice in this report. The risk of linking participants with their quotes is too high. We assured those who shared their time and expertise that we would not identify them; there are few people working in this space, and any descriptions we might give to assist the readers' understanding could unintentionally identify the individual to their colleagues and communities.

68   We suspect that this is not unusual for those working in the area of traumatic collections.
69   We are not suggesting that this is the only reason people declined to participate.

anism to provide former Indian residential school students who suffered sexual or serious physical abuse a process for settling claims out of court. Striving to create a fair, expeditious, and neutral claimant-centred process, the IAP is headed by the Adjudication Secretariat, which settles claims and awards compensation. The chief adjudicator directs the work of the secretariat, which operates independently of the government.[70]

A survivor who submits a claim to the IAP is required to go through a number of codified steps in order to receive a resolution (and, in successful cases, compensation) to his or her claims of abuse. Once the application is received, the secretariat rules on its eligibility and, if accepted, requests further supporting documentation. The government then submits its research regarding those named in the survivor's claim, and the secretariat informs those accused and invites their contribution to the process. At that point, either a resolution is sought without a hearing or the adjudicator may request a private hearing with the survivor and potentially a separate hearing with the accused, but the participation of the accused is neither guaranteed nor required. The formal process is concluded with the adjudicator's decision, which is binding.[71] Applications to the IAP were required to be filed by 12 September 2012, with no exceptions and/or post-deadline appeals allowed. Thousands of cases remain in progress.[72]

Complexity and the IAP records

One of the heated disputes arises from this question: What will happen to the information generated by the IAP process (e.g., survivor testimony, supporting documents, etc.) related to individual claims? Going into the IAP process, the parties were told that records would be destroyed, but some now argue that by destroying these records, the most compelling and traumatic testimonies and material related to the residential schools will be lost. Others feel that the promises made to the parties going into the process need to be honoured and the accusations (against teachers, fellow students, clergy, etc.) kept confidential. Multiple voices have weighed in about whether to destroy

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70 Established as set out in "Schedule D" of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the IAP began in 2007 and is scheduled to wrap up in the spring of 2016, when it will have resolved almost 38,000 claims. See Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat/Secrétariat d'adjudication des pensionnats indiens, "Adjudication Secretariat Statistics: From September 19, 2007 to June 30, 2015," accessed 31 July 2015, http://www .iap-pei.ca/information/stats-eng.php.

71 Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat, "Information: FAQ," accessed 31 July 2015, http://www.iap-pei.ca/information/faq-eng.php.

72 Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat, "Information: Adjudication Secretariat Statistics from September 19, 2007 to June 30, 2015," accessed 31 July 2015, http://www .iap-pei.ca/information/stats-eng.php.

or archive these documents, and about where these documents should be preserved and by whom. The TRC and the chief adjudicator of the IAP put forward two Requests for Direction (RFD) to the court.[73] The issues being debated are whether or not the IAP records should be destroyed and, if kept, who should be their custodian moving forward. The chief adjudicator sought an order that the IAP documents be destroyed, whereas the TRC sought an order that the documents be archived by the government.[74]

In his ruling on the RFDs, Justice Perell, while unpacking the complex nature of the IAP process and the concerns of its participants, privileged those he regards as having the strongest voices in the room – the survivors. He states, "It is the survivor's story to tell and it is the survivor's individual decision that must be respected."[75] Perell ruled that the IAP records should be destroyed unless survivors give their explicit consent to include material related to their claim.[76] Such a ruling, although challenged by a number of parties in the Ontario Court of Appeal, potentially sets the stage for the NCTR to receive, manage, preserve, and administer access to some of these contentious records over time.

The nature and complexity of the entities' relationship to the IAP process and records are made explicit throughout Justice Perell's decision. One evocative example is found in his description of the government's position "to be that of some sort of trinity where there are three emanations from one omnipotent unity."[77] Charged with multiple functions with regard to the IAP, the government has possession of the documents in two different capacities – as an entity responsible for defending its role in the process and challenging claimants, as well as through its relationship with the autonomous secretariat. Canada's role becomes even more complicated under the broader IRSSA, for which it provides the infrastructure to the apparatus that makes up the IAP and Common Experience Payment, respectively, as well as supplying billions of dollars in funding for the settlement, while also having the right to challenge entitlements. Expanding on the complex role of Government of Canada, Justice Perell adeptly states, "Perhaps the kabbala, which has ten emanations

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73 While these are the two entities that brought official RFDs before the court, there are a number of other affiants recognized in Justice Perell's decision regarding the disposition of the IAP records, including Indian Residential School Survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, the Government of Canada, and others. See *Fontaine v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2014 CanLII 283 (ON SC).

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., 6.

76 Justice Perell ruled that the IAP records should be destroyed, but only "after a 15-year retention period, during which the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools may choose to spare some of their documents from destruction and instead have the documents (with redactions to protect the personal information of others) transferred to the National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)." Ibid., 3.

77 Ibid., 12.

of the godhead, is a better analogy than the trinity because Canada's emana-
tions, sometimes conflicting emanations, are present throughout the IRSSA."[78]

The above example of the complexity of the role of Canada in the IAP
process helps illustrate the multi-faceted relationships and resulting tensions that
surface in one group of records, some of which may be housed in the NCTR.
Such stewardship engages the NCTR's agents in issues of ethics, account-
ability, and professional practice in a broader socio-political environment.

Facing the Questions of Action

The complexity of ethical concerns exemplified by the ongoing litigation
around the IAP records is evident throughout the contexts in which the NCTR
operates. As we continued our scholarly inquiry, we kept returning to our
inquiry around action: How do those tasked with designing and managing
information systems that document horrific events guide their actions when
working within the limitations of individual capacities, available resources,
and institutional and legal structures?

Through this inquiry, we identified further synergies with the work of Iris
Marion Young. As emphasized earlier, Young's primary concern entails ques-
tions about guiding ethical action in an unjust and complicated world. At the
time of her death, Young was expanding her concept of the social connection
model of political responsibility, demonstrating a need to account for respon-
sibility for structural injustices beyond an explicitly individualistic conception
of responsibility.[79] The social connection model addresses how to develop an
ethical account of individual action pertaining to socio-political injustices
without needing to demonstrate direct, linear causation of an explicit harm
committed by a specific individual. This helps determine an individual's
connection to and responsibility to address a structural injustice and how one
might act to address it.[80]

Young emphasizes that individuals are part of collectives born into socio-
political situations that they did not create. Yet through their engagement in
daily activities, individuals influence and/or perpetuate socio-political struc-
tural processes; the conditions we are born into shape, limit, and enable our
social relations, abilities to act, and responsibilities to one another.[81] She is
clear, however, that the social connection model does not replace or negate
the need for individualistic accounts of responsibility.[82] Rather, these models
address different types of responsibilities that often interact and work together

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78   Ibid., 12.
79   Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
80   Ibid.
81   Ibid., 100.
82   Ibid.

in necessary and complicated ways. Through her writing, Young helps us in our research to avoid perpetuating unjust power structures, appropriating the world view of others, or placing the archivist in a position of being accountable for a multiplicity of perspectives.

Utilizing the social connection model entails recognizing injustice and the structures and processes that support it as an initial, essential step. The next is figuring out what specifically positioned individuals can do about it, within their particular context and given their relations to the harm being done, aiming for forward-looking transformation. Although Young's framework leaves a great deal of discretion with individual actors, she proposes that people can be guided by reflecting on how power, privilege, interest, and collective ability provide insights into how they, as individuals, are part of a collective, and how they are enabled and constrained to act based on their particular circumstances.[83]

The IAP process and debate over the future of IAP records, as discussed above, exemplifies the interrelated nature of individual and collective responsibility for justice. Although a survivor's testimony involves recounting the specific actions of individual(s) who harmed her or him, the responsibilities for justice resulting from these individual acts are intricately tied to collective actions, past and future, of those working within and for the federal government and church organizations.

Areas of Friction

Below we discuss areas of contention that we identified through our three strands of inquiry. Combined with Young's social connection model, these areas can provide guidance for how to make choices and take action (or not)[84] as this project and the NCTR progress in their development: ongoing conflict, shifting capacities, deepening plurality, and incorporating distrust. We propose that these frictions can generate the energy and space needed for change.

Ongoing Conflict

Trudy Huskamp-Peterson, a leading scholar on truth commissions and their records, has defined truth commissions as (1) temporary bodies; (2) established to look at and report on a pattern of abuses; (3) by a previous repressive

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83 Ibid., 142–47.
84 See Genevieve Fuji Johnson's expansion of Young's social connection model for guidance on how we can delineate when we are or are not responsible to take action; Genevieve Fuji Johnson, "Social Connections and Our Political Responsibilities to Future Generations," in *Political Responsibility Refocused: Thinking Justice after Iris Marion Young*, ed. Genevieve Fuji Johnson and Loralea Michaelis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 114–17.

regime; (4) oftentimes during or directly after a regime change.[85] The first two parts of this definition apply well to Canada's TRC. It was a temporary body; its closure was in the summer of 2015. The TRC was established to investigate and report on a limited pattern of abuses of Aboriginal children and their communities.[86] Other claims regarding government-initiated abuses against Canada's Aboriginal children (e.g., the Inuit and Innu of Labrador residential schools, community hostel students in northern Canada, and day students) are excluded from the IRSSA.[87] However, reflecting on the latter two characteristics, in light of the reading and conversations we have engaged in over the past two years, and as Canadian citizens and residents, we question whether it is reasonable to state that there has been a repressive regime change in Canada.[88] Rather, we propose that neither the phrase "post-colonial regime" nor "post-conflict context" accurately describes the contemporary Canadian context. Repression and conflict continue, just in different forms.

As mentioned earlier, conflict led to the TRC. The Canadian federal government and many of the churches involved denied for decades that any harm had been done to Aboriginal children, parents, or communities through the Indian residential schools. It is only through civil court action, protests, and marches – sustained conflict – that space was created for the TRC. Court filing by the TRC to force the federal government to improve the collection and digitization of documents related to residential schools was necessary to make room for a change in these practices.[89] It is through these struggles that generative opportunities for change were made possible. Young also captures the need for disruption in her discussion of the social connection model when she states, "Social change requires first taking special efforts to make a break

85 Trudy Huskamp-Peterson, "Preserving the Records of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions" (paper presented at the National Research Centre Forum, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Vancouver, 1–3 March 2011).

86 "Schedule N," in *Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Trust Deed*, 2013, accessed 31 July 2015, http://umanitoba.ca/admin/indigenous_connect/media/IND-00-013-NRCAS -TrustDeed.pdf, 8–9.

87 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "Interim Report," 8–9.

88 For example, Prime Minister Stephen Harper denied that there was a systemic problem revealed in the extremely high percentage of Canada's Aboriginal women targeted in violent crimes. Canada's highest political representative called these events individual crimes rather than a sociological phenomena arising out of a history of discrimination and oppression. Alex Boutillier, "Native Teen's Slaying a 'Crime,' Not a 'Sociological Phenomenon,' Stephen Harper Says," *Toronto Star*, 21 August 2014, accessed 31 July 2015, http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/08/21/native_teens_slaying_a_crime_not_a _sociological_phenomenon_stephen_harper_says.html.

89 Canadian Press, "Huge Number of Records to Land on Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Doorstep," *CBC News: Aboriginal*, 23 April 2014, http://www.cbc.ca/news/ aboriginal/huge-number-of-records-to-land-on-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-s -doorstep-1.2617770.

in the processes, by engaging in public discussions that reflect on their work-ings, publicizing the harms that come to persons who are disadvantaged by them, and criticizing power agents who encourage the injustices or at least allow them to happen."[90] In this understanding, conflict serves as a point of disruption that enables reflection and movement for change regarding social processes that have become mundane and assumed yet are continually reinforced and upheld through the daily activities of many people.

Thinking through ongoing conflict in the context of the NCTR, its infor-mation policies will be bound by federal and provincial legislation, court agreements, and the policies of the University of Manitoba and/or the institu-tions that host hubs. Yet the vision statement for the NCTR speaks to privil-eging Aboriginal voices and practices.[91] While vision statements are necessar-ily aspirational, absent is the recognition of and space to engage the ongoing influence and need for conflict in order to make room for changes to coloniz-ing practices and norms within these institutional structures. We argue for the recognition of both ongoing conflict and the need for conflict in order to make room for change as a place of generative friction for those trying to achieve the goals set forward in the NCTR's visioning statement. The lack of explicit recognition of the need for conflict stymies efforts to address past and ongoing injustice. How can we adequately recognize the need for ongoing conflict in order to work toward justice?

Shifting Capacities

"How can we enhance our capacities to respond?"[92] This question, posed by J.L. Schiff when engaging Young's social connection model, reflects aware-ness that individuals, collectives, and institutions have capacities, abilities, and agency that are fluid and change over time. As contexts evolve, they enhance and constrain our access to resources, the structures within which we work, and our ability to take action. Our capacities, then, rather than being quantifi-able, are responsive and generative to our environments. In her work, Schiff seeks ways to understand power that is "not available for use" and singular,

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90 Young, *Responsibility for Justice,* 150.
91 University of Manitoba Libraries, National Research Centre Bid Committee Fonds, box 1, folder 3; for an inventory of the committee's records, see the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections online finding aid, http://umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/collections/complete_holdings/ead/html/NRC_Bid_Committee_13.shtml#tag_did, accessed 31 July 2015.
92 J.L. Schiff, "Power and Responsibility," in *Political Responsibility Refocused: Thinking Justice after Iris Marion Young*, ed. Genevieve Fuji Johnson and Loralea Michaelis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 59.

but is rather multiple and characterized as "emergent," "circulat[ory]" and "generat[ive of] social positions and relations between them."[93] Through these observations, made by Schiff in response to Young, we wish to call attention to discussions of the professional responsibilities of archivists, recordkeepers, technologists, and information professionals in relation to their capacity to respond. Discussions of professional roles, such as those of Caswell, noted earlier in terms of the responsibilities of archivists, are critical to engage. By recognizing and articulating both one's obligations and responsibilities,[94] individuals can identify the capacities they need to foster in order to work toward fulfilling obligations they are currently incapable of addressing.[95] There is a need to identify and acknowledge a person's limitations to act, present in environments such as the NCTR, which operate within often competing and/or conflicting socio-political paradigms. Although the position of the archivist may be one of privilege, the norms and expectations of such a position may inhibit a professional's capacities to respond because roles and practices come to be viewed as naturalized, fixed, or neutral.[96] What steps can be taken today to enhance one's future capacity to better address injustice? Responses to this question bring to mind the work of Caswell and her calls for supporting plurality through archival practice.[97]

Deepening Plurality

Despite the effort dedicated professionals put into developing archival holdings that are trustworthy, authentic, and reliable, whether viewed as fixed or contingent, there will be situations that render the truth of the collection's materials false. As mentioned earlier, the work of Durrant, Kirk, and Reeves reinforces this point: material in the Kigali Genocide Memorial collection, although seen as trustworthy, authentic, and reliable by its stewards, could be rendered false by those who disagree with the framing of the atrocities remembered.[98] What possibilities can a deeper understanding of multiplicities and paradoxes of pluralism generate for the NCTR and those working within it?

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93 Ibid., 44.
94 Here, we are drawing on the distinction made between obligations and responsibilities as articulated by Genevieve Fuji Johnson and Loralea Michaelis. For them, responsibility is distinct from obligation in that it pertains to the ability to act. They claim, "To raise questions about political responsibility is to ask not simply whether and how we should act but also whether and in what way we are capable of acting"; see Johnson and Michaelis, "Political Responsibility Refocused," 5.
95 Ibid., 4–5.
96 Schiff, "Power and Responsibility," 43.
97 Caswell, "On Archival Pluralism."
98 Durrant, Kirk, and Reeves, "Human Values," 2685–94.

Incorporating Distrust

The same juridical and political systems that conceptualized, created, managed, and perpetuated the harms of the Indian residential school system continue to be forces that shape the work of the NCTR. Canadian universities contributed to the running of the Indian residential schools (e.g., training teachers); one such university now hosts the NCTR, whose staff are university employees.[99] The university works within the legislative and juridical boundaries of the province of Manitoba and the nation-state of Canada. The mechanisms created to address the harms are bounded by the same institutions that inflicted the harms. Young assists here by addressing the ongoing influence of structural processes and the importance of understanding history in order to move forward. She argues that

understanding how structural processes produce and reproduce injustice requires having an account of how they have come about and operated in the past coming up to the present. Having such a backward-looking account also helps those of us who participate in those processes understand our role in them.[100]

Given that structural injustices are processes leads the backward-looking aspects to motivate the forward-looking aspects: "The injustices produced through structures have not reached a terminus, but instead are ongoing. The point is not to compensate for the past, but for all who contribute to processes producing unjust outcomes to work to transform those processes."[101] On this account, taking up responsibility with a social connection model entails seeking to transform rather than repair structural injustice. Whereas we began the project with a focus on opportunities for building trust through information policies, as a consequence of our conversations we now recognize the importance of making room for distrust.[102] How might acknowledging and recognizing the role of distrusting materials within the collection (that were themselves created through unjust processes) support the critical thinking of those who access the system?

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99 This is demonstrated in the apology of the president of the University of Manitoba, David T. Barnard, to residential school survivors and his acknowledgement of the university's complicity with the schools; see University of Manitoba, "About U of M, Office of the President: Reports and Commentary, University of Manitoba Statement of Apology and Reconciliation to Indian Residential School Survivors," 27 October 2011, https://umanitoba .ca/about/media/StatementOfApology.pdf.

100 Young, *Responsibility for Justice,* 109.

101 Ibid., 109.

102 Whereas McKemmish, Faulkhead, and Russell offer ideas for overcoming distrust, we are arguing that distrust can generate action and prompt change when entities make efforts to understand why the conditions of distrust are necessary; see McKemmish, Faulkhead, and Russell, "Distrust in the Archive."

Future Work

We are in the early days of our inquiry, as are those who are designing, implementing, and managing the NCTR at the University of Manitoba. We continue to collect and review court documents and media coverage related to the NCTR and its partners while engaging in ongoing conversations with those involved in the development of the collection. Through these materials and conversations, we continue to develop our understanding of the frictions involved in designing and managing traumatic collections and, in turn, the generative possibilities for developing policies that inform and guide ethical, reflective, and situated information practices.

Conclusion

Through this article, we have identified systemic frictions faced during efforts to steward collections of trauma ethically in a conflict-ridden world. We engaged recent scholarship on the concept of archival pluralism. We agreed that pluralism is a strong conceptual tool for professionals who esteem the work of generations of archivists, while they recognize significant inequalities, silences, and absences in previous professional approaches. Yet we have pointed to the difficult practical questions that remain: the questions of action. We reflected on initial discussions with those involved in the development of the NCTR and our ongoing review of websites, reports, court documents, and media accounts related to the TRC and the NCTR. We highlighted how those involved in the NCTR's development are participants in and descendants of Canada's legacy of colonizing initiatives, as is the research team. Through the writing of Iris Marion Young, and the Canadian scholars who continue to build upon her work, we demonstrated that political responsibility is something that is taken up by individuals, yet it cannot be fulfilled without conjoined efforts with others. We identified frictions related to the questions of conflict, capacity, plurality, and distrust that underlie collections of trauma. These reflections guide our ongoing investigation, and we offer them for other scholars and designers to question, refute, engage with, and build upon.

It is critical to acknowledge the harms perpetuated through historically dominant archival theories and practices. Yet we propose stepping away from the immobilizing nature of guilt and blame, which can easily overwhelm those working within the context of an institution such as the NCTR. Those working in this space need to focus on the practices they are currently engaged in and the histories of these practices, and question how they can work toward shifting them when moving forward. How can those engaged in archival work at the NCTR make choices and take action in the present that avoids perpetuating harms and reinforcing dominant power imbalances? As stated

by Young, "Where individuals and organizations do not have sufficient energy and resources to respond to all of the structural injustices to which they are connected, they should focus on those where they have a greater capacity to influence structural processes."[103] In other words, do the work you can today, preferably with others. Make decisions recognizing the way the world is (flawed and needing change), rather than the way the world should be.

Acknowledgements

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103 Young, *Responsibility for Justice,* 144.

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