

MA PROJECT PAPER

REMAKING KM6:
An Autoethnographic and Photographic Journey to Santa Cruz Bolivia

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Abstract

This paper examines the process of autoethnography and photographic study within the context of hybridity and diasporic cultural identity. For this project, *ReMaking KM6*, I returned to my childhood home of Santa Cruz, Bolivia creating representations of this city in the context of Latin America. Through the lens of hybridity, I look at my own process of autoethnography and documentary photography. The concept of hybridity resonates in my personal narrative, which illustrates the meeting between Korean, Bolivian and Canadian cultures. As a result, the visual evidence gathered demonstrates a specific perspective and contributes to the pool of Latin American images available in North America. The photographs gathered during my fieldwork illustrate the day-to-day lives of *Cruceños* (people of Santa Cruz) that disrupt notions of Latin America as static, and exotic providing an alternative to stereotypes of this region. In order to illustrate specific examples of this process, this essay will refer to the seventy-page book titled *ReMaking KM6: Childhood Memories of Santa Cruz, Bolivia*, that outlines this journey through the combination of visual evidence and narratives.

My autoethnography takes on the process of “memory-work” in which I explore the relationship between my childhood memories and present-day reality in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. By looking at Latin America as a concept, I create a specific local and regional representation of Latin America that shows one of the many diverse narratives within this hybrid cultural ground. Through careful examination of my role as former-resident, present-day foreigner, North American, artist, researcher, academic and photographer, I negotiate the meanings in my photographs by contextualizing my hybridity and subjectivity.

Some of the main questions that I tackle in this essay are: what kinds of tools can be used in order to engage in an autoethnography that exists within the representation of place? What are the characteristics of diasporas, and hybrid identities that renounce positivist notions of static and dichotomous identities and embrace identity as a constant flux? What constitutes Latin American photography? What have been the tendencies in Latin American photography? How do artists and photographers that live or have strong connections to Latin America portray this vast area? Can photography be an effective tool in representing diversity?

ReMaking KM6:

An Autoethnographic and Photographic Journey to Santa Cruz Bolivia

Introduction

The departure point for the methods and theories in this essay is hybridity, a postmodern concept that allows for the formulation of relational and positional perspectives about place (in this case the city of my childhood, Santa Cruz, Bolivia). Through the lens of hybridity, identity surrenders positivist and essentialist notions of culture. Hence, my method of autoethnography, the exploration of my identity, and the visual evidence created during my journey read as negotiations within and in between cultures; as dialogues between diverse methodologies in photography; as well as socially contextualized positions according to my experiences shown through image and text. Resulting in a wide range of possibilities, I am open to the conception of identity and the processes for its formation as fluid and dynamic. The methodologies and theories presented in this essay mirror my cultural hybridity, which places my identity in negotiation between my Korean ethnic heritage, my Bolivian affiliation through childhood as well as my present location in Canada. This hybridity also allows for definitions that are constantly shifting depending on location, time, as well as cultural specificity and positioning.

This auto-ethnography is based on my personal journey returning to my childhood home of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia after seventeen years. My personal memory, which prompted my return, is informed by my hybrid identity that includes being in the Korean diaspora, spending my childhood in Latin America, and my current realities in Canada. This autoethnography takes on the tradition of autobiography as

well as memory-work in retelling and recounting narratives that illustrate cultural identity. Furthermore, the dynamics of identity are complicated by my varying positions as a foreigner, former resident, artist and researcher. The resulting photographs from this journey can be analyzed through theories on ethnographic practice, documentary photography, memory-work, and representations of Latin America. These photographs also serve as visual evidence of middle class *Cruceños* (people of Santa Cruz) that exist in between the categories of personal and family album, documentary photography, snapshots as well as art photography.

In addition, the book, *ReMaking KM6: Childhood Memories of Santa Cruz, Bolivia* is the most comprehensive cultural artefact that has been created in response to this project featuring images accompanied with narratives that complete my story. This book will be examined in detail throughout this essay to provide concrete examples that demonstrate my process and the evidence that I gathered. It also takes the form of personal albums, which combines photos from childhood alongside photographs that were taken upon my return. These photographs informed by my past can be placed within the realm of Latin American photography contributing to images of Latin America in North America, where I am currently present. This body of work also resonates within the tendency in Latin American art that portrays the urban and city life. Contrary to stereotypes of this area as the "third world" and static, Latin America is represented by its inhabitants as urban demonstrating a socially and politically rich landscape.

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positivist notions of static and dichotomous identities and embrace identity as a constant flux? What constitutes Latin American photography? What have been the tendencies in Latin American photography? How do artists and photographers that live or have strong connections to Latin America portray this vast area? Can photography be an effective tool in representing diversity? How can this be achieved?

Tools of post-modernity are used to represent Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. Hybridity as the starting point guides the process of my autoethnography and photographing. This hybridity is also demonstrated within the discourse of diversity in Latin American photography looking at the urban context of individual cities within this geography and concept. Photography is visual evidence that can be useful in portraying the dynamics of diversity. Furthermore, these images of Bolivia must be shown in context and in conjunction with their corresponding narratives to recount encompassing stories about the people and places in the photographs.

The Book: *ReMaking KM6, Childhood Memories of Santa Cruz, Bolivia*

The relationship between the narratives and photographs that I gathered through this memory-work and autoethnographic journey are outlined in a seventy-page book that reads like a diary and a personal album. The images found in this book combine a number of photographs from my childhood, black and white 35mm images taken upon my return as well as digital photographs that complement the journey. This combination and collage of photographs mirror the process of memory-work, which involves gathering fragmented pieces of my past in order to make sense of a previous life, a part of my cultural identity.

This book is an essential element of the overall project, which contextualizes my personal story within a greater social context. The selected photographs were edited through the same process used to choose photographs in personal albums, informed by subjectivity and emotional connection to the people and places in the photographs. This narrative and illustrative book is another manifestation of my project acting as a social and cultural artefact that informs a North American audience about the daily lives of middle class *Cruceños* (the people of Santa Cruz). I refer to the *Cruceños* that I photographed as my collaborators since their role within this project was beyond posing for photographs. My former friends and neighbours helped me trigger certain memories. Through casual interviews, I rediscovered and remembered details about the past that were lost in the webs of my memory. They also helped me get reacquainted with the city by taking me to places that otherwise, I would have not been able to find. I refrain from using the term “subjects” since it implies passivity. My process of photographing is often a conversation and collaboration. Hence, I note the importance of referring to the people photographed as collaborators. This project would not be possible without their help and input.

The portraits of my collaborators are somewhat ambiguous, as they do not necessarily give concrete indications of place or time. Evidence of place demonstrated is subtle. These photographs portray fragments of the everyday within this particular place creating a sense of familiarity through the use of environmental portraiture. These photographs feel familiar because they follow the tradition of portraiture common across cultures, which inform about the everyday within a specific social context in an era of globalization.

Why use autoethnography as the primary method of inquiry?

I begin with my autobiography placing myself within the social context of my past to gain insight into a culture and a group of people that were part of my childhood in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. My tale works as a catalyst to answer larger social questions about the daily-lived realities in Santa Cruz. This autoethnography uses “memory-work” (2006) as coined by Annette Kuhn in which I recount and reconstruct a history through the past. “Memory does not revive the past but constructs it” (Hua, 2005, p. 198). My process of autoethnography involves constructing identities, including my own and of those that were part of my past. In order to explore these cultural identities, I will work along the lines of identity as perceived by Stuart Hall:

Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices tend to represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a “production” which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term “cultural identity” lays claim. (2003, p.234)

If cultural identity is in constant transformation, it is a process rather than a product meaning that identity is not a tangible entity rather that it is characterized by its transformative characteristics. For instance, my cultural affiliation with Bolivia and the Latino community has always been part of my cultural reality. Even though, I left Bolivia at the age of thirteen, I have identified with Latin America. Upon return to my childhood cultural playground, I discovered that through time and distance I had become a foreigner. In this process of reconstructing my former Bolivian identity, I had to simultaneously define, redefine, un-define my identity and its characteristics. As Hall stated, identities are produced and “are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past.” (Hall, 2003,

p.235). During my fieldwork, it was necessary to reposition myself as I met my past in the present. If identity is not a concrete entity and cannot have solid definitions, we can only contextualize or outline the characteristics of our cultural identities based on positioning, meaning our location within the social arrangement of our culture/s.

As an autoethnographer and autobiographer, I contextualize my narrative in synch with my social and cultural reality. "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always "in context," *positioned*" (Hall, 2003, p234). First, the autoethnographer recognizes her/his subjectivity by clearly positioning her/his perspective coming from a specific place in history and society. Through the past, I am able to access a world that is far away from my home in Toronto, Canada. Bolivia is a place that is far away geographically but close to the formation of my identity. Upon my return, my position within this familiar context fluctuates. I am an insider and as well as an outsider. The individual factors of my diverse subjectivity exist within a plurality of contexts. My subjectivity shifts depending on my social environment and in context to social and political locations. Latin America is characterized by its diversity and fusion of different cultures, and lifestyles. Hence, my own hybridity brings me closer to a place, which is not my place of birth but is a place that has shaped my fluid and ever-changing cultural identity.

Relationship between Narration and Cultural Identity

Jesús Martín-Barberos takes Homi Bhabha's idea on cultural identity:

In order that the plurality of cultures be taken politically into account, it is imperative that the diversity of identities can be recounted, narrated. Thus, there is a constitutive relationship between identity and narration, there being no cultural identity which is not recounted (Bhabha, 1990) (2002, p.623)

Identities become validated through the act of recounting and writing. Personal histories can play an important part in illustrating the diversity that is present within one or diverse cultures. Martín-Barberos continues to build on this idea of identity as a “relational construction.” In the process of telling and recounting experience, identity is constructed, formulated and situated. In order to actively engage in the relational construction of my identity, I recount/tell/narrate my cultural history and collect the stories of my past. I am able to tell my story through the creation of the book that marries anecdotes and photographs. This cultural artefact recounts my story through the style of diary and family album giving validity to my cultural experience and identity creating cultural history. As my subjectivity is not singular but multiple, first I define the social backdrop that I came into in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, my former home. My subjectivity shifts between various locations: as a foreigner coming from North America; a foreigner who is Asian in appearance but who is fluent in Spanish; as somebody within the Korean Diaspora; and as an artist emerging into the context of the artistic community in Santa Cruz, *mestizos*, *cambas* (another term used to describe people in this region that are of mixed origin) and middle class *Cruceños*. The method for this autoethnographic study is based on autobiography (Reed-Danahay, 1997), which takes on the process of collecting one’s own memories in order to make sense of the past and formulate a personal narrative.

Memory-Work and Autobiography

According to Annette Kuhn, “Memory-work has a great deal in common with forms of inquiry which – like detective work and archaeology, say – involve working backwards – searching for clues, deciphering signs and traces, making deductions,

patching together reconstructions out of fragments of evidence” (1995, p.4). My journey to Bolivia followed this process of memory-work looking at past narratives that resurfaced placing “the self within a social context” (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p.9). My personal location diverged into the analysis of the city’s social context. I engaged in the everyday, photographing and documenting the lives of middle class *Cruceños*. If the activity of remembering is collective in nature (Kuhn, 1995, p.5), autobiographical memory-work could not be complete without the examination of the collective culture that I formerly belonged to in Santa Cruz.

Turning to the book, pages fourteen to forty-three narrate the stories of former classmates from *Colegio Cardenal Cushing*, an all-girls school for upper and middle class children. These stories illustrate a specific group of people in the city, mainly females between the ages of twenty-nine to thirty-one who attended the same Catholic school. They also represent the most cohesive collective, which I came into contact with upon my return. Other collaborators outside of this context such as *Arasely* and *Director Davalo* (pages fifty to fifty-one), *Señor Andres* (pages sixty-one and sixty-four), and the lady by the tree (page forty-four) complete certain gaps to provide a more encompassing picture of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. My personal journey occurred within this context as a member of the Korean diaspora rediscovering a place from the past. To complicate matters further, I am also an outsider from North America. This explanation sets the background for the photographs that were produced as well as the narratives to unfold.

The methodology for my project, which could be described as autobiographical, autoethnographical, and memory-work is in synch with:

A changing conceptions of both the self and society in the late twentieth century. It synthesizes both a post-modern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a post modern autobiography, in which the notion of the coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question.” (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p.2).

Perhaps the rise of post-modern conceptions of ethnographies and autobiographies are the result of the birth of subjectivity, positionality and global realities that have transformed the way humans interact with each other as well as how they see themselves within the global, which reflects an increase in cultural hybridity. This hybrid approach comes from post-modern methodologies and mirrors the process of analysis within diaspora studies.

Who is the Autoethnographer?

“One of the main characteristics of an autoethnographic perspective is that the autoethnographer is a boundary-crosser... A dualistic view of the autoethnographer may be better substituted with one stressing multiple, shifting identities.” (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p.2.) If the autoethnographer is a “boundary-crosser”, then the autoethnographer exists not only under one context but adapts and negotiates between various cultural and ideological environments. This characteristic of the autoethnographer mirrors the characteristics that cultural hybridity requires. For instance, Michael J.M. Fischer explains that identity and the self, conceived through autobiographical traditions have been dynamic, multilayered as well as containing various perspectives (1986, p.199-201). The self, recognized as complex has been the result of post-modern techniques that involve “bifocality or reciprocity of perspectives” (1986, p.230). These conceptual tools of post-modernity allow for diverse narratives to be deciphered within a single location. My journey in Santa Cruz examines the interplay

between diversity: *Cambas, Collas*, and foreigners. How does my own presence as autoethnographer disrupt the social divide/s?

I situate my position within the Korean diaspora and my Asian appearance as the factor that gives the illusion of my identity. In reality, my visual presence only touches the surface of my identity. At the same time, my fluently spoken Spanish and my perfect imitation of the *Camba* accent confuses *Cruceños*, the locals. I appear to be of Asian descent. Nobody suspects that I am Canadian. This cultural hybridity allows my project to take a “multiple focality” of perspectives while looking at race and class relations within this particular area. My own cultural identity is diverse and fluid. It is perceived in many different ways depending on the environment that I enter. As an autoethnographer, my main purpose is to point out certain consistent characteristics within my identity since it would be unfeasible to outline concrete evidence of an essential identity. At the same time, I negotiate my presence in Santa Cruz with locals: the artists that I meet, my former friends and strangers. To my former friends, I am an old schoolmate, hence considered one of them even if the cultural differences are inevitably present. I feel most at home with artists whose main concern is the act of art making. The language of art has less limitations and boundaries. I am mostly isolated and separated from the working class individuals that I encountered daily, as they are suspicious of my foreign presence. While negotiating through these contexts, the fluidity of my identity facilitates my photographic and artistic journey.

The resulting book also illustrates my connection to certain people and places within the city revealing my own location within this environment. For instance, a majority of the people that I photographed and interviewed are former Catholic

classmates from middle school. Photographs that demonstrate the working class population in the city are limited in number. I photographed *Señor Andres* and the lady sitting by the tree. The collection of photographs that are shown in the book reveal my social location upon my return as well as my access to the city's landscape. My process of art making is not fixed nor formulaic, I follow my instincts above all, allowing for the environment to dictate my movement and action. My project works through an organic and fluid framework that parallels fluid notions of hybridity.

Autoethnography and Diasporic Identity

Post-modern conditions have led to the inter-relation between autoethnography, autobiography and diasporas. For instance, this is evident in texts by Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe, a feminist self-ethnographer who contextualizes her autoethnographic process situating herself within a specific feminist "standpoint" that provides perspective to her life experience growing up in Nigeria, Britain and America (2003). Through her "complex subjectivity", she tells stories as experienced through her everyday reality as a *Métisse* woman (2003, p.184).

Where are you from? On an empowered day, I describe myself as a Diaspora(s) daughter with multiple migratory and ancestral reference points in Nigeria, Ireland, England, Guyana and the United States. On a disempowered day I am a nationless nomad who wanders from destination to destination in search of a singular site to name as home (p.196).

According to the author, her identity is dependent upon context and her changing subjectivity and perspective. The author confronts her hybridity as she recognizes the complex nature of her identity in negotiation with race, ethnicity and diaspora. I self-contextualize my perspective as belonging within certain social positioning(s), a technique used by many auto-ethnographers such as Ifekwunigwe in the process of

creating a personal narrative in the Diaspora and an illustration of place. This kind of auto-ethnographic writing on cultural identity introduces notions of culture that exist within a complex web of intercultural relations. Accordingly, cultural identities are not fixed but rather shifting and changing constantly.

Another autoethnographic work that explores cultural identity and the necessity for positioning within autoethnography is Pnina Motzafi-Haller's self-ethnography.

By collapsing the categories of native and non-native, subject and object, researcher and subject of study, I hope to go beyond the strict laws of the genre identified with traditional social-science practices. This is making me a better, not less able anthropologist and analyst (1997, p.219).

The author recognizes how our identities fluctuate between our cultural contexts, especially when one is part of many different cultures. She is a Jewish Mizrahi woman, born in Israel with parents who were Iraqi immigrants. In Israel, she is considered "black" because of her background. On the other hand, during her fieldwork in Botswana, she passes as white because of her lighter complexion and her status as a researcher and foreigner coming from the United States. Consequently, she negotiates and adapts her identity depending on the cultural context of her surroundings in order to fulfill her different roles as a woman, a researcher, a minority and a privileged American academic. Through her writing, she expresses the personal conflict that she encounters having to negotiate from one role to the other. Similarly, I also experience this discomfort while I attempt to negotiate with the distinct cultures that are part of my identity.

Negotiating Memories: Diaspora, Identity and Hybridity

“As most diaspora groups share also incorporated ethnic groups, they must carefully manage their communicative negotiations of their ethnic and national identities in relationship to the homeland as well as the place of settlement” (Drzewiecka, 2002, p.1.) The person, who has crossed transnational borders, gathers experience, which becomes manifested through a collection of memories. In turn, memories of a former life and present reality allow for the individual to form a hybrid identity, which is often complex, contradictory and multifaceted. According to Vijay Agnew, “memories that are documented in narratives, life writings and autobiographies represent individuals and groups with a specificity and particularity that eschew homogeneity and generalizations” (2005, p. 7). Thus, Agnew points to the multiplicity of diasporic cultural identities, which allow for a multitude of narratives to exist and share a similar context. If narratives are essential in describing the multifaceted nature of diaspora identities, autoethnography and autobiography are a compatible method for exploring hybridity and identity. In addition, Agnew points to the importance of memories that inform these narratives of multiplicity.

According to Sarah Walls, Mucey’s outline on ‘how to do’ autoethnography includes “[the] use of snapshots, artefacts/documents, metaphor, and psychological and literal journeys [as] techniques for reflecting on and conveying a ‘patchwork of feelings, experiences, emotions, and behaviours that portray a more complete view of ... life’” (2007, p.10). To further this idea, Walls explains that personal narratives are typical products of autoethnography as well as a proposed method in itself. In relation, my memories of Bolivia illustrate a personal narrative about the social environment of a

place that was once my home. The selection of photographs in the book also give indication about places in the city such as my former schools (*Colegio Henry Prince*, *Colegio Cardenal Cushing*), neighbourhoods (KM6 and *Casa de la Ramada*) and other key places such as the ex bus terminal (present-day city hall and my parent's former place of business.) According to Mary M. Reda:

Memory is a self-selecting process, creating patterns through elision, emphasis, and forgetfulness. Such transformations radically alter the "data." We read the writer's retrospective reconstructions of, essentially, a different culture; hypotheses inhere through these patterns of memory. History gives these constructions a teleological imperative: to explain the present through the past" (2007).

Even though autoethnography through one's own memory is a valid form of research, it is important to consider one's subjectivity as memory is often attached to emotional perspectives about the past.

Memory and Photography

According to Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble, "Photographs inevitably return us not just to scenes of memory but, at the same time, to *sites* of memory, sites that are unfailingly imbued with an emotional charge" (2003, p.6). In *ReMaking KM6*, I returned to the *sites* of my memory creating images that speak about the past in the present. Some of my most vivid memories were inconsistent with the reality that I encountered upon my return. This was to be expected since seventeen years have passed since I originally collected those memories. The difference between what I had imagined over the years and what was present reflect the unsteady and fluid nature of memory. Even though I was not able to recreate my past as I had imagined, part of my remembering involved accepting the uncertainty that time brings. "Image making is indivisibly a part

of remembering” (Morris, 1989, p.33.) Hence, on this personal journey, photography served as a way to remember my past and gather visual evidence of a specific place in Bolivia. Additionally, the resulting book uses the visual technique of placing past images next to current photographs of collaborators. In the pages that illustrate the narratives of my former classmates, I display childhood photos next to current photographs that I took upon return.

Photographs can be worked as “visual practices, mnemonic devices, repositories of collective knowledge and powerful imagery that mediates social realities” (Kuhn, McAllister, 2006, p.5). Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister talk about the nature of the photographic image as holding a “recorded moment in stillness” (2006). “In seeming to capture times and places lost in the past, the photograph can disturb the present moment and the contemporary landscape with troubling or nostalgic memories and with forgotten, or all too vividly remembered, histories” (Kuhn, McAllister, 2006, p 1.) In my experience, the present moment and process of photographing disturbed my past or at least what I thought the past might have been by contesting certain notions that existed only in my imagination. Through the photographs selected in the book, one can also be witness that the actual place has not changed too much over the years. Inevitably, people from the past have grown older but the visible changes are not in the way that I had anticipated. Furthermore, my return to the land of childhood nostalgia further complicated my global displacement, no longer able to identify myself fully within the context of this city in Latin America. Between excitement and homesickness, I had to renegotiate my movements around the city as well as learn the culture nuances that I had forgotten over the years.

The diasporic subjectivity is thus necessarily double: acknowledging the imperatives of an earlier "elsewhere" in an active and critical relationship with the cultural politics of one's present home, all within the figurality of a reciprocal displacement. (Radhadkrishnan, 1996, p. xiii)

My own diasporic identity is double and multiple at the same time. This multiplicity places me as well as takes me away from the various contexts, which I navigate through culturally and physically. Hence, my narrative fits into the autoethnographical tradition of the diaspora illustrating individual experience within diasporas as absolutely heterogeneous rather than homogenous. My journey illustrated through text and photos also demonstrate this heterogeneity. Hence my experiences in Santa Cruz belong in Bolivia regardless of my culture of origin.

Imagined Global Communities

As never before, photographs made the past, a palpable part of the present. The historical importance of photography as a new means of collecting and classifying geographical and other forms of knowledge and of communicating them to both popular and elite audiences should not be underestimated. Over the past century and a half, photographs have been used not only 'in a multiplicity of way', but also in profoundly influential ways to shape modern geographical imaginations. (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003, p.5)

Perhaps photography's impact in the world in the last century has been as significant, if not more so, as the impact of print capitalism on *Imagined Communities* as theorized by Benedict Anderson. Readapting this idea, I question whether the predominance of photography in our world has resulted in *Imagined Global Communities*, however accurate or misleading such representations might be. According to Anderson, a population that shared a specific national geographic area could identify through print without ever meeting one another, thus creating a somewhat unified group of people under one common interest, a sense of nationalism and identification with one another

(1991). The difference between Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and *the Imagined Global Communities* is that even though the latter might be trying to unite the world despite geographic differences, often it creates and installs an illusion about far away places. This misinterpreted ideas of other nations could further isolate us from the rest of the world as we perceive as factual and rely on imagery that clearly points out the difference between cultures, creating a sense of *us vs. them*. Based on the nature of image production and the hierarchy that exists within it, ideas about unknown and far-away places could lead to *othering* those that we have not met, creating a sense that '*we have seen it therefore it is proven that they are different*'. Mainstream images of foreign lands can assist in shaping a misconception of the rest of the world and the "others" that live in it. The geographical imagination is not reliable, and cannot possibly provide an accurate and balanced view about a place. This imagination allows for the world to appear more accessible. At the same time, it also creates misrepresentations and misconceptions about places.

Representations of Latin America

Since photography's inception, European ethnographers have turned their eye to the New World in order to document their "others," mostly for the purposes of European self-definition and to satisfy a hunger for the "exotic." (Schwartz, Tierney-Tello, 2006, p.3). This tradition still resonates within current photographs of Latin America including those of Bolivia which fulfil the purposes of charity, glorification of poverty as art, and the simplification of its people as the exotic other. Hence, the location of the other remains in the past reflecting a hegemonic device of colonialism that isolates the other in time and place (Lippard, 2003, p.346). Images of South Americans are dichotomous

either demonstrating them as “innocent and docile or as dangerous and ferocious animals” (Desnoes, 2003, p.317). These perspectives on the Latin American “other” stems from colonial times of conquest. According to Boris Kossoy, “There was no better “evidence” for the differences between the superior race and the inferior ones than the photographic record of an anthropological and ethnographic nature” (1998, p.41). He says that images of *tipos*, certain stereotyped personas within Latin American society, were used as factual knowledge which would mark difference between Western civilization and the Latin American “other”. These types of photographs were sold and consumed by Western tourists as mementos, which would aid in the construction of the myth of the “uncivilized” (Kossoy, 1998). In order to contradict such historically embedded perspective of place, I have photographed a segment of the population of one city that is informed by my past and memories. Through the representation of a place in the everyday, I focus on the similarities between daily human experiences.

In a globalize era, colonial mentalities are still reflected in the way that images of the “other” are circulated in North America. There is also an over-abundance of images, which include photographs from virtually every part of the world. However, what I question is the types of images available depending on the distribution of power and one’s location within this global chaos. It is essential to look at the nature of images to determine hierarchy and predominance of certain types over others. Taking this idea in relation to my childhood country of Bolivia, it could be said that little information is known about this place in North America. Bolivia is a place often in the periphery of North America having one of the weakest economies in Latin America. Hence, the production of images of this place could be low priority within the hierarchy of global

image production. As well, the available photographs of Bolivia are mainly used within its regional and national context. The hierarchy of images, along with political and economic realities allow certain information about certain places to be prioritized over others. Furthermore, within the limited amount of Bolivian images available, the majority of them portray a rural way of life showing the indigenous population living what is considered an indigenous lifestyle.

The most common impression of Bolivia in the North American perception is the presence of indigenous people (*Collas*). Considering that the majority of the population in Bolivia is *Colla* (66.2% in 2001) (*Oyarce & del Popolo, 2005*), this notion is not completely skewed. The rise of Evo Morales as the indigenous socialist president in Bolivia might have also contributed to this idea. What I argue is not that it is inaccurate to show that Bolivia is made up of a majority of indigenous people whether they are Quechua or Aymara (the two largest indigenous groups), rather that there is a difference between being indigenous, having indigenous physical characteristics and living a so-called indigenous lifestyle. The two might not necessarily go hand in hand. Globalization has also reached Bolivia like the rest of the world and most of the population in Bolivia participate within a modernized way of living. The disparity in North American view of Bolivia exists between what is considered indigenous people and an indigenous way of life. According to the 2001 census from Bolivia, sixty-two percent of all Bolivian live in urban centres (Bolivian Census, 2001).

In addition, one must also remember that the growth of cities such as Santa Cruz in the last eight years has been enormous. The populations flocking to urban centres to gain economic stability must have increased dramatically in the last eight years since

the last census. Santa Cruz, my former home is situated in the Southeastern part of the country. The population of the department of Santa Cruz was 1,545,161 in 2008. Seventy six percent of this population lives in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the largest city in Bolivia. The population in this department is predominantly *Camba* (*Mestizo* or mixed race) who make up thirty percent of the total population of Bolivia. Even though Santa Cruz's population of *mestizos* are a minority in the country, they do account for one third of Bolivia's population. Representations of this area are not commonplace in the global front. Through my autoethnographical journey and the photographs I collected, I document the daily lives of a group of people that are part of Bolivia's cultural diversity (Bolivian Census, 2001).

The photographs that I have conceived through my journey avoid stereotypes of place by contextualizing the everyday. These portraits of *Cruceños* are read as images found in personal/family album, which contain narratives told through the sequencing of images. This strategic sequencing is also demonstrated in the book, *ReMaking KM6: Childhood Memories of Santa Cruz, Bolivia*. The function of the album is to intrinsically rate the importance of individual photos or groupings through a process of selection, editing and ordering. Personal subjectivity and memories determined and prompted my search. In the process of creating my book, I took the methodology of making personal albums displaying present-day photographs next to past images that inform about my personal history and memories. The resulting series of portraits illustrate the daily lives of my former friends and acquaintances that I sought out. These personal photographs are based on my curiosity and self-search for identity. The series of photographs taken do not glorify any experience beyond what they are, a moment in time within the regular

lives of regular people which serve as ethnographic photographs of the everyday within a city in Latin America. The objects and background within the portraits set the general environment giving subtle clues as to the location and the people. This particular socio-economic group in Bolivia that are *Mestizo* (Mixed origin) lead lives that parallel North American lifestyles. Globalization has penetrated virtually all corners of the world including Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. The people in my photographs have an appreciation for American brand names such as Adidas and Levis while drinking Coca Cola and driving Toyotas and Hondas. Through my personal connection to the *Cruceños*, I discover how they adapt to globalized lifestyles to suit their needs.

Photographing the City

According to Néstor García Canclini, the urban context of Latin America must be studied for its diversity, especially by looking at the interaction between native and non-native cultures, the mix between Indigenous, Catholic, and Europeans that allow for these populations to adapt modernity and technological advances in their own way, within their own context that is most suitable to them (2005, p.178.) He furthers this notion by explaining that modernism as a Latin American project has very different implications than in the West, as they incorporate the indigenous into a new context (2005). My project returning to Bolivia recognizes the complex social mapping of Latin America, which transcends Western stereotypes. Hence, I portray the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, as an urban centre through Canclini's framework, which looks at the complex nature of Latin American societies in the era of globalization through the representation of diversity and hybridity in this context. "Susan Sontag insists that photographers began as "artists of the urban sensibility" (Schwartz, 2006, p.117).

Furthermore, Schwartz also traces the photographic aesthetic as intrinsic to the experience of the city (2006, p.56). I am interested in Sontag's perspective on photography having roots in the urban to capture images of cities. I also work with Schwartz' idea that photography has a certain city aesthetic, which is reflected in the visual evidence that I gathered from Santa Cruz. My process of photographing a Latin American city follows a tradition of Latin American artists whose work demonstrate the complex social and political realities in their cities. Esther Garbara explains that one of the most reoccurring themes among Latin American artists are portrayals of urban life and its organization in order to represent their own home (2006). Contrary to Western perspectives on this area, Latin Americans live and thrive in urban centres. My images of Santa Cruz reflect the relationship between photography and the city. The city aesthetic is visible in the architectural photographs of the old bus terminal as well as my former home in *La Ramada*.

Latin America as a Concept

“In order to speak of the Latin American Image, we must first address the diverse geographical, cultural and historical realities of an entire continent” (Parkinson Zamora, 1998, p.293). This diversity evident in Latin America is due to its complex historical background that includes diverse cultures that arrived in different moments. According to Parkinson Zamora, ““Latin America” is a concept as well as a place that contains both geographic and cultural diversity” (1998, p.297). Looking at the concept of Latin America through this description, hybridity is one of the main characteristics that mark this continent. Latin America is a place or a combination of many places, the playground for diversity to intermingle, converse and converge where cultural inter-

relations occur and where the modern meets the traditional. This concept also speaks to the fluid nature of cultural identity within Latin America and the difficulty in trying to allocate fixed definitions to the identities found in this continent. Hybridity as the most remarkable feature of this area comes in many different shapes and sizes depending on the specific locations in Latin America. Even in one single country, one can find a great cultural shift from one region to the next. In the example of Bolivia, Santa Cruz de la Sierra is located in a tropical rainforest with a *Mestizo* population. The capital city of La Paz, located in the Andes, is marked by high altitude and a population that is predominantly Indigenous. The difference in geographic landscape as well as local culture is evident. At the same time, both places do participate within a similar set of urban rituals that happen in all cities of the world that participate in globalization, regardless of their level of participation within the global. Contradictions found within a culture and place allow for their definitions to be inconclusive, and an ongoing process rather than a set category. "Cultural Identity must be defined locally before it can be defined hemispherically" (Parkinson Zamora, 1998, p.299). By looking at the individual places that make up this vast region, one realizes the diversity in Latin America.

Understanding Latin America means recognizing its hybridity, diversity and fluidity. Hence, I embarked on a journey to look at the city of my childhood, Santa Cruz de la Sierra to gather photographic evidence that illustrate my autoethnography living amongst middle class *Cruceños*. I question the position that my photographs occupy in Zamora's concept of Latin American photography. What encompasses Latin American photography and what are its functions? According to Desnoes:

We must develop [Latin American] photography as a critical attitude revealing and directing a world that can offer a possible alternative, another reality, to the Europe-and USA-centric vision and cultural conceptions. Not only do we live other economic and social problems, but we live them differently (2003, p.316).

Through my photographs of Santa Cruz, I provide alternative perspectives of Latin America demonstrating my personal narrative as well as the narratives of my collaborators who represent a particular population in the city. The photographs also serve as document, a slice of life in Bolivia that denounces stereotypes and does not over glorify or exaggerate the realities of a so-called third-world country. Desnoes adds:

The Latin American photographer has the possibility, and the means, for naming the things of our world, for demonstrating that there is another kind of beauty that faces of the First World are not the only ones. These Indians, black, plundered white and Mestizo faces are the first element defining the demographic content of our photography. Cultural, economic and social conflicts are also obvious in many photographs. An eagerness, to name our reality is present in the dark splendour of most of these images, as well as the need to reject the exploitation of exotic colours so as not to fall into a facile and declamatory photography of denunciation (2003, p.318).

In my Latin American photographs, I illustrate one specific group of people that are part of the diverse demographics of Latin American photography. Many of the representational images of Latin America comment on the political and social conflicts as a result of the realities that artists face within their surroundings. Latin America has been a place that has a history of corruption and revolution at the same time. Its inhabitants live in an environment that is highly politically charged on a daily basis. In turn, my photographs of Santa Cruz show subtle manifestation of these political and social realities within the everyday. Though the photographs do not explicitly point out specific political situations, they give indication of a place and people's everyday connection to this place. Taking for instance Tania's portrait on page forty-eight, she

poses against the backdrop of the run-down city hall walls with the Bolivian and Santa Cruz flags waving in the back. In chapter, *Ex Bus Terminal/ Present Day City Hall*, it is indicated that the crumbling structure was transformed from a public place (a gateway of travel and commerce) to a heavily guarded government structure. This transformation also reflects the priority of the socialist federal government and demonstrates the ideological changes upon the landscape of the city. The narrative book subtly illustrates the changes caused by the federal government of Evo Morales through the representation of the everyday. In Santa Cruz, I witnessed several fragmented aspects of place finding irony and beauty within its contradictions. The book also plays the role of cultural artefact that reflects alternative stories within Latin America and a representation of Latin American photography.

Desnoes suggests that, "Critical photography of everyday life is inseparable from cultural dialogue" (2003, p.319). Desnoes refers to "critical photography" in two ways. One is the act of critical analysis of the everyday through a cultural and sociological lens. Two is the recognition and validation of photographs of the everyday that are critical in defining Latin America. Furthermore, the cultural dialogue is key and an important process to bring representations about Latin America that are closer to the experience of its inhabitants. Even though I no longer live in Bolivia, I believe that my childhood affiliations helped me create this cultural dialogue. "We come to a sense of belonging in a place by any number of different roads; in fact mere time spent is often not enough... To be of rather than in a place certainly does not demand that one be born and raised there."(Lippard, 1997, p.9). It is not an easy task to define whether my identity could be viewed as Latin American due to my childhood connections and

personal attachment to this geographic area or as not Latin American since I was born in Korea, and was only a temporary resident during childhood. The sense of personal belonging to a place is developed by emotional attachment to place, which is based on personal subjectivity. Lippard adds that “Space defines landscape, where space combined with memory defines place” (1997, p.5). Santa Cruz de la Sierra combined with my childhood memories has become a place that has marked my identity and my perspective. The images that I photographed represent my own perspective and attachment to this area. As a photographer, I made certain choices on subject matter (people and places) based on my childhood memories, access, and personal subjectivity. In this project, I had a greater advantage than a tourist or a foreigner thanks to the artist’s residency and my friends from the past that I found. Even though the photographs demonstrate the daily lives of *Cruceños*, I cannot deny my own framing of their lives literally and photographically in how I chose to portray my collaborators and locations. For instance, the portraits illustrate a consistent aesthetic and compositional style indicating the presence of a particular eye and a perspective that is framing. This project doubles as a nostalgic journey and a documentation of Santa Cruz.

Based on my fieldwork, I realized that the process of defining my “cultural identity” in response to my “memory-work” became an exercise in unifying fragmented elements to accept contradictions and the ephemeral nature of identity and culture. Similar to the work of photographer, ethnographer, and poet, Elizabeth Bishop, as analysed by Jay Prosser in *Light in the Darkroom*, my perspective of Bolivia is “not a unifying picture but a broken, composite collage, holding at a distance certain generalizations” (2005, p.140). Though her work refers to her experiences living in

Santos, Brazil, in the 1950s, I draw parallels between her autoethnographic experience and my own in Santa Cruz. Brazil through Bishop's eyes was diverse and multi-faceted hence she created fluid definitions about Brazil, a place where Indigenous, African and European experiences are so vividly present and intermingled. It is also a place where cultural differences between the North of the country and the Southern regions are immense. "She wanted to illustrate Brazil through the anecdotal, as depressed but humorous, made up of quirky details and quotations" (2005, p.140). Through narrative, Bishop represents Brazil as fragmented because her own experiences were also fragmented. She understood Brazil as culturally multiple rather than simply dual or dichotomous.

Similarly in my project, accepting this type of multiplicity of experience has allowed me to embrace and understand the contradictions, which I found in Santa Cruz. In my autoethnography that is shown in the book, segments of my experience fit into a collage of ideas rather than into a cohesive puzzle with a fixed image. Perhaps, my version of Santa Cruz is constantly morphing. The images that are contained in my Santa Cruz collage can shift, disappear and reappear. This process also parallels my memory-work. The memories of my childhood constantly shift back and forth from one reality as I remembered to a different reality that I discovered as an adult. Memories of a photograph are "generated in an inter-text of discourses that shift between past and present, spectator and image, and between all these and cultural contexts, historical moments" (Pink, 2001, p.397). The combination between old colour photographs, black and white images and digital images illustrate this inter-text discourses that crossed over time. Many of these seeming contradictions have certain historical and

sociological basis. The constant shift between memory and reality, past and present, etc. allows Santa Cruz to exist outside of time, space and place.

The Latin American concept takes into consideration history of colonization and the resulting hybridity. Europeans' arrival in the continent led to the conquest and cultural mixing between colonizer and Indigenous locals resulting in a majority of *Mestizos*. This *Mestizaje* (hybridity, fusion, mixing) is particular to the area, which in turn creates conflicting identities within the self. At the same time, this *Mestizaje* is what allows for a multiplicity of perspectives to exist within Parkinson Zamora's concept of Latin America. Hence, my presence as well as my perspective exists within this hybrid cultural ground.

Ethnographic Photography and the Meaning of Photographs

The photographs that I took in Bolivia can be described as cultural experiences or cultural vignettes that illustrate the people, buildings, and houses in Santa Cruz. The book, *ReMaking KM6*, is divided by chapters of people and places from the past. For instance, the chapter titled KM6 illustrate an old neighbourhood and contains a current day photograph along with photographs from my childhood. Certainly, these photographs are also in context with my research, artistic and academic purposes. Therefore, they must be interpreted and contextualized within the process of their production as well as the purpose for the production.

Photographs are evidence, after all. Not that they are to be taken at face value, necessarily, nor that they mirror the real, nor even that a photograph offers any self-evident relationship between itself and what it shows. Simply that a photograph can be material for interpretation – evidence, in that sense: to be solved, like a riddle; read and decoded, like clues left behind at the scene of crime (Kuhn, 2006, p.395)

The photographs that I gathered are meant to be evidence in need of deciphering and careful examination. I cannot take for granted that their meaning will be read as I intended by any audience. One purpose is to show these photographs in North America to counter balance stereotyped notions of place. Some of the portraits taken in backyards and architectural images of the city give an indication of the climate and evidence of place. For instance, portraits of Lisette Zambrana (pages twenty-four and twenty-five) and Patricia Quiroga (pages thirty-six and thirty-seven) contain vegetations in the background that give an indication of a tropical climate. The photograph of the lady sitting by the tree in KM6 (page forty-four) also gives an indication of another social and cultural group that remains in the periphery of the city. The presence of run down structures such as the bus platforms at the former bus terminal (page fifty-two) and the objects left behind in this space (pages fifty-four to fifty-nine) give the notion of abandonment. The structures are occupied but the upkeep is minimal. Upon viewing the photographs without the accompanying text, one might come to the conclusion that this place is located somewhere in the so-called "third world". However, a North American audience might not have enough knowledge about Bolivia to place the photographs or understand their meaning. Hence, I include titles in their exhibition as well as textual narrative in the photo-book that guide readers through the meaning of these photographs. This representation of Santa Cruz (consequently a place in Latin America) demonstrates an alternative view about Latin America through their casual and familiar approach to the people and places contained in the photographs.

Pink proposes that photographs are not inherently ethnographic. A single photograph can take various meanings depending on the context where it is shown

(2001). Therefore, “the meanings of photographs are arbitrary and subjective, they depend on who is looking” (Pink, 2001, p.51). Even though the act of looking is subjective and personal, it is possible that this personal subjectivity also belongs within a greater cultural context. The narrative text accompanying my photos explain my context and demonstrates how it fits into a greater society. In terms of ethnographic images, it is crucial that we look at how the images will be used and for what purpose.

Ethnographic photography may be defined as the use of photographs for the recording and understanding of culture(s), of both the subject and the photographer. What makes an ethnographic photograph is not necessarily the intention of its production but how it is used to inform ethnographically” (Scherer, 1992, p.34)

The ethnographic images that I gathered in Santa Cruz are intended for a North American audience to inform about the daily-lived realities of this area. Hence the format of the photo-book is appropriate in showing the marriage between narration and photographs that contextualizes my journey and positioning. The evidence that I gathered is also used within the context of the academia through my Master’s project and the arts community for presentation in galleries around Toronto. These photographs of Santa Cruz belong within the realm of fine art photography and personal albums. The interaction between genres allow for this body of work to have an expanded ethnographic purpose.

Ethnographers’ photography and photographs can represent an explicit meeting point (or continuity) between personal and professional identities; as material objects they pass through, and are invested with new meanings in situations where individual may wish to express different aspects of their identities (Pink, 2001, p.26.)

My photographs contain my personal, autoethnographical, autobiographical and artistic journeys that narrate the lives of the people from my past expressed predominantly

through my own aesthetics and artistic style in black and white photography. All of the photographs selected within the edition demonstrate an aspect of my fragmented memories in an attempt to make sense of my own cultural identity and of belonging to this place.

While in Santa Cruz, as a photographer and artist-in-residence at *Kiosko Galería*, I lived and worked within the context of upper middle class *Cruceños* along with a small number of working class people with whom I came into contact. The social distinctions and separation between classes was evident within the hierarchy of inter-class relations reflected through the distribution and assignment of work. Only upper and middle class individuals had professional designations such as graphic designer, web developer, curator or artist. Working class individuals worked as *the help* or as assistants and did most of the work through their manual skills. In fact, only the upper and middle classes can afford the luxury or have the opportunity to be artists. During my visits to my old working class neighbourhood, I was only able to photograph two of the people from the past. In contrast, I found most of my classmates from Cardenal Cushing, middle class *Cruceños* and *Cambas*. The girls that I photographed were Silvia Lima, Lisette Zambrana, Glendy Zarraga, Kathya Gonzales, Vania Schwarm, Patricia Quiroga and Liliana Olmos. The complete body of work serves as evidence of place showing the demographics of this area through my experience. The portraits of my collaborators indicate the faces that I encountered within distinct social and geographic locations in Santa Cruz. I am not certain that it reflects a balanced percentage of the true demographics of this area, which also speaks about my own limitations in accessing certain areas of the city as well as places me within certain social parameters. The

places and persons photographed represent my own location and connection to distinct people in the city. In the book, we see the different neighbourhoods where my collaborators live as well as the places where I lived during childhood. The choices that I made as a photographer was through personal knowledge, intuition, coincidence and natural connection to the people in the photographs. As mentioned earlier, I also arrived with the intention to fulfill a project for my Masters degree as well as to satisfy an artistic need. The analysis of my autoethnography and the resulting photographs must be contextualized within my own position as researcher, artist, foreigner, former-resident and so on. My photographs take on altered meanings, based on the place and location where they are shown. In Santa Cruz, I showed this work at *Kiosko Galería*, where it was presented as a portrait of the city, perhaps as an attempt to create positive images about the city for a population of people that were undergoing a difficult social and political situation. People attended the show and recognized themselves in the photograph as well as saw familiar structures around their city. The photographs were not exotic rather familiar. These photographs could be hanging in living rooms of the audience. Some of them might actually be on the walls of my collaborators at the moment.

Upon my return to Canada, the photographs take on another representational meaning where I must be more explicit in stating its context and purpose. In exhibiting these photographs in North America, I must contextualize, explain, label and provide details about the photographs more directly. Hence, the format of the book allows for the narratives to take an equal part to the photographs in the construction of my memories and culture. Subtle details in the images give the impression that the

photographs are not from Canada. For instance, the street scene unfolding on page sixty-five illustrates a house with a distinct humble architecture and a palm tree. On pages fifty-four to fifty-seven, there are objects such as chairs and tables stacked and abandoned which contrasts the systematic order evident in Canadian government buildings. Childhood photographs on pages fourteen, twenty-six and thirty show school children dressed in a white uniform that is specific to Bolivia. Upon exhibiting these images to an audience outside of Bolivia, certain questions will arise such as: where are these structures? Who are these people? What are they doing? What social significance do they have? Showing these images take on more complex representational connotations as I can give meaning to the photographs through text. How will a North American audience read these images? And, what decisions do I make regarding their exhibition? What is my awareness of the theories of representation that inform this photography?

Pink states that such questions must be asked by the researcher/ethnographer while creating representations of place. Part of the process of representation is also figuring out the balance between the different roles that the photographer takes on during her/his process, as well as other environmental and contextual factors surrounding the project, which can be a difficult task (Pink, 2001, p.57).

Fundamental to understanding the significance of the visual in ethnographic work is a reflexive appreciation of how such elements [theoretical beliefs, disciplinary agendas, personal experience, gendered identities and different visual cultures] combine to produce visual meanings and ethnographic knowledge (Pink, 2001, P.29).

Hence, notions of Latin America as perceived in the West are based on representations and images created to serve specific purposes. For instance, images created for the

purpose of charity as well as tourism, which romanticize the exotic. Hence, one must understand that the function of the visual is not inherent but created. My work representing Santa Cruz is yet another visual evidence coming from one particular perspective. The photo-book also doubles as a cultural artefact that informs about a particular city and its people.

The *Cruceños*: Interacting with my collaborators

According to Soyini Madison, “interviewer and interviewee are in partnership and dialogue as they construct memory, meaning and experience together” (2005, p.25). The same concept could be applied to the relationship between photographer and person photographed which can overlap with the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. In this project, every person who I interviewed and photographed was a key collaborator rather than a passive subject. During this process of photographing my former friends and acquaintances, I came to discover that distance and time has made me culturally and socially different from my former friends. Without the aid of the camera, I noticed less this distance. They were people from the past who have taken various different paths and it felt natural to talk to them again and to get reacquainted. However, once the camera was placed between my friends and I, my perspective shifted. I took on the position of photographer, sociologist, researcher, ethnographer and academic. I began to notice the physical characteristics that place them in the different hierarchy of class and *Mestizaje*. I noticed the way they were dressed, which indicated certain social comfort or hardships. After my return from Bolivia, I visited an old friend who is now living as an illegal alien in Arlington, Virginia. She had been one of my best friends during childhood. The meeting was very natural as I was meeting my

dear friend from childhood. The moment I placed myself behind the camera, I began to see her reality, her difficulties living under the radar in the United States, her situation as a single mother of 2 little girls and her social position way down the food chain of America's consumerist society.

Susan Sontag said that photography is practiced as "a tool of power" (1977, p.8). She also stated that to photograph "means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge-and, therefore, like power" (1977, p.4). While I photographed my friend in Arlington, I felt my own power being imposed on my childhood friend. She smiled at the camera exaggerating her pose, as to be expected in the ritual of friends/family photography. I saw through the lens somebody who was constantly fighting to survive in a new country with limited resources and help. This recognition of her social reality created a flood of emotions in me from sadness to anger and from sympathy to discomfort. Is it possible to help her? Am I exploiting her reality for my personal gain? Is it ethical to photograph her? I have not yet printed those photographs. I will not until I find the most "natural" and dignified way to present them.

Through my process of autoethnography, I came in contact with many of the ethical issues in documentary photography that made me more aware about the implications of my artistic and ethnographic practice. On a more personal level, through interaction with my collaborators, I discovered narratives of my past that had been forgotten or that I had never known. On page fifty and fifty-one, I tell the story of my friend Arasely from grade five. She remembers that we used to fight over our math grades, which I do not recall. In fact, I do not recall any of my classmates from that

time. She clearly remembers that boys in school used to tease me by calling me *SoJin King Kong*.

One of the greatest challenges that I faced during my photography sessions was to balance between my role as friend, photographer, ethnographer, artist, researcher and academic. Initially, my position as friend gave me an immediate entry into the world of my collaborators. However, once the process of photographing began, I could no longer solely rely on this role. Through open dialogue, I negotiated between my diverse roles, making clear the implications of my ethnographic study. My collaborators were aware of my project, its purpose and its process. In turn, this allowed me to engage in image making that was collaborative rather than forceful.

Conclusion

Defining what Latin American photography is or entails is a daunting task. Parkinson Zamora asks whether Latin American photography is any photographs taken by Latina/os regardless of subject matter? Can a Latin American photographer make Latin American photography outside of this area? Does a Latin American subject matter make Latin American photography? Can somebody who is not Latin American make Latin American photography? Though I cannot formulate conclusive answers or outline concrete definitions on Latin American photography, the questions above demonstrate the potential for diversity in Latin American photography. Instead of fixating on the categories of my work and assigning it fixed definitions, first, I position myself and clearly state my intention through my different roles within this project. My main goal through these photographs is to create truthful, useful and local representations of Latin America that narrates my experience placing it into a social context. The photographs

taken belong within the fluid category of Latin American photography and fit into one of the many slots of the so-called Latin American experience.

One of the questions that I am often asked is whether I identify myself as Latina, Korean, or Canadian. Often times, people expect me to rate these cultures in order of influence. However, I often feel that this is not an easy or possible task. My hybrid cultural experiences have shaped my perspective and are manifested in different ways in different aspects of my life. My identity is also constantly shifting, as I require new knowledge about the world. Although the combination and details of my diasporic identity may be unique, it shares many similar characteristics to other Diasporic identities. Furthermore, identity whether it is singular or plural are often “contradictory and are always situational”. According to Hall, there is no single underlying way of being from a particular race or place. “Identities can only be articulated as a set of representations”. I reiterate, identities are fluid and fixed definitions are only pretending to be accurate (Hall & Bailey, 2003, p.383).

Photographs serve an important function in shaping our notions and perception about the world. Hence, there is a need to create more encompassing and diverse narratives that illustrate the everyday realities in Latin America as well as the rest of the world. Mainstream images do not show the breath of diversity truly present and often exist to serve a specific purpose depending on the hierarchy of image production. Photography's importance in shaping our notion and conception of the world cannot be understated. Perhaps, it would be possible to create a Global Community through the production of images as long as the process taken is all encompassing and balanced. It is also quite possible that such production of images would have to occur regionally by

people documenting their own realities to show what goes on in their corner of the world. The intention of my autoethnography is to encapsulate a very small fragment of the Latin American continent through daily co-existence with regular everyday protagonists. These photographs contribute to the pool of Bolivian images that exist and that are available in order to demonstrate through personal experience, the daily lived experience of people living in the largest and fastest growing city in Bolivia. I am able to fulfill their purpose more effectively through the photo-book that demonstrates the everyday reality in this area to a North American audience. The purpose of my search was more personal than political, meaning that I wanted to make sense of my past by revisiting old friends and collecting their narratives. At the same time, I cannot avoid making social observations and contextualizing the background for the people that I photographed. By photographing middle class *Cruceños*, my intention is to contextualize daily reality as a point of analysis.

Through my own autoethnography, I have come to an open-ended conclusion that experience is often fragmented and can never be fully encompassing. I state clearly that the representations of place that I gathered are through my subjective perspective. If another person with a similar history was to engage in this work, the representations might be entirely different than what I discovered. Through this work, I hope to contribute to the knowledge of Bolivia to a Canadian audience to disrupt stereotypes of Bolivia as well as to construct more encompassing images of Latin America in North America.

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