Investigating the Impact of the Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada

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ABSTRACT The Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada is an online resource for community engagement and historical awareness with a particular emphasis on empowering survivors of state-enforced sterilization. This article reports on a qualitative impact study that reflects on secondary literature and interviews with 14 project participants to assess the extent to which the Living Archives impacted its members (including scholars, students, community partners, and survivors) and fulfilled its own stated goals (knowledge mobilization, research, and disability activism). While some of these impacts initially appear limited, the article, using the lenses of community archives, social justice impact, ethic of care, and critical disability studies, explores how the Archives counters the symbolic annihilation attempted by eugenic discourses and programs by giving both voice and editorial autonomy to survivors of Alberta's sterilization program. The Living Archives project also developed a strong network of academics, activists, community members, and survivors, who modelled ways in which archival pursuits can successfully draw on an ethics of care. This article suggests that the Living Archives project should serve as a model for other digital archival projects to emulate.

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RÉSUMÉ *Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada* est une ressource en ligne pour l'engagement communautaire et la sensibilisation historique qui met un accent particulier sur l'autonomisation des survivants aux stérilisations imposées par l'État. Cet article rend compte d'une étude d'impact qualitative qui offre des réflexions sur des sources secondaires et des entretiens avec 14 participants à un projet visant à évaluer l'étendue avec laquelle *Living Archives* a eu une incidence sur ses membres (parmi lesquels des chercheurs universitaires, étudiants, partenaires communautaires et survivants) et a rempli les objectifs fixés (connaissance, mobilisation, recherche et militantisme en faveur des droits des handicapés). Bien que ces retombés semblent de prime abord limitées, cet article, adoptant l'angle des archives communautaires, de l'incidence de la justice sociale, de l'éthique de la compassion et de l'étude critique de la situation des handicapés, explore comment *Archives* s'oppose à la tentative d'annihilation symbolique des discours et programmes eugénistes en donnant à la fois une voix et une autonomie éditoriale aux survivants du programme de stérilisation de l'Alberta. Le projet des *Living Archives* a également développé un réseau solide de chercheurs, d'activistes, de membres de la communauté et de survivants, offrant des modèles d'avenues pour un développement réussi des archives sur les bases de l'éthique de la compassion. Cet article avance que le projet *Living Archives* devrait servir de modèle pour les autres projets d'archives numériques.

Introduction

The last eugenics program in Canada ended in British Columbia in 1973. Despite a landmark wrongful sterilization case in 1996 and publications on the subject since then, many are unaware that Alberta and British Columbia had robust eugenics programs.[2] Some of these programs' survivors are still alive, but few have had the opportunity, freedom, or agency to tell their stories and testify to this injustice. The Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada, which ran from 2010 to 2015, sought to address this silence. The project raised awareness of historical and contemporary manifestations of eugenics, created new and innovative scholarly resources about Canadian eugenics, and captured and disseminated the stories of sterilization survivors and vulnerable populations – stories that have been largely omitted from historical accounts.[3]

This article represents the second of two exploratory studies on the social justice impact of archival records, both made possible by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The first, by Heather MacNeil, Wendy Duff, Alicia Dotiwalla, and Karolina Zuchniak, investigated the impact that a severe paucity of records has had on survivors of abuse in the Scottish residential school system.[4] This article reports on a qualitative impact study – done through interviews with many of those who played significant roles in the project – of an archives documenting the history of eugenics in Alberta. Together, these two studies are intended to present different views of the social justice impact of archival records. Here, we study the degree to which the Living Archives achieved its own stated goals – raising awareness, creating new scholarly materials, and capturing and disseminating untold stories – rather than measuring its impact against an external rubric. We also seek to understand the project's impact on its creators and on external audiences by analyzing its impact through social justice and critical disability lenses.

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[2] In 1995, Leilani Muir sued the Alberta government for wrongful sterilization. *Muir v. The Queen in Right of Alberta* was a landmark case in Canada. The verdict was announced on 25 January 1996. For more information on the case, see Sheila Gibbons, "Leilani Muir Sues Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Alberta," Eugenics Archives, accessed 17 October 2018, http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/51731e47eed5c6000000003f.

[3] For more information on the project, see Eugenics Archives, accessed 19 May 2019, http://eugenicsarchive.ca.

[4] Heather MacNeil, Wendy Duff, Alicia Dotiwalla, and Karolina Zuchniak, "'If There are No Records, There is No Narrative': The Social Justice Impact of Records of Scottish Care-Leavers," *Archival Science* 18, no. 1 (2018):1–28.

Context

The Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada began in 2010, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRC's) now-defunct Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) program. A CURA grant supported research alliances between post-secondary institutions and community and voluntary organizations.[5] The Living Archives connected research scholars, community partners, and sterilization survivors to educate the public about the history of eugenics in Western Canada. The Archives now operates as an online resource for community engagement and historical awareness, with a particular emphasis on empowering survivors of state-enforced sterilization through oral testimony. Its website hosts 12 interactive tools designed for exploring the Archives; these include an encyclopedia, several timelines, biographies, video interviews, and oral testimonies.[6] The project had three overarching goals:

1. To increase awareness about the history of eugenics in Canada, both past and present (*knowledge mobilization*)
2. To create innovative academic resources for scholars across various disciplines (*research*)
3. To actively involve community organizations and vulnerable individuals whose stories have been omitted from the Canadian memory of eugenics, disability, and inclusion (*disability activism*)

In many ways, the Living Archives functions more like a community archives than a traditional institutional archives. While definitions of *community* can be complex and fluid, Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd propose that "the defining characteristic of community archives is the active participation of a community in documenting and making accessible the history

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[5] SSSHRC, "October 2009 Competition," Archived Funding Opportunity Descriptions, Government of Canada, 6 September 2013, accessed 19 May 2019, http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/cura-aruc-eng.aspx#archived.

[6] Eugenics Archives website, accessed 19 May 2019, http://www.eugenicsarchive.ca.

of their particular group and/or locality *on their own terms*."[7] Community archives allow a self-defined community, often one excluded from institutional archives and mainstream historical institutions, to make communal decisions about how its past is collected, described, and accessed, effectively controlling the representation of its collective history.[8] While these archives often collect traditional archival records, they also acquire "artifacts, artworks, clothing, oral histories, photographs and film, leaflets, badges, newspapers, books, grey literature – all items which individually, and more importantly when viewed as a collection, are perceived as reflecting significant aspects of the community's life."[9] The Living Archives fits into the community archives framework as it collects video oral histories by and about those affected, directly or indirectly, by both historical and contemporary eugenic thinking – that is, oral histories that are created, described, and controlled by those whose lives they document.

Literature Review

This article builds on the literature of impact, community archives, ethic of care, critical disability studies and archives, and testimony to investigate the impact of the Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada project. Before reviewing these bodies of literature, we provide an overview of the ideas supporting eugenic programs and their implementation in Canada.

Eugenics

In the late 19th century, eugenics was introduced as a program for "human improvement" through controlled breeding for desirable heritable characteristics. The theoretical precepts of eugenics purported that heredity – the passing

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[7] Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream," *Archival Science* 9, no. 1–2 (2009): 73 (emphasis in original).

[8] Jimmy Zavala, Alda Allina Migoni, Michelle Caswell, Noah Geraci, and Marika Cifor, "'A Process Where We're All at the Table': Community Archives Challenging Dominant Modes of Archival Practice," *Archives and Manuscripts* 45, no. 3 (2017): 202–15.

[9] Andrew Flinn, "Archival Activism: Independent and Community-Led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions," *Interactions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 7, no. 2 (2011): 6, accessed 22 September 2018, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9pt2490x.

of traits from parents to their offspring – governed not only physical attributes, but also personal character, morality, and mental capacity. As both a social movement and a subject of scientific and medical study, eugenics attempted to address intractable social problems such as criminality and social dependency as well as so-called "inferior" or "unfit" human traits.[10] When concerns of "feeble-mindedness" and "genetic purity" became increasingly prevalent in public discourse, government control and oversight of reproduction, via public education, institutionalization, and compulsory medical procedures, were proposed and implemented in a number of countries.[11]

Canada was not exempt from these trends and, in fact, passed several pieces of eugenics legislation in the early 20th century. In 1928 and 1933, respectively, Alberta and British Columbia became the only two Canadian provinces to implement sterilization legislation, each in the form of a *Sexual Sterilization Act*. While the two Acts came into effect within five years of each other, Alberta initiated a far more aggressive eugenics program. Approximately 3,000 people were sterilized in Alberta between 1928 and 1972, while the same period saw 200 operations in British Columbia.[12] The heightened activity of Alberta's eugenics program has been attributed to the creation of the Alberta Eugenics Board, whose four members reviewed inmates referred to them by the province's mental hospitals and facilities.[13] The board had the power to recommend surgical operations for sexual sterilization of men and women determined to be at a "danger of procreation" due to their presumed mental disability.[14] Victims of sterilization were perceived to present cognitive or developmental impairments; to be engaged in activities that rendered them "social defectives," such as prostitution; or to belong to populations considered "genetically inferior" and therefore predisposed to "feeblemindedness." This characterization was overwhelmingly

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[10] Mariana Valverde, "Racial Purity, Sexual Purity, and Immigration Policy," in *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings*, ed. Barrington Walker (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2008), 176.

[11] Jana Grekul, Arvey Krahn, and Dave Odynak, "Sterilizing the 'Feeble-Minded': Eugenics in Alberta, Canada, 1929–1972," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 17, no. 4 (2004): 358.

[12] Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885–1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 47.

[13] Deborah C. Park and John Radford, "From the Case Files: Reconstructing a History of Involuntary Sterilisation," *Disability and Society* 13, no. 3 (1998): 322.

[14] Ibid.

applied to members of Indigenous populations, immigrants, and women.[15]

Research on the history of involuntary sterilization in Canada is relatively recent and therefore often broad, with limited focus on individual cases or experiences. In order to address the paucity of first-person accounts and personalized testimonies, a growing body of scholarship, particularly in the area of disability studies, is using oral history and individual testimony to explore the legacy of eugenics in Canada and its contemporary manifestations.[16] As Claudia Malacrida notes, "the memories of those who lived in and worked at the institution, and the hidden official records contained in the institutional archives, offer a stark counter-narrative to the official institutional memory."[17] Other counter-narratives are offered in the arena of *newgenics*, a concept broadly understood as both "contemporary manifestations of eugenic thought" and a modern "backdoor to eugenics."[18] Although explicit eugenics programs have been shuttered in Canada for decades, scholars and activists are increasingly identifying modern eugenic modes of thought and practice that have "emerged in light of new technological developments, referring to ideas and practices that appeal to scientific advances and genetic knowledge with the aim of improving mankind and curing or eliminating genetically based illness."[19] In practice, these expressions of newgenics take the form of biomedical and genetic interventions such as pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, prenatal testing, and selective abortion and of non-biological interventions such as automatically removing children in the case of parental disability, advising long-term use of "preventative" birth control, and limiting access to resources about sexuality.[20] While

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[15] Claudia Malacrida, "Contested Memories: Efforts of the Powerful to Silence Former Inmates' Histories of Life in an Institution for 'Mental Defectives,'" *Disability and Society* 21, no. 5 (2006): 398.

[16] See Malacrida, "Contested Memories," 397–410; *Hear My Voice: Stories Told by Albertans with Developmental Disabilities Who Were Once Institutionalized*, ed. Karin Melberg Schwier (Edmonton: Alberta Association for Community Living, 2006); Nic Clarke, "Opening Closed Doors and Breaching High Walls: Some Approaches for Studying Intellectual Disability in Canadian History," *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 39, no. 78 (November 2006): 467–85; Robert Wilson, "The Role of Oral History in Surviving a Eugenic Past," in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, ed. Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 119–38.

[17] Malacrida, "Contested Memories," 400.

[18] Robert A. Wilson, "Eugenic Thinking," *Philosophy, Theory and Practice in Biology* 10 (2018): 5, accessed 19 May 2019, https://philpapers.org/archive/WILET-3.pdf.

[19] Caroline Lyster, "Newgenics," Encyc, 14 September 2013, accessed 17 October 2018, http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/5233c4395c2ec5000000008a.

[20] "What is Newgenics?" Eugenics to Newgenics, accessed 19 May 2019, https://eugenicsnewgenics.com/2014/05/14/what-is-newgenics/#What%20is%20Newgenics%20References.

the definition of newgenics will benefit from further refinement and adoption across eugenic discourses, it offers a terminological means of capturing eugenic thought and behaviour sustained in Canada since the end of explicit sterilization programs in the 1970s and a way for individuals to contextualize their contemporary experiences in testimony and dialogue.[21]

Impact

The online Cambridge Dictionary defines *impact* as "a powerful effect that something, especially something new, has on a situation or person."[22] In the information field, impact studies are well-established, especially as they relate to the assessment of library and museum services. More recently, archives have begun to receive similar treatment, though these assessments generally relate to different categories: the educational, economic, and social impact of archives; the impact of archival activists; and the affective impact of records.[23] While these various dimensions of impact are worth considering, many can be subsumed under an umbrella phrase for a kind of impact more closely associated with the goals and mission of the Living Archives project: the social justice impact of archives.

In the last two decades, the archival community has been increasingly interested in the intersection of archives and social justice, both as a concept and as a call to action. David Wallace's analysis of the social justice archival literature

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[21] For a further discussion of *newgenics* and modern manifestations of eugenic thought, see Erika Dyck, "Newgenics and the Politics of Choice: A Historical Look at Canada's Psychiatric Institutions in the 1970s," in *Preventing Mental Illness: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Despo Kritsotaki, Vicky Long, and Matthew Smith (Cham, CHE: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 237–56; Susan Ledger, Sarah Earle, Elizabeth Tilley, and Jan Walmsley, "Contraceptive Decision-Making and Women with Learning Disabilities," *Sexualities* 19, no. 5–6 (2016): 698–724; Karen Stote, "The Coercive Sterilization of Aboriginal Women in Canada," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 36, no. 3 (2012): 117–50; and D. Stehlik, "A Brave New World? Neo-Eugenics and its Challenge to Difference," *Violence Against Women* 7, no. 4 (2001): 370–92.

[22] "Impact," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed 16 March 2018, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/impact.

[23] Morgan Daniels and Elizabeth Yakel, "Uncovering Impact: The Influence of Archives on Student Learning," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 39, no. 5 (2013): 414–22; Wendy Duff and Joan Cherry, "Archival Orientation for Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study of Impact," *American Archivist* 71, no. 2 (2008): 499–529; Community Archives Development Group, *The Impact of Community Archives: Summary of Independent Research Commissioned by the Community Archives Development Group* (CADG) (n.p.: Community Archives Development Group, 2007) accessed 19 May 2019, http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/resource/summary; Elizabeth Yakel, Wendy Duff, Helen Tibbo, Adam Kriesberg, and Amber Cushing, "The Economic Impact of Government Archives," *American Archivist* 75, no. 2 (2012): 297–325; Sonia Yaco and Beatriz Betancourt Hardy, "Historians, Archivists, and Social Activism: Benefits and Costs," *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 253–72; Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez, "'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing': Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," *American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (2016): 56–81.

concludes that, though writings on social justice have increased substantially since 2000, and even more dramatically since 2010, the phrase *social justice* remains undefined and somewhat vague.[24] At the same time, numerous scholars identify strategies for assessing the social justice impact of archives; these scholars include Duff, Flinn, Suurtamm, and Wallace, who posit five starting points for conceptualizing social justice impact. First, understanding power and its unequal distribution is critical to understanding social justice and injustice. Second, social justice is a complex concept whose many dimensions apply "not only to economic inequalities, but also to structures of non-recognition and marginalisation." Third, social justice impacts are "not binary (absent–present) but complex and multi-dimensional and change and evolve over time." Fourth, social justice impact can, and most probably will, be different for different groups of people. Finally, impacts can be individual and collective, "can be studied at multiple societal levels (macro, meso, and micro)," and can be positive or negative, short-term or long-term.[25]

These five points, while comprehensive, can make it difficult to grasp a causal link between an archives and its social impacts. Social justice efforts by archival and records professionals may lead to widespread outreach and social impact beyond the initial act of record preservation or acquisition. Small efforts can make the records of marginalized communities visible, lead to increased funding to support further acquisition and preservation efforts, and empower communities by placing value in their records.[26] Yaco and Betancourt Hardy surveyed 195 historians, educators, and archivists to analyze the impacts of activism (defined as "activities that are intended to achieve social or political change") by cultural heritage and social history professionals on their institutions and communities.[27] Their study suggests that, while assessments of social impact consider impact on wider communities, these activist efforts can also have transformative impacts on the professionals who manage collections.

Social impacts of archives are typically located in the development of personal and community identity, the preservation of culture, the broadening

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[24] David Wallace, "Archives and Social Justice," in *Currents of Archival Thinking*, 2nd ed., ed. Heather MacNeil and Terry Eastwood (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2017), 271–98.

[25] Wendy M. Duff, Andrew Flinn, Karen Suurtamm, and David Wallace, "Social Justice Impact of Archives: A Preliminary Investigation," *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (2013): 319.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Yaco and Betancourt Hardy, "Historians, Archivists, and Social Activism," 253.

of understandings of history, and the positive representation of communities.[28] As Duff et al. note, "social impacts tend to be long term," and "archives act in concert with systems of education, jurisprudence, legislation, social networks, political activism, and other institutions and individuals, in order to make change."[29] Traditional and quantitative methods of measuring impact are ill-equipped for measuring this type of impact. In the last few years, several archival scholars have begun to employ qualitative and ethnographic methods that better capture the nuanced, complex, multi-causal impacts of archives. These methods provide equally effective tools for illustrating reality and can also be used to strengthen quantitative data.[30] The project discussed in this article is informed by calls for narrative methodologies – which use storytelling, mythmaking, and narratives in "the formation, maintenance, and day-to-day operations of archival institutions"[31] – as sites for qualitative measurements of impact.

Impact and Community Archives

Many community archives have a vested interest in fostering a sense of social justice and personal and community identity, but their impact is also observed in other areas. For example, the UK-based Community Archives Development Group[32] has found that community archives have a positive financial impact on their communities, in part increasing the "livability" of neighbourhoods, generating income and transferable job skills, and, in at least one case, rehabilitating a historic building scheduled for destruction. Using questionnaires and detailed case studies, the research has found that community archives also have wide-ranging impacts in terms of developing volunteers' skills; preserving narratives

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[28] Caroline Wavell, Graeme Baxter, Ian Johnson, and Dorothy Williams, *Impact Evaluation of Museums, Archives and Libraries: Available Evidence Project* (Aberdeen, UK: Robert Gordon University, 2002).

[29] Duff et al., "Social Justice Impact of Archives," 333.

[30] MacNeil et al., "If There are No Records, There is No Narrative," 1–28; Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives?" 71–86; Diana E. Marsh, Ricardo L. Punzalan, Robert Leopold, Brian Butler, and Massimo Petrozzi, "Stories of Impact: The Role of Narrative in Understanding the Value and Impact of Digital Collections," *Archival Science* 16, no. 4 (2016): 327–72.

[31] Diana E. Marsh et al. "Stories of Impact," 331. Marsh et al. also note that professionals who work with ethnographic collections, for example, are very reluctant to use numeric assessments, given the colonial legacy of knowledge production – that is, the ways in which such assessments (particularly but not limited to quantitative assessments) have historically been used to further subjugate colonized populations.

[32] Name has been changed to Community Archives and Heritage Group.

not found in mainstream institutions; and promoting community pride, citizenship, empowerment, and social inclusion.[33]

While the intended recipients of the social impact of community archives may be relatively small, that group also benefits from immense cultural impact. For example, Kirsten Thorpe and Monica Galassi illustrate the ways in which archival materials may impact Indigenous communities, especially those who have had limited access to their cultural heritage. Finding one's community's language and cultural heritage materials can lead to a greater societal impact, including redress for generational traumas, as items can be "brought together for community use" in ways that were not previously possible.[34]

Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) have investigated the affective or emotional impacts of archives, with a particular emphasis on the impacts of community-based archives documenting groups that have been marginalized on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and ability. The UCLA Community Archives Lab has created a toolkit to help community archives assess their affective impact. Drawing on Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth's *The Affect Theory Reader*, the lab defines *affect* as "'those visceral forces beneath, alongside,' feeling and emotions, encompassing the conscious, the semi-conscious, and that which is 'other than conscious knowing.'"[35] That is, affect includes the non-cognitive, non-linguistic, and non-rational forces that undergird thought, action, and relationships.[36] Their report notes that "participants demonstrate affective impact when they express changes in emotions, or how they feel about themselves, their communities, or the world, as a result of interactions with or at community archives. Such affective impact may be positive or negative."[37]

Borrowing and building on the concept of *symbolic annihilation* from feminist media studies scholars, Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez

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[33] Community Archives Development Group, *The Impact of Community Archives*.

[34] Kirsten Thorpe and Monica Galassi, "Rediscovering Indigenous Languages: The Role and Impact of Libraries and Archives in Cultural Revitalisation," *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 45, no. 2 (2014): 81–100.

[35] Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1, quoted in UCLA Community Archives Lab, *Assessing the Affective Impact of Community Archives: A Toolkit* (Los Angeles: UCLA Community Archives Lab, 2018), 5, accessed 19 May 2019, https://communityarchiveslab.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/InitialToolkit-compressed.pdf.

[36] UCLA Community Archives Lab, *Assessing the Affective Impact of Community Archives*, 5.

[37] Ibid.

have conducted interviews and focus groups to explore the affective dimensions of seeing members of one's own community absent, marginalized, or misrepresented in mainstream archives. Representation – or its lack – in archives has a powerful affective impact, they assert. They further propose the term *representational belonging* to describe "the ways in which community archives empower people marginalized by mainstream media outlets and memory institutions with the autonomy and authority to establish, enact, and reflect on their presence in ways that are complex, meaningful, substantive, and positive to them in a variety of symbolic contexts."[38] In another study, Caswell, Alda Allina Migoni, Noah Geraci, and Cifor have interviewed 17 community archives founders, staff, and volunteers at 12 sites in Southern California to confirm that such concepts resonate with lived experience. Based on this empirical data, they propose a tripartite framework for discussing the impact of community archives in the wake of symbolic annihilation: ontological impact, epistemological impact, and social impact.[39] Caswell has posited that archival representation fights back against the symbolic annihilation, or representational erasure, of marginalized and non-hegemonic communities, either through inclusion in archival collections themselves or through the ways archives arrange, describe, and make their collections accessible to certain user groups.[40]

Ethic of Care

Caswell and Cifor argue that archival considerations of social justice should move away from a traditional rights-based approach and adopt a framework based on feminist ethics, especially the ethic of care, which was developed by scholars in the 1980s.[41] In 1982, the ground-breaking work *In a Different Voice* argued that traditional models of moral development were biased against girls and women because they emphasized a male perspective of objectivity and rights instead of a female perspective, which focuses on empathy and compassion in

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[38] Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez, "To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing," 57.

[39] Michelle Caswell, Alda Allina Migoni, Noah Geraci, and Marika Cifor, "'To Be Able to Imagine Otherwise': Community Archives and the Importance of Representation," *Archives and Records* 38, no. 1 (2017): 5–26.

[40] Michelle Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives and the Fight against Symbolic Annihilation," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 4 (2014): 26–37.

[41] Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," *Archivaria* 81, no. 1 (2016): 23–43.

moral decision-making.[42] The ethic of care has five major features, according to Virginia Held: it focuses on caring for particular individuals for whom one has a responsibility; it values emotion, rather than pure reason, in choosing actions; it rejects the view that abstract reasoning is necessarily less biased; it reconceptualizes notions of private and public; and, finally, it reconceives of the individual as relational and interdependent rather than self-sufficient and independent.[43] Nel Noddings argues that, in the caring relationship, the carer should exhibit two characteristics: engrossment, or thinking about someone to gain a greater understanding about them, and motivational displacement, where the carer's behaviour is shaped by the needs of the recipient of care. Noddings also suggests that, if the relationship is truly caring, "both parties contribute to the relation; my caring must be somehow completed in the other."[44] Finally, she distinguishes between "caring for," which requires face-to-face contact, and "caring about," which "requires some concern but does not guarantee a response to one who needs care."[45] Working in the context of disability studies, Eva Kittay argues that the ethic of care allows us to view people as moving in and out of relationships of dependency throughout their lives. She posits that moral deliberations require not only reason, but also empathy, emotional responsiveness, and perceptual attentiveness, while moral harm is not only a violation of rights but also a "consequence of failures in responsibility and responsiveness."[46]

Critical Disability Studies and Archives

Recently, scholars, including Malacrida, have begun considering the relationship between disability and archives. Malacrida suggests that archives that are currently not available to researchers could provide insight into the official histories of residential care facilities.[47] Park and Radford found that the case files of the Alberta Eugenics Board provide a glimpse into the "hand of officialdom"

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[42] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[43] Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 10–13.

[44] Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2nd ed., updated (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 4.

[45] Ibid., xiv.

[46] Eva Feder Kittay, "The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability," *Ratio Juris* 24, no. 1 (2011): 53.

[47] Malacrida, "Contested Memories."

and "glimpses of the individual stories of those who were sterilised."[48] Elizabeth Tilley, Jan Walmsley, Sarah Earle, and Dorothy Atkinson reviewed research on the sterilization of women in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Nordic countries, as well as oral histories of women who had been sterilized without their consent. The authors note that the records rarely include the opinions of women who were sterilized and call for an end to this "roaring silence."[49] In a recent article, Chloe Brownlee-Chapman, Rohhss Chapman, Clarence Eardley, Sara Forster, Victoria Green, Helen Graham, Elizabeth Harkness, Kassie Headon, Pam Humphries, Nigel Ingham, Sue Ledger, Val May, Andy Minnion, Row Richards, Liz Tilly, and Lou Townson discuss their project, the Inclusive Archive of Learning Disability History.[50] This project sought to uncover "hidden histories," connect institutional and personal accounts of learning disabilities, and enable people with learning disabilities to access their heritage. The authors – some of whom are disabled themselves – highlight concerns that surfaced during the design of this inclusive archives, including those around how, with whom, and for how long individuals' stories would be shared and who was empowered to make these decisions and control the stories.[51]

Sara White and Gracen Brilmyer propose that archivists embrace disability studies frameworks when appraising and describing records. White notes that, in the late 20th century, the disability rights movement borrowed discourses from the civil rights movement to redefine disability as a social and political, rather than a medical, issue. Now, White suggests, scholars "argue that disability should be understood through the theory of complex embodiment, which locates disability in the interactions between people with and without impairments recognizing power as only one component."[52] White calls upon archivists to

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[48] Park and Radford, "From the Case Files," 338.

[49] Elizabeth Tilley, Jan Walmsley, Sarah Earle, and Dorothy Atkinson, "'The Silence is Roaring': Sterilization, Reproductive Rights and Women with Intellectual Disabilities," *Disability & Society* 27, no. 3 (2012): 413–42.

[50] Chloe Brownlee-Chapman, Rohhss Chapman, Clarence Eardley, Sara Forster, Victoria Green, Helen Graham, Elizabeth Harkness, Kassie Headon, Pam Humphries, Nigel Ingham, Sue Ledger, Val May, Andy Minnion, Row Richards, Liz Tilly, and Lou Townson, "Between Speaking Out in Public and Being Person-Centred: Collaboratively Designing an Inclusive Archive of Learning Disability History," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, no. 8 (2018): 889–903.

[51] See also The Inclusive Archive of Learning Disability History website, accessed 19 May 2019, https://inclusivearchive.org/.

[52] Sara White, "Crippling the Archives: Negotiating Notions of Disability in Appraisal and Arrangement and Description," *American Archivist* 75, no. 1 (2012): 116.

consider the theory of complex embodiment when making appraisal and description decisions. The theory acknowledges that one's identification as disabled is an individual decision influenced by both internal and external forces. Brilmyer argues that archives are complicit in psychiatric and racial injustices as they reinforce "power and control over marginalized lives." According to Brilmyer, applying a disability studies political/relationship model to archival description will facilitate a "connection to how the creation of a record and the assumptions and intentions of those who created it engenders power into a record by surfacing the scrutiny of language and historic violence disabled people have endured through archives."[53]

Testimony

Oral testimony has been a fundamental part of legal proceedings for many centuries. The concept of *eyewitness testimony* links testimony to facts or statements that provide evidence or proof, a key element in court cases.[54] Today, testimonies are not just passive statements of facts or proof but instead are actively created by a witness and an examiner, or an interviewee and an interviewer, for posterity – and to serve particular agendas. Scholarly and public spheres have only relatively recently accepted testimonies as reliable historical sources.[55] Reliance on personal memory and, by extension, on testimony, has historically been seen as unreliable and capricious, and historians have often treated it as "an undisciplined activity that troubles the clear waters of historiography."[56] Annette Wieviorka identifies the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, where 117 Holocaust survivors recited their testimonies to an Israeli court, as the beginning of the rise of the era of testimony.[57] The trial provided a mechanism for a widespread public to observe personal testimony via mass media for the first time, creating "a social demand for testimony." Concomitantly, historians began to incorporate

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[53] Gracen Brilmyer, "Archival Assemblages: Applying Disability Studies' Political/Relational Model to Archival Description," *Archival Science* 18 (2018): 105.

[54] "Testimony," Lexico, accessed 19 May 2019, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/testimony.

[55] Tony Kushner, "Holocaust Testimony, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006): 275.

[56] Aleida Assmann, "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006): 263.

[57] Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 56–95.

testimonies into histories "from below," to give voice to the "excluded, the unimportant, the voiceless."[58]

The nature of testimony is deeply personal and "appeals to the heart and not to the mind. It elicits compassion, pity, indignation, even rebellion. The one who testifies signs a 'compassionate pact' with the one who receives the testimony."[59] By directly engaging the human elements of history, first-person accounts burn through the "cold storage of history" and give "texture to memory or to images that otherwise would have only sentimental or informational impact."[60]

Video testimony amplifies these qualities, adding "substantive evidence": "The spoken word is embedded in a setting, a situation, a context. People speak with body language, expression, and tone."[61] Speech allows for open-ended passages, pauses, silences, uncompleted sentences, and innuendo – all of which contribute to and alter meaning in ways that written testimony cannot.[62] As well, video testimony offers the interviewee the ability to show objects and provide "information that identifies and contextualizes objects and arrange items to impart added meaning through their juxtapositions."[63] These aspects of video testimony make it possible for viewers to take part in what Alison Landsberg calls "prosthetic memory":

> In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history . . . The person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics.[64]

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[58] Ibid., 97.

[59] Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, 143.

[60] Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Learning from Survivors: The Yale Testimony Project," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 9, no. 2 (1995): 197.

[61] Dan Sipe, "The Future of Oral History and Moving Images," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 408–9.

[62] Assmann, "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," 264.

[63] Jeffrey Shandler, *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age: Survivors' Stories and New Media Practices* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 153.

[64] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 2.

Roseanne Kennedy highlights the importance of studying the relationship between testimonies and their audiences, including the ways in which audiences "respond to the address of the survivor."[65] Kennedy explains that responses to testimony may include not only positive responses such as empathy but also negative emotions such as anxiety, angst, frustration, shame, and denial.

Study Design

The aim of our research was to qualitatively study the impact of the Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada by interviewing individuals who contributed to the project in some capacity. These individuals were chosen from three categories:

1. Research scholars, academics, and archivists who assisted in the preparation and implementation of the Living Archives

2. Individuals associated with, or representative of, community organizations that assisted those affected by Canadian eugenic sterilization legislation

3. Individuals who contributed their oral histories to the Living Archives

This study sought to interview as many people as possible from all three categories and sent letters to over two dozen individuals requesting their participation in the study. The process of recruiting and interviewing the sterilization survivors, who had given their oral histories to the project, differed slightly. Instead of being contacted directly, these people were contacted by a Living Archives community partner member known to them. We provided the sterilization survivors with lunch and an allowance for transit rather than with an honorarium, as we wanted to encourage participation based on individuals' interest in telling and sharing their stories, rather than to incentivize participation through compensation.

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[65] Rosanne Kennedy, "The Affective Work of Stolen Generations Testimony: From the Archives to the Classroom," *Biography* 27, no. 1 (2004): 51.

In total, we interviewed 14 participants (see appendix for a list of interviewees). For each participant, a semi-structured and conversational interview first established the participant's role, contributions, motivations, and goals in relation to the project. The interview script then focused on the project's impact by asking about the following:

- The goals the Living Archives project hoped to achieve, whether those goals changed over time, and if those goals were met
- The impact of the project on members of various groups who participated in the project, including themselves
- The impact of the project on non-affiliated groups with access to the project's resources
- The kinds of impact (long-term, short-term, positive, negative, etc.) the interviewee perceived or predicted the project to have had

The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using NVivo, a qualitative analysis software. Once the transcripts were coded, the paper copies and original audio files were destroyed.

The participants interviewed in this study constituted a demographically representative cross-section of the project as a whole. They included the Living Archives project director and a number of team leaders; the head of the technical team for the digital platform; a few research assistants, who contributed to the project's accessible resources; a disability activist; two community partners, who connected members of their disability community with academics working on the project; and finally, two sterilization survivors, who were partners in the project and contributed their testimonies.[66] While the Living Archives project followed a survivor-centred model, our contact with the sterilization survivors was limited and we make no claim to having used a survivor-centred model in this study.

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[66] We had hoped to interview both survivors, Glenn Sinclair and Judy Lytton, with Nicola Fairbrother, who was well known to both. Glenn Sinclair was interviewed alongside Nicola Fairbrother; we had lunch and chatted prior to the interview. Unfortunately, Judy Lytton was unable to participate in the face-to-face interview; the first author conducted a phone interview and committed to meeting for lunch when she was next in Edmonton.

Impact of the Living Archives Project

During the data analysis, we identified the groups who may have been impacted by the Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada: the sterilization survivors who were partners on the project and added their stories to the Archives; community partners and academics who worked on the project; and those who did not directly participate in the project but interacted with its resources. We framed our analysis around the stated goals of the project (knowledge mobilization, the creation of innovative research, and disability activism), considered whether the project met these goals, and examined the realized or potential impact of the project.

Impact on Project Participants

The most tangible evidence of impact was revealed when our interviewees talked about the people who worked on the project, whether themselves or others. For those who participated in the Living Archives, the project was a tremendously impactful and almost entirely positive experience.

Impact on Sterilization Survivors

It was immediately apparent to many of the interviewees that the project had had a positive effect on the survivors who had had the opportunity not only to tell their own stories, but also to go back and edit the videos, with full editorial control over the information they had shared. The positive impacts of the oral testimonies were evident in descriptions of the experience as critical and empowering for the survivors.

Studies of people living with intellectual disabilities have demonstrated strong links between choice, self-advocacy, and empowerment, especially because disabled people are so often denied the ability to exert control over their own lives.[67] When asked about the project's impact on their lives, both sterilization survivors spoke enthusiastically about the positive power of sharing

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[67] Ann Gilmartin and Eamonn Slevin, "Being a Member of a Self-Advocacy Group: Experiences of Intellectually Disabled People," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 38, no. 3 (2010): 152–59; Michael L. Wehmeyer and Nancy W. Garner, "The Impact of Personal Characteristics of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disability on Self-Determination and Autonomous Functioning," *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 16, no. 4 (2003): 255–65; Dan Goodley, "Empowerment, Self-Advocacy and Resilience," *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* 9, no. 4 (2005): 333–43.

their stories with the Living Archives and of being able to control the narrative. Glenn Sinclair hoped that his testimony would educate people about what had happened and ensure it did not happen again:

> **Interviewer.** *Were you interested once Nicola called you and told you about [the project]?*
> **Glenn.** *I was. I was interested in telling my story and about how I was raised up in an institution and everything, and all this information.*
> **Interviewer.** *What was important about you getting the chance to tell your story?*
> **Glenn.** *It was very important because people want to know what we went through at the time and give a sense of what we had to face back then. And help other people get out, that this does not happen again. We want, it's kind of like a history of what we went through . . . This is why I gave out this information.*

Judy Lytton spoke more fervently about the empowering aspects of the project on her own life: "Well, I feel so much better, and I have learned to accept myself for who I am, and I function much better in society now because I feel like I am one of them. I'm normal because I spoke out and told my story. I'm one of them. It doesn't mean because I faced incarceration throughout my life that I was any less than they were."

Both community partners also suggested that the project had had a positive impact on those who had provided their stories to the Archives. One community partner stated, "Well, for the individuals . . . with disabilities, if you want – who got to be seen as having a valid contribution to make, who had knowledge to share, and whose opinions were to be seriously considered – I think for them, it clearly was a valuable experience."

They elaborated on this point later in their interview:

> The centring of the oral history of survivors opens up the Archive to this survivor-centred narrative, rather than the administrative and bureaucratic records that conflict or disadvantage their stories. For those in the project, this was an absolutely vital part of it and one of its most notable impacts. And I think people that had those opportunities really appreciated that and feel like they've made a difference by having their stories to share.

Nicola Fairbrother, Director of Neighborhood Bridges, an Edmonton-based disability rights advocacy organization, conducted all the oral testimony interviews. She stated,

> I think this project would've been worth it and valuable beyond measure just based on the fact that some people got to tell their stories and connect with each other outside of the shame of having it happen to them. And that transition, that transformation to "This is a thing that I overcame." Just that we impacted a dozen people, like on film, and then other people that we've spoken to since then, maybe who weren't on film. That in itself was worth the investment of all the time and money, actually.

Impact on Students and Participants

According to our interviewees, the Living Archives had also had a strong impact on the students and participants who were involved in the project. The three academics who had employed student research assistants discussed the project's impact on these students. Alexandra Minna Stern noted, "One of the things that has struck me is, over the course of working on this and involving undergraduate and graduate students, mainly in public health, is how important this project has been to them. . . . This has become integral to their way of thinking about women's health, about issues of the state and power."

Rob Wilson, the project director, saw an even greater impact on the lives of his student assistants. The project was not just positive; it was life-changing: "It changed what a number of them were doing with their whole trajectories and how they saw themselves. . . . You see that even with students who just hear about it in courses a bit. It really sticks with them."

In her interview, Erika Dyck remembered the first time her undergraduate research assistants met a few of the sterilization survivors in a project meeting in Edmonton:

> I still stay in touch with some of those students who said, "That meeting was the reason I stuck with history," or "That meeting," in one case, "is the reason I went into education and I want to work with kids who would have been institutionalized." One of them works in special education, and she's now a teacher in that capacity. So, there are tangible outcomes there.

Other interviewees, however, questioned whether the impact on students would last. Assistant professor and disability activist Danielle Peers speculated that, though the impact on the students might have seemed profound and positive, it would not always lead to long-term change:

> Often, these kinds of cases where you involve undergrad students in this kind of working, there's a thing in overstating the way that community is created for those students, in the sense that, the second they stop being paid to do the work or get credit for it, they cease to have community somehow . . . I think disabled people have become through, . . . I think, continued experiences like this, . . . I don't know any disabled people who are, have access to students of this coming often who aren't a little jaded about that claim . . . So, I think that happens a lot, that in particular, that the non-disabled party who is being paid or getting credit will say that this was a great friendship and community, but they don't invest in it beyond being paid or getting credit.

Nicola Fairbrother echoed this in her interview: "Erika and all of her students working in Saskatoon: no they didn't build close, intimate relationships. [chuckle] I think they built really good relationships with each other, in terms of sort of like crossing that divide. No, but I mean, they weren't involved in the stuff that likely would net that kind of result."

Later in her interview, she did acknowledge a positive impact the project had had on students, though it had arisen from their interactions with the content of the Archive rather than with the project team: "And my observation was that some of students and academics were incredibly affected by what they heard . . . And I guess I wouldn't necessarily automatically sort of characterize that as 'in relationship,' but I think people were really, really moved by what survivors had to say – as they should be. They were good stories."

To sum up, while the academics who supervised student research assistants indicated that the experience of working on the project had been impactful, others questioned the depth and duration of the impact.

Impact on Others

What impact did the Living Archives have on those who were not affiliated with the project but came in contact with its many resources? Can these resources, particularly the stories, still positively impact individuals? If so, how? A consistent refrain found in our interviews was the potential impact on those who hear the oral testimonies of eugenics or newgenics survivors, whether on the website or in person. Nicola Fairbrother spoke of the humanizing element of the survivor testimonies:

> I think the testimonies hook people in, because they're the most . . . As I've said, and everybody else, I don't know what they say. But my bias is, I think it's actually hearing it from somebody's mouth that makes the biggest difference. But once you're there, you get into the context. And I think the website was artfully and brilliantly designed.

Amy Samson, who worked with Erika Dyck at the University of Saskatchewan, agreed, noting that she used the testimonies to great effect in her teaching:

> I've given a number of talks about the history of eugenics in classrooms, university-level classrooms, and they really respond. Students really respond to the videos, I think. Being able to see them and hear the perspective from the survivors' own mouth[s] and their story is really powerful for them . . . And I know that they felt that was really meaningful. They hadn't . . . I got the sense that they hadn't really realized the impact that history could have and were able to put, I guess, a face to those histories.

However, the depth and longevity of this impact was disputed by a number of our more critical interviewees. One community partner saw contemporary societal views and norms as strong limits on the effect that these stories would have on listeners.

> The stories today aren't any different than the stories of the past. After decades of effort, we still get physicians saying, "This child will never walk, will never talk, will never do this, will never do that," and so on, and so forth, and they're constantly proved wrong. And so, educating

> that population of very highly educated people seems to be a challenge, because you're really confronting a culture. And it's not just knowledge, then; it's actually a culture about who's valued and who isn't, and that's a much more difficult process than simply educating people.

The project's testimonies are a powerful tool for education and changing perceptions, but are they enough to counter prevailing attitudes and prejudices? Unfortunately, as described below, the Living Archives team ran into numerous problems disseminating their resources, so we cannot point to any widespread impacts just yet. We believe the project's resources have a strong potential to be positive and long-lasting, although assessing that impact would require different methodologies.

Knowledge Mobilization

The Living Archives project began with a number of objectives under the umbrella of "knowledge mobilization." Unfortunately, distributing the resources created by the Living Archives proved to be one of the project's more difficult and recalcitrant issues. While a number of objectives were met – the website was created, conferences were convened, art shows and other public events were held – one of the project's main engines for dissemination unfortunately fell to the wayside. From the beginning of the project, one of the most promising goals was to develop an educational curriculum around the history of eugenics and its connection to modern-day policies on disability, which could be used to teach high-school students in Alberta. Michael Billinger noted that the website was designed to "resonate for at least anyone with an eighth-grade reading level or above," and although an intern was tasked with creating the curriculum, it was never finished and, unfortunately, the project ran out of time and money. The interviewees spoke repeatedly about the project's potential impact if its resources were used by teachers. Many expressed their hope that teachers had picked up the resources independently. Amy Samson, shortly after describing how she used the project's resources to teach her own students, said, "What I would be really interested in knowing is, particularly Alberta teachers, is how many of them know about the project? If they know about it, do they use it in the classroom, and how do they use it in the classroom?" However, without an educational curriculum, it is unlikely that the resources are being used to their full potential.

A number of other ideas for knowledge mobilization were sidelined as well. As Rob Wilson explained, "There was the idea that survivors would go out and talk. They'd have classes, and we could show them how to use the website, and classes could do their searches, and then we'd have survivors come and we'd do a whole bunch of other series of things. It was part of an educational package. But we just lost steam in doing it."

Apart from the website, scholarly publications, and a film, the project raised awareness and got some media attention through public events held at the University of Alberta and Edmonton's city hall. Michael Billinger noted, "And certainly, when I was still in Edmonton, I was impressed that, during the time that we worked on this project, people who had no connection with the university were coming to me and saying, 'Did you know that this happened in Alberta?' And so, I think there were really some direct benefits that I saw from it."

The informational resources created by the Living Archives project present an excellent starting place for learning about the history and persistence of eugenics. We believe the website and oral testimonies have the potential to teach students to ask critically important questions about disability, eugenics, and the type of people who should be in the world. Despite the lack of concerted dissemination, a few interviewees highlighted an increased awareness of the project and its resources. Erika Dyck stated, "I've been surprised by the number of people who have come up to me at conferences outside of Canada and talked about this website and asked me questions about it. So, it has certainly had some reach that I . . . I never really know how these things are going to go, but I've been impressed by that."

The project also attempted to bridge the gap between older forms of eugenics, practiced in Western Canada and many other parts of the world, and newer eugenic thinking that still permeates discourse on ability.[68] The project sought to dispel notions of eugenics as a bygone idea and to connect it with paternalistic institutions and thinking that continue to restrict the agency of disabled people, even while they profess a more "progressive" model. As a community partner noted,

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[68] See Marina Kamenev, "Sterilizing a Child, for a Better Life," *The Atlantic*, 19 September 2013, accessed 19 May 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/09/sterilizing-a-child-for-a-better-life/279765/.

> Many [intellectually disabled people] have interactions with [the] child welfare system. Their kids are apprehended before they're even given an opportunity to parent, for example. They're rarely given the appropriate supports they need to parent. So here we are saying, "We're not gonna sterilize you, and it's a tragedy what we did because you can parent." Then, when people are parenting, we're not prepared to accept them as parents 'cause [they don't] necessarily relate the same way many of us do. They don't speak with the fluidity that I'm talking today with, for example.

According to those interviewed, the Living Archives project succeeded in this regard by presenting informational resources that made connections between traditional and new eugenics and by sharing personal stories of survivors of both forms. Alexandra Minna Stern spoke to this in her interview: "For those who have seen it and engaged with it, one of its primary virtues is that it draws a strong clear line between the eugenics of the past and discrimination against people with disabilities, and ongoing marginalization of people with disabilities around issues related to their daily life, reproductive autonomy, things like that."

Nicola Fairbrother agreed: "And I think what the project did was really illustrate that, actually, that the way we think about intellectual disability hasn't markedly changed. What we do to control both reproductive rights and personal freedoms of people with intellectual disabilities manifest a little bit differently, but based on thoughtless and not critically evaluated sets of values."

Resistance to newer forms of eugenics can be informed by the survivors' stories, so that, hopefully, contemporary forms of discrimination and violence toward the disabled are recognized and rejected. Danielle Peers illustrated this in her interview:

> To me, showing the nuance is not only about showing the agency of disabled people and how they make lives in unlivable situations, but also that it enables us in some ways to recognize contemporary institutions and contemporary, I think, forms of violence, including the induced poverty around how low disability income is and those kinds of things . . . These intimate stories that actually show much more nuanced versions of that, that are actually recognizable in institutions today.

Did the Living Archives project increase people's awareness of their history of eugenics and its contemporary significance today? Based on our analysis of the interview data, we believe that, like many archives, the project's resources, if activated, have potential impact. However, until the resources are included in curriculum, this potential will not be fully realized.

Research

Intimately connected with the "knowledge mobilization" arm of the project was the facilitation of academic partnerships that could lead to new and innovative research into eugenics in Western Canada and beyond. This was done in a number of ways. First, the Living Archives facilitated connections between academics, community partners, and survivors who introduced their stories into the Archives. A number of the interviewees suggested that this network helped narrow the gap between disability communities and those who study them. A community partner spoke of

> an inner circle community, I would say, in my view, of people . . . with disabilities themselves, who'd been institutionalized and sterilized, who were, in a way, seen therefore almost as co-researchers, that the knowledge they brought to the table was their lived experience. And so, they would be seen more as colleagues than as subjects, for example. And I think for those sitting around the table like this, in larger numbers, that was a true experience for them.

Nicola Fairbrother explained how the project brought together two disparate communities in a way that felt significantly different than other projects:

> Because there is a . . . You're here to say, "How can we use our archives and activism?" Well, one of the bridges to cross is to connect academics with community. And there is that significant separation between usefulness of academic research, as well as connectivity in community that this project had, that I don't see in a lot of projects. It was quite extraordinary in that way, actually.

Second, this project built a community of academics from different disciplines, who all worked on different and overlapping parts of the project. From the start, those who worked on the project recognized that it was a multidisciplinary undertaking, and the Living Archives has made a difference within academic communities by connecting people and spurring new grounds of research. Erika Dyck highlighted connections made between the project's researchers and academics investigating the history of madness in Canada:

> I've seen groups from disability studies – and again, because of the cross-fertilization with the history of madness project, we've referenced each other's work and introduced each other to different protocols and communities. So I've seen that uptake really nicely. The madness community has its own version of psychiatric survivor archives, both physical location and an online presence. And it's been really nice to see that these two groups sort of connect with each other and learn both methodologically as well as in terms of creating a virtual network, which is really difficult, I think . . . not only for people who have been institutionalized, but they are almost invariably people living in impoverished conditions, and that has been really rewarding on the side of social justice.

In the most immediate sense, these connections have led to academic publications from the project members. Rob Wilson spoke of the project's academic output, counting the number of books, journal issues, and other publications that stemmed from the project, as did the film *Surviving Eugenics*.[69] In addition, the project created hundreds of scholarly encyclopedia entries, easily accessible on the website. The entries – which cover various concepts, categories, events, important people, groups, places, and notable publications and laws related to the history of eugenics – are an exceptional resource for students, academic scholars, and the general public.

However, even as interviewees heaped praise on the website and its resources, comments on the problems of disseminating this research emerged. As Alexandra

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[69] For example, Erika Dyck's book, *Facing Eugenics: Reproduction, Sterilization, and the Politics of Choice* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), drew on the project's research to examine the experience of individuals who had participated – whether voluntarily or not – in the eugenics program. The book was shortlisted for the Canada Prize in the Social Sciences, awarded by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Sir John A. Macdonald Prize, awarded by the Canadian Historical Association. Rob Wilson's book, *The Eugenic Mind Project* (MIT Press, 2017), examined past and present eugenics thinking and practice.

Minna Stern stated,

> I think that, I know that a lot of work went into these digital entries. I read some of them, and I wrote some of them, and I think they're actually really good, but unfortunately, I don't think they've gotten the visibility that they deserve. And at the rate it's going, I don't think many people are going to know about them, unless there was to be increased awareness or a campaign.

Another potential impact lies in the methodology of creating the testimonies. Molly Ladd-Taylor spoke to this in her interview, observing that the oral testimonies created for the Living Archives were an exceptional addition to an interdisciplinary research conference:

> To me, one of the most meaningful – and I'm not even sure if this was one of the original goals in the same way – one of the most meaningful things were those testimonies that Nicola Fairbrother did. And one thing I should say that I did, I was one of the organizers of the Berkshire Conference on Women's History at the U of T, and she came and was on a panel that was actually just about this. So, somebody from the Montreal Life Stories project who was talking about working with, I think they were from Haiti, Haitian refugees . . . And then somebody who had done a film featuring Mental Patients Liberation Front, and Nicola. So, it was talking about the survivor testimony as oral history documents it, and taking this testimony, not ripping it off, and giving voice to people. . . . It was quite amazing, just the kind of thing that you would be interested in in terms of oral histories.

However, Nicola Fairbrother discovered that some scholars questioned the value of the videos as historical sources. She recalled that, when she presented the oral testimonies at a conference with Erika Dyck,

> a moderator for her session was really agitated about the process that we had used in terms of taking testimonies, like, "How can oral history be accurate if people can go back and edit it?" And I was like, "It's an oral history. It's a different kind of archiving, and actually the story

> connects people to the stuff that you think is so important to preserve." . . . And he was really mortally offended as a traditional archiver.

Nicola continued, defending the "full editorial control" given to the survivors as a critical consideration in order to be both ethical and protective:

> And when I say protective, I mean to allow people to protect themselves . . . The repercussions could be serious, because these are people who maybe have staffing support, so they have family who's not fully familiar with what has happened to them, or who, many families still think the sterilization program was a good idea. So, people need to be able to go back or say, "I made a mistake there. I remember." And to connect with each other, because part of the process we used was to bring people together, to look at first draft edits of interviews, and give each other feedback.

While the future impact of these testimonies remains to be seen, the Living Archives project created an important and innovative resource, grounded in responsibility and respect for the survivors who shared their stories. The need to allow individuals to control access to their story also arose in the design of the Inclusive Archive of Learning Disability History.[70] "While the latter project [the Inclusive Archives] chose to share the full unedited version of the interviews, the Living Archives on Eugenics project decided to support the survivors, who have until recently only been talked *about*, by allowing them to tell their stories, to edit their stories alongside others in their community, and to present their story as *they* saw fitting."[71] Entrusting "full editorial control" has had noticeably positive effects on the project's participants, proving to be empowering and validating. As Nicola explained, "People know what their story is. Developing the relationship, creating an environment where that story can be told in a way that people feel safe, allowing them to understand that that story is their property, and they permit us to use it. That for me was central."

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[70] Brownlee-Chapman et al. "Between Speaking Out in Public and Being Person-Centred."

[71] Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).

This approach has the potential to serve as a model for creating oral testimony of marginalized groups, and it answers Caswell's call for a survivor-centred approach that prioritizes the needs of survivors of violence. Caswell states,

> By refocusing a conceptual lens to prioritize the concerns of survivors and victims' families, archivists and archival institutions can most ethically serve communities coming to terms with violent pasts. As the subjects of records created against their will in order to facilitate their abuse, survivors should be uniquely positioned at the locus of archival efforts. Given the atrocities suffered by such communities and their ongoing struggles for justice and accountability, keeping them at the center of archival efforts is the least we can do.[72]

Disability Activism

As discussed in the literature review, archival records rarely include the voices of people who were sterilized,[73] and archives have been complicit in psychiatric and racial injustices. Based in collaboration among eugenics survivors, disability activists, community partners, and academics, this project sought a different model. Rob Wilson, writing about the project in 2014, observed that the history of eugenics studies in Canada and beyond has largely relied on

> the assumption that those institutionalized, sterilized, and stigmatized in the name of eugenics were not capable of telling their own story, either in part or in full, as they were deemed to lack the basic capacity to contribute directly to the story we tell about eugenics. In this respect, it is not simply that survivor oral history has been omitted, forgotten, or neglected, as in other cases; rather, it is that survivor oral history has been presumed to be precluded by the putative nature of those deemed mentally deficient.[74]

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[72] Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse,"

[73] Tilley et al., "'The Silence is Roaring'."

[74] Robert A. Wilson, "The Role of Oral History in Surviving a Eugenic Past," in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, ed. Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 121.

The Living Archives project prioritized the stories of eugenics and newgenics survivors by ensuring that people retained full editorial control over their stories and providing a website to distribute the testimony widely. Glenn Sinclair discussed the impact of his participation in the process of editing his own story:

> **Interviewer.** *Was it difficult to pick the parts that would be in the story on the website? 'Cause you had lots of footage. How did you decide what part was gonna make it into the final product?*
> **Glenn.** *Well, I had to look at a few pictures and stuff. And get an idea of which one is the right picture. And it fit the story of what we wanted to put through on the film script. And ideas of what we put in there had to be exact in detail, about what was going on in an institution and what we had to face being in an institution.*
> **Interviewer.** *So, you wanted to get it right?*
> **Glenn.** *We wanted to get it right, yes . . . We choose parts we didn't want and parts we did want to be put into the film feature.*
> **Interviewer.** *It must have been hard to decide which part to go in and what part to take . . .*
> **Glenn.** *It was very hard, yeah. Very tear-dropping in some parts. Very sad what we had to go through.*

One community partner, who worked closely with some of the sterilization survivors, believed the process was a deeply empowering act:

> And watching, in particular watching the survivors who came back over and over again, and sometimes had a lot to say, and sometimes were quiet, I felt like I gained a huge appreciation for the way that they interacted with this. It's almost like they were sort of responding to being told to do stuff, which makes perfect sense. This is how they've lived most of their lives. They haven't had a lot of autonomy or choice or independence . . . And watching them find their voices and watching them take risks in telling their stories but also in owning their stories was something that I didn't, I wouldn't have known how to anticipate that. It's something you kind of hope for, but it's hard to articulate or understand or appreciate how that might go or how to facilitate that. And that was incredibly inspirational and humbling.

Nicola Fairbrother, who conducted the vast majority of interviews, echoes this point, highlighting the various values embodied in the testimonies:

> So, the idea that we would have a speakers' bureau, the idea that we would have people available to tell their stories, share their stories with each other, the high level of autonomy relative to the testimony that we took, and people's capacity to own their stories, speak about their stories. There's a therapeutic value, there's an informational value, and there is some sort of an activist's perspective: that way to share that experience in a way that builds personal power and autonomy over victimhood.

Both community partners highlighted the importance of autonomy. As numerous studies have noted, intellectually disabled people are rarely perceived to have the ability to make their own choices.[75] Not only do these oral testimonies combine self-advocacy, empowerment, and personal autonomy, but they also respect the interdependence and relationships within this community. We observed that the strong relationships among some of the participants (i.e., the survivors) highlight the value of interdependencies and caring relationships emphasized by the ethic of care. The co-editing and mutuality of the videos aligns strongly with the concept of relational autonomy, in which autonomy is constructed *within* and *because of* relationships, not only with people but also with the social, economic, and political relations that act on our lives.[76] Danielle Peers also highlighted the importance of hearing the survivors' stories:

> I think there are so few times that you actually get to hear about anything which is way past, from the perspective of disabled people . . . So, they don't include our names. They don't include our actions. They don't include our agency. They don't include the ways that we survived, the

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[75] See Shirli Werner, "Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities: A Review of the Literature on Decision-Making since the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)," *Public Health Reviews* 34, no. 2 (2012): 1–27, for a comprehensive review.

[76] Jennifer Nedelsky, "Reconceiving Autonomy: Sources, Thoughts and Possibilities, *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 1, no. 1 (1989): 7–36; Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured," in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, eds. Catriona MacKenzie and Natalie Stoljar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–34.

> ways that we made joy, the ways that we made connections. . . . One can actually access resources that take perspectives from folks who are in those positions. I don't think actually the importance of that can be overstated.

Sterilization survivor Judy Lytton saw her oral testimony as a way not only to share her own history and perform agency and self-advocacy but also to advocate for members of the disability community who are unable to speak for themselves:

> Well, I agreed to be part of it because I know that there's so many people that had lobotomies who couldn't speak for themselves. I know people who were severely and profoundly retarded that could not speak for themselves, and I thought, "Somebody's gotta speak up for them. Somebody needs to help them, and they can't do anything themselves." So, I thought I could help them by speaking out for them, never dreaming it would be on as big a scale as this, but I always did speak out on behalf of them.

The testimonies of survivors of both historical and contemporary forms of eugenics act as another form of disability activism, introducing into the archival record stories and histories that have been "symbolically annihilated"[77] by both dominant disability discourses and top-down disability histories. Molly Ladd-Taylor recognized this in her interview and spoke to how the Living Archives project addressed this problem head on:

> And I think the really innovative, incredible strength of the Living Archives project was its emphasis on disability. And, at the time that it started, especially, in terms of US and Canada, that was quite unusual. And a lot of scholars of eugenics, in the US especially, they were . . . they didn't bring up disability . . . And what's the wonderful thing about this case and the testimonies is taking people – not just people who didn't have . . . who were wrongfully labelled intellectually disabled – and taking their testimony, but also taking the people who do identify as having intellectual or cognitive disability, and that's huge and really important.

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[77] Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History."

By providing a survivor-centred and community-sensitive framework[78] through which these stories could be told, the Living Archives project offers survivors of eugenics and newgenics and members of the disabled and institutionalized communities a new way forward in communicating the history and presence of disability in Canada and beyond.

Whether this particular process of creating oral testimonies with complete editorial control will have a lasting impact is unknown. While "shared authority" is now an established principle in oral history,[79] giving interviewees full editorial control over the outcome of the interview is not, nor is collectively editing an interview in order to "get it right." Yet this project, similar to the Inclusive Archive of Learning Disability History, demonstrates the importance of this model. For Danielle Peers, editorial autonomy was the most important outcome of the project:

> And for me in this case, maybe the precedence of a narrative of the survivors became more important than having an archive. And I think that, in the outcome, I'd argue maybe that is the case. In the end, it was more important to have the survivors control the narrative than to have an archives. I can tell you from being in the space with folks, that three or four or five, at different times, folks, interestingly, always sitting next to each other, and often choosing to be there and being with and, I think, witnessing and participating and co-creating communal response to whatever was going on, for me was the most valuable and learning point of it.

Discussion

The Living Archives resources highlight the power structures that were used to dehumanize intellectually disabled people and led to the eugenics program in Alberta. Alberta's eugenics movement perpetuated and thrived on both the belief that intellectually disabled individuals could not parent and the desire to ensure such people could not pass on their genes. That is, it sought an erasure

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[78] Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse," 320.

[79] Frisch, *A Shared Authority*.

of their potential lineage or legacy. Moreover, intellectually disabled individuals were placed in institutions that "were designed to silence," as Danielle Peers noted in her interview, causing further erasure. While the eugenics movement fell into disfavour because of its link to the Nazi movement, the view that intellectually disabled people should not parent is still prevalent. Nicola Fairbrother explained: "There's a lot of shame with the idea of being labelled disabled still today in our community. There's a lot of shame around the idea that you can't have children."

The project fought against this shame, using stories to critically engage with stereotypes of intellectually disabled people. Viewed through a framework of symbolic annihilation, the project resources – including the website, testimonies, publications, and the film – push against the harmful narratives that assume that having a disability is shameful, that disabled people cannot parent successfully, that there is a singular "right" kind of parent, and that society has a right to control intellectually disabled individuals.

The critical disability lens also highlights issues of control and power. The Living Archives on Eugenics honoured the agency of all project partners rather than reinforcing "power and control over marginalized lives," as Brilmyer suggests archives often do.[80] It acknowledged participants' ownership over their stories and granted them full control over how they were told. Handing over full editorial control to survivors – which blends the positive impacts of empowerment and self-advocacy and prioritizes the concerns and needs of survivors – is an important achievement and a model for future projects.

Conclusion

This study of the Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada has pointed toward evidence of the project's impact through our use of secondary literature and participant interviews. The study originally sought to understand impact by focusing on the goals of the project. Through this focus, we identified an important but limited impact on the participants and a potential impact: to raise awareness of the history of eugenics. When the data is viewed within a symbolic annihilation and critical disability study lens, however, the project's impact in

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[80] Brilmyer, "Archival Assemblages."

countering stereotypical images of disabled people and its potential long-term effect in creating a more just society is revealed.

The Living Archives project is one step in a very long process of changing the way people view intellectually disabled individuals. It provided an opportunity to build a strong, caring community of partners, and it can act as a model for projects based on "a feminist conception of ethics built around notions of relationality, interdependence, embodiment, and responsibility to others."[81] For almost all who worked on it, this project appears to have exerted a positive and potentially life-changing impact. While some interviewees spoke of impacts that were not yet realized, or of the inability of the project's resources to overcome preconceived biases against people with learning disabilities, none of our participants spoke of negative or harmful impacts of the project. And while we do not know how many people are currently using the project's materials, the authors believe the resources, especially the testimonies, have the potential to change views of disabled people and to increase understanding of the consequences of eugenic thinking and practice. Realizing this change will take time, but as Duff et al. note, understanding power and its unequal distribution is critical to understanding social justice and injustice.[82]

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[81] Caswell and Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 30.

[82] Duff et al., "Social Justice Impact of Archives," 319.

BIOGRAPHY Wendy Duff is a professor and Dean of the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto, where she teaches courses in the areas of archival access and community archives. Her research and publications focus on archival access, archival users, the impact of archives, and archives and social justice.

BIOGRAPHY Jefferson Sporn is a recent graduate of the University of Toronto's Master of Information program, specializing in archives and records management. He holds a BA in anthropology from Emory University. He is passionate about politics, film, and the intersection of community archives and representation. He lives and works in Toronto.

BIOGRAPHY Emily Herron is currently the Archives Specialist at the Manulife Corporate Archives. She obtained her Master of Information degree from the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information in 2017. As research assistant to Wendy Duff, she joined the Living Archives study in the summer of 2016. At the 2017 ACA Conference, she presented initial findings of the Living Archives study on a panel discussing social justice in archival contexts.

Appendix: Interviewees

- Alexandra Minna Stern (professor and Chair of the Department of American Culture at the University of Michigan)
- Amy Samson (PhD student at the University of Saskatchewan, now at the University of Alberta)
- Danielle Peers (assistant professor, Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation at the University of Alberta)
- Erika Dyck (professor at University of Saskatchewan and the 2018 Canada Research Chair in the History of Medicine)
- Glenn Sinclair (sterilization survivor)
- Judy Lytton (sterilization survivor)
- Michael Billinger (a privacy officer and researcher)

- Molly Ladd-Taylor (associate professor in the Department of History at York University)
- Nicola Fairbrother (community partner and Director of the Neighborhood Bridges organization in Edmonton)
- Natasha Nunn (technical team lead)
- Rob Wilson (project director of the Living Archives project, professor of philosophy at the University of Alberta, now at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia).
- Stacy Kaufeld (Executive Director of the Legal Archives Society of Alberta)
- Wayne Murdoch (Director of Collections Management at Government of Alberta, Provincial Archives)
- One community partner, who wished to remain anonymous