THE PLACES OF PLACEMENTS: USING PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY AS AN EXERCISE OF
REFLEXIVE LEARNING FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENT PLACEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis develops an argument that psychogeography can provide alternative, yet familiar, approaches to social work research and pedagogy. Psychogeography refers to studies of how our psychological experiences, such as our thoughts and feelings, are connected to our being in places. The present study was designed to be a novel application of a psychogeographic exercise in a social work learning context. For this research project, I met with five undergraduate students and interviewed them as we walked through the neighbourhoods surrounding their field practicum placement settings. My interviews with these students focused on the thoughts, feelings, memories, and experiences that they associated with these places. This exercise inspired critical reflection of diverse themes; including the impacts that places of placement environments had on the participants' development of their existential identity and critical consciousness. I argue that psychogeography evokes such reflection because its conception is rooted in efforts to develop creative and participatory engagement in place-based reflection for inspiring social justice activism. As such, the philosophical work of phenomenology and the action-seeking work of critical theorists can orient psychogeographic place studies to be congruent with social work research that aims to develop holistic and critical social justice-oriented education and practice.

"*Not all those who wander are lost*"

- *J.R.R. Tolkien*

INTRODUCTION

The major events of the past few years since I started graduate school have compelled our global society to recognize the ways in which places shape our experiences, contribute to our overall well-being, and become the sites of organized action and resilience. Collectively, major events of the past few years have called into question our sense of place and the ways in which we engage with and understand the spaces we occupy. Places cradle our joys and sorrows, witness our triumphs and setbacks, and bear witness to the unfolding stories of our lives. In the embrace of familiar landscapes, we can find solace and perhaps even a sense of continuity like a comforting melody that stirs our deepest longings. The absence of certain places and the resulting feelings of displacement remind us of their essential role in nurturing human connection, community engagement, social cohesion, and a shared sense of identity. When we become displaced, we mourn not just the physical spaces themselves, but the memories held within their walls. The loss of places severs the threads that weave our stories together, leaving us grappling with a sense of fragmentation and displacement. It is in our response to loss, our ability to hold space for grief, and our capacity to cultivate new senses of belonging that we find the resilience to navigate the ever-changing places and landscapes of our lives. We carry within us the indomitable spirit that knows the power of place and the transformative potential it holds for belonging and survival.

The COVID-19 pandemic, with its widespread lockdowns, travel restrictions, and physical distancing measures, profoundly impacted our senses of place on an unprecedented scale. No other events in recent memory have had such explicit and immediate global repercussions for all our homes. Although there have been other urgent crises occurring in the world that threaten the organization of human life as we know it, the COVID-19 pandemic has

been unique in the sense that all nations were responsible for making a worldwide emergency response that no one could ignore; regardless of the opinions that may have been held by individuals with varying appraisals of the severity of the danger that the virus represented. Social justice movements, such as the Black Lives Matter protests, sparked conversations about the significance of place in relation to race, identity, and belonging. These protests called for an end to racism and brought attention to the ways in which certain places and landmarks have been symbolic of systemic inequalities and marginalize certain communities; as well as sites of resistance, activism, and remembrance. Geopolitical tensions and warfare that have reached crisis levels in the past years continued to perpetuate widespread displacement of refugees, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and loss of lives; profoundly altering the physical and social fabric of civilian communities in those regions. It has been long recognized that geopolitical conflicts not only rupture civilian connections to their homes and ancestral lands, but also fracture their communal identities and cultural heritage. Moreover, the escalating climate crises, from devastating wildfires to rising sea levels, have underscored the vulnerability of our natural and built environments. These events call for a heightened collective awareness of the impacts of human activity on the places we inhabit and the urgent need for sustainable and equitable approaches to environmental stewardship.

As a social worker deemed an essential service during the COVID-19 outbreak, the sense of risk and vulnerability associated with my work and home environment was particularly intensified. Essential workers had to navigate spaces, including agency offices and the homes of service users in the community, with heightened awareness; constantly assessing potential risks and taking precautions to protect themselves and others. Moreover, essential workers experienced changes in their relationships with their homes. As the pandemic necessitated

physical distancing measures, many essential workers faced the challenge of isolating themselves from their families and loved ones to minimize the risk of transmission. This separation disrupted the sense of comfort and refuge that their homes may have once provided. Instead of being a place of respite, home became a space marked by sacrifice, loneliness, and worry about potentially exposing their loved ones to the virus. The places we once considered safe and reliable now carried an additional layer of uncertainty and fear. With restrictions in place, we were all compelled to reassess the value and significance of the places that had been integral to our daily lives.

Yet, even in the face of such losses and changes, there is resilience. As traditional avenues of support and therapeutic activities became inaccessible, one activity emerged as a lifeline for many: walking. The act of walking, once taken for granted, became one of the few exercises that remained available and accessible during the lockdowns. The pandemic brought about a multitude of stressors; including social isolation, fear, and uncertainty. These factors took a toll on people's mental well-being, leading to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness that are continuing to persist past the COVID-19 outbreak (Choi et al., 2020; Cullen, Gulati, & Kelly, 2020). Amidst these struggles, walking became a simple yet powerful coping mechanism: offering solace and a sense of control in an otherwise chaotic world. Walking provided an opportunity to step outside the confines of our homes and into the healing embrace of nature. The act of putting one foot in front of the other became a form of meditation; allowing opportunities for us reconnect with our bodies rather than being preoccupied with worries of the mind to find moments of tranquility amidst the chaos. The rhythmic movement of walking offers a sense of grounding and stability; providing a

counterbalance to the turbulent and overwhelming digital landscape through which we connected with the world outside our doors.

Engaging in regular walks is empirically recognized for offering numerous physical and mental health benefits (see Kelly et al., 2018; Roe & Aspinall, 2011). Walking stimulates the production of endorphins, the brain's natural mood-enhancing chemicals, promoting feelings of happiness and well-being (Mikkelson et al., 2017). Walking also serves as a conduit for social connection. While physical distancing measures restricted face-to-face interactions, walking outside allowed people to connect with others in a safe and responsible manner. Whether it was walking with someone from my household, a close friend, or even virtually connecting with my loved ones during walks; the simple act of being in each other's company provided a much-needed sense of presence, support, and connection. Like many others, I have realized how much I had taken for granted the freedom to gather, connect, and experience the vibrant energy of communal spaces. The absence of these communal places highlighted their importance in fostering a sense of belonging, social interaction, and well-being. As we adjusted to the new reality, I started to appreciate the significance of smaller, seemingly ordinary places. The neighborhood park became a haven of solace, providing a safe outdoor space for reflection. The quiet streets of my community offered a renewed sense of serenity and familiarity as I explored them during my daily walks. Each street corner, park bench, or apartment building carried within it a history, an energy, a palpable essence that infused human existence. And yet, these places were not static entities frozen in time. They pulsated with life, transformed by the footsteps, voices, and interactions of those who encountered them leaving indelible imprints of memories, emotions, and a viscerally existential sense of being.

Amidst these reflections, I embarked on an arts-based project that aimed to capture the stories and experiences of people in my community of Hamilton, Ontario. Inspired by the newfound significance of places and their role in shaping our lives, our team decided to create a guidebook that would serve as a visual representation of the diverse narratives and connections that make up our city. We invited community members to share their personal stories, memories, and reflections about different places in Hamilton that held meaning for them. Through written submissions from the community, we curated a rich assembly of narratives that celebrated the hidden gems, cherished landmarks, and transformative moments symbolizing the vibrant life stories in our community. By showcasing the diverse stories of Hamilton residents, the guidebook aimed to serve as a testament to the richness and resilience of our community. At the time of this writing, our team is still in the process of creating and publishing the guidebook for public distribution.

The reflections on place that I considered over the course of the past few years motivated my research inquiries of the impact of places on the lives of individuals and communities, especially in times of crisis, and reinforced the urgent need to advocate for accessible, safe, and inclusive places that foster social connection, resilience, and collective well-being. This thesis project is focussed on investigating how psychogeography can be applied to critical social work research and pedagogy striving to address the needs of our communities through equitable and justice-seeking practice; but is personally dedicated in reverence for the resilience and perseverance of human spirit.

LITERATURE REVIEW OF PLACE STUDIES AND PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY

I will describe psychogeography in more detail later, but briefly it is a practice that explores the relationship between physical spaces and human experiences. Psychogeography examines how our surrounding environments impact our emotions, behaviours, and sense of identity. I argue that psychogeography, taken up from a from a critical phenomenological perspective, can be applied in critical social work research and pedagogy to develop the field's understanding of how subjective experiences of places are shaped by social, cultural, and historical ideologies that are implied in the infrastructures of places. In this discussion, ideology refers to sets of socio-political beliefs and I am primarily concerned with discourses that push false ideas on people (see Zizek, 1989). This literature review aims to acknowledge highlights of the multi-disciplinary influences that I appealed to in conceiving of a research program that would bridge psychogeography and critical social work.

Critical social practice and research aims to challenge oppressive systems, advocate for social justice, and empower marginalized communities (Fook, 2003; Neuman, 1997). Psychogeography aligns with these aims in its utilization of participatory reflection, dialogue, and social-justice focus towards action-oriented examination of the ways in which power relations and dominant ideologies shape physical spaces and impact community experiences. Critical approaches challenge social workers to analyze the social infrastructures and thought which influence our understanding of social problems and their solutions (Fook, 2003, Neuman, 1997). I argue that by integrating psychogeographic approaches into social work research and pedagogy, practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of how physical environments impact the lived experiences of people and their communities. Psychogeographical exercises encourage reflexive and interdisciplinary approaches in seeking to understand the interplay between

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tangible physical infrastructures and intangible social, cultural, and historical influences on those infrastructures. This understanding can inform the development of more contextually sensitive and environmentally specific interventions, policies, and programs that address the needs and aspirations of service communities; while also fostering a more nuanced appreciation of the diverse perspectives and experiences within those communities. Moreover, incorporating psychogeography into social work pedagogy can enhance the critical thinking skills, analytical capabilities, and existential identity development of future social workers. By encouraging social work students to explore their own subjective experiences as being embodied in the social dynamics of physical spaces, educators can equip them with the necessary mindset orientation and sense of agency for challenging oppressive systems and advocating for suitable social-justice interventions in those environments. By utilizing psychogeographic approaches in both research and pedagogy, social workers can gain deeper and embodied experiential insights of what it means to exist in the communities they wish to serve and envision appropriate actions as advocates for transformative social change.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Place

The concept of place and its significance in human experience and identity is a central theme to place studies. As such, this section develops some consideration of defining how "place" is to be defined in my research scope. Cresswell (2015), in his book *Place: A Short Introduction*, develops his central argument that place is not simply a physical location or space, but a complex and dynamic social and cultural phenomenon:

> "Place is a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world. When we look
> at the world as a world of places, we see different things. We see attachments and
> connections between people and place. We see worlds of meaning and experience.

Sometimes this way of seeing can seem to be an act of resistance against a

rationalization of the world that focuses more on space than place. To think an

area of the world as a rich and complicated interplay of people and the

environment – a place – is to free us from thinking of it as facts and figures"

(Cresswell, 2015, pg. 18).

Cresswell's conceptualization of place provides a helpful starting point for discussing place

studies in a social work context due to its emphasis on the social and cultural dimensions of

human-made places. Cresswell (2009; 2015) defines place as a meaningful location that is

imbued with human experiences, identities, and social interactions. According to Cresswell,

place is a dynamic and socially constructed concept that encompasses both the material and

symbolic dimensions of a particular space. Place is not a given or fixed entity, but rather emerges

through the interactions and perceptions of people and their communities. Places acquire

significance through human activities, memories, and narratives that are associated with them,

but are shaped by cultural, historical, and social processes structured by power relations and

discourses. Furthermore, Cresswell argues that place is deeply intertwined with notions of

belonging, attachment, and identity. People develop a sense of place-based identity and

belonging through their relationships with specific locations. Places can shape individual and

collective identities, providing a sense of rootedness, continuity, and a source of meaning and

connection. Cresswell also highlights the multisensory nature of place, emphasizing that our

experiences of place are not limited to visual perceptions but also encompass embodied,

emotional, and other sensory engagements. Places evoke particular feelings, atmospheres, and

moods, which contribute to our understanding and interpretation of them. Cresswell's definition

of place positions an understanding of place as a dynamic, socially constructed, and multidimensional concept encompassing both physical and symbolic elements.

While Cresswell's definition of place provides a valuable framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of places, it is not without its limitations and potential critiques. Cresswell's definition heavily focuses on the human experience and the social construction of place. While it acknowledges the importance of human activities and interactions in shaping places, it may overlook the non-human elements and ecological dimensions of place. This perspective neglects the agency and significance of the non-human world in shaping and defining places that may be considered from alternate perspectives, such as Indigenous and spiritual perspectives of place and being. Indeed, psychogeography is primarily concerned with the study of places made by human activity, rather than the places of the natural world. Critical social work research aligns with the focus on spaces developed by human activities due to several compelling reasons. Urban areas are characterized by dense populations, diverse communities, and complex social issues; and serve as hubs of cultural diversity where different ethnicities, languages, and customs converge. As such, urban places offer rich contexts for social work research that addresses various challenges faced by individuals, families, and communities. Urban spaces are often at the forefront of social and cultural transformations and often are the places where the functions of social structures and power are most visible. Cresswell's emphasis on socially constructed places aligns with the social constructionist perspective often employed in critical social work research. Critically oriented social workers recognize that social environments are shaped by the interactions, meanings, and power dynamics attributed to them by individuals and communities (Fook, 2003). By acknowledging the social construction of

places, social work practitioners can examine how social and cultural factors influence the experiences and well-being of individuals and communities in different locations.

Cresswell (2015) acknowledges that social power operates in the production and representation of places; however, the implications of this observation can be more thoroughly developed and investigated with incorporation of a critical theory lens, which I will describe more thoroughly in a later chapter on theoretical positioning. A critical social work lens would guide analyses of how the social construction of places is influenced by unequal power relations; including political, economic, and cultural forces that shape and control the meaning and access to inclusion in certain places. A more nuanced understanding of power dynamics and their impact on place would enhance the analysis provided by Cresswell. It would be valuable to consider how place meanings and experiences vary across cultures, ethnicities, and social groups, and how these variations contribute to the complexity of the places where they exist. While Cresswell acknowledges the symbolic dimensions of place, his definition leans more toward the representational aspects, such as memories, narratives, and identity. This may downplay the embodied and sensorial engagements with place, which are crucial in understanding the full range of human experiences and interactions with the physical environment. The temporal dimension of place is also not extensively explored in Cresswell's analysis of place; that places evolve and transform in their cultural meanings over time. Understanding the temporal aspects, including the historical layers, temporal rhythms, and processes of change, is essential for a comprehensive understanding of place. To account for these critiques, I develop my argument for how we can appeal to phenomenological perspectives on how we may use psychogeography to investigate our sensorial engagements with places in the next chapter on theoretical positioning.

Conceptualizing Place Studies

Place studies refer to an interdisciplinary field that explores the multifaceted nature of places and their significance in human experiences, identities, and social interactions (Hauge, 2007). Place studies represent a subset of humanist geography, which is a theoretical perspective that emphasizes the importance of human experiences and values in shaping the social world and encompass a diverse range of disciplines including geography, anthropology, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and urban planning (see Cresswell, 2009; Ley, 1981; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014; Tuan, 1977). Place studies investigate the intricate relationships between people and their environments and examine how places shape and are shaped by subjective human actions, meanings, and emotions in those places (Cresswell, 2008; Tuan, 1977). Scholars in this field delve into the complex ways in which places are conceptualized, experienced, and represented by exploring the physical, social, cultural, and symbolic dimensions of place; recognizing that places are not mere geographical locations but rather dynamic and layered constructs that hold profound significance for individuals and communities (Cresswell, 2015; Ellard, 2015). Place studies also examine the processes through which places are constructed, contested, and transformed. This includes investigating the social, political, and economic forces that shape the built environment, as well as the power dynamics that influence access to and control over places; often recognizing that places are not neutral spaces, but rather sites of social and cultural struggles where identities, histories, and narratives can intersect and clash (Hauge, 2007; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014; Tuan 1976). Place studies address the diverse meanings and experiences associated with different types of places, ranging from urban spaces and rural landscapes to natural environments and virtual realms, in exploring how individuals and communities form attachments to places, develop a sense of belonging, and construct their

identities through their interactions with specific environments (see Ellard, 2015). The emotional, sensory, and embodied dimensions of place are central to this inquiry, as scholars seek to unravel the affective and subjective experiences that people have in relation to their surroundings. Moreover, place studies acknowledge the significance of place in the context of larger socio-political and environmental challenges. This includes examining how places are affected by phenomena such as globalization, urbanization, climate change, and social inequalities (Cartier & Lew, 2004; Devine-Wright, 2013; Fresque & Armitage, 2012; Tschakert et al., 2017; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014).

Merrifield (1993) argues that places are not fixed static entities with blank slates; rather they are written onto via various consumerist and commercialist institutions and groups in the production of space and occupying of space, which in turn has the effect of shaping people's experiences and being – a view that echoes the sentiments of Guy Debord (see Debord, 1967), who was a French philosopher often credited for being the founder of psychogeography, which will be discussed in a following section dedicated to his conceptualization of psychogeography. Citizenship of places can thus exalt the inclusion on who adheres to these prevailing ethics that shape spaces and marginalize those who do not (Joseph, 2017; Miles, 2012; Thobani, 2007). Such efforts demonstrate that it is crucial to call into question the normalised perceptions and discourses of thinking and behaving by going beyond studies of psychology and behaviour in controlled experimental settings, but also study the environments of everyday life (Bridger, 2022). Indeed, opposition to such prevailing ideologies in the construction of spaces can also utilize grassroots occupation of spaces; as demonstrated by some of the most culturally iconic organizations of activism such as the Arab Spring in Tahir Square, Occupy Wall Street in New York City, and Tiananmen Square in Beijing (Cresswell, 2015).

Place studies provide a rich framework for understanding the intricate interplay between people and their environments by investigating the ways in which these processes shape the lived experiences of individuals and communities, and how they contribute to the formation of place-based identities and narratives. By exploring topics such as place attachment, place-making, place identity, and place-based activism, this interdisciplinary field aims to deepen our knowledge of the complex and dynamic nature of places and their profound impact on individuals, societies, and the world at large.

The Poetics of Space

The arts have long recognized that place is more than just a physical location, but also a psychological and emotional space that shapes our experiences, perceptions, and glimpses of meaning of the human condition. From landscape painting and photography to vivid imagery captured in the lyrics of song writing, artistic sensibility has been an integral bastion of cultural insights that our relationships with places and their histories are constantly evolving and changing. Artists across cultures have often intuitively, yet masterfully, found that abstract mediums are able to emphasize the importance of unique subjective experiences of places and how these experiences can be shaped by factors such as memory, emotions, imagination, and history. As such, I dedicate some consideration to the artistic perspectives that have influenced my argument that deepening our psychic and creative awareness of these connections needs to be implicit in the ways we consider places in investigative social sciences.

Bachelard's (1958) poetics of space is a philosophical and literary theory that explores the relationship between people and the spaces they inhabit. Bachelard coined the term "topoanalysis" which he defined as "the systemic psychological study of the localities of our intimate lives" (Bachelard, 1958, p. 8). Bachelard's main argument is that our experience of

space is not just a physical one, but a psychological and emotional one as well. Bachelard suggests that the spaces we inhabit, from the smallest of rooms to the grandest of landscapes, are not simply neutral backdrops to our lives but are active participants in shaping our experiences and perceptions of the world. He argues that by exploring the poetic dimensions of space, we can gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us in ways that conventional non-poetic analytical norms may not achieve. Bachelard's work emphasizes the importance of imagination, memory, and intuition in our relationship with space and encourages us to see the world as a place of endless possibility and wonder; while also accepting that we may have inherent perceptive limitations, especially in our linguistic cognition and our perception of time, that may restrict our ever having a fully articulated understanding of our experience in places. For Bachelard, these limits of perception are not necessarily barriers to be broken down but are indeed what makes our attempts to capture and represent experiences in place through poetic and artistic abstraction and archetypes so interesting, beautiful, and worth talking about.

Bachelard's focus on the individual's internal experience can be critiqued for obscuring the social and political dimensions of space. For example, while Bachelard explores the poetic and imaginative associations that certain spaces evoke, he does not always consider the historical and cultural factors that shape these associations. This can limit the extent to which his work is useful for understanding the broader social and political dynamics of space. Bachelard also tends to essentialize certain types of spaces as archetypes. For example, he describes an ideal house as home for the psyche where the attic represents space that evokes the poetic imagination and the unconscious, while the cellar is associated with darkness and repression. While Bachelard's descriptions of these spaces can be evocative and insightful, they can also be critiqued for being overly simplistic and reductive. Although the meanings and associations of spaces may often be

more complex and varied than Bachelard suggests, Bachelard's emphasis on the poetic and imaginative associations of space can be particularly useful for informing psychogeographic approaches as he encourages us to look beyond the purely functional or utilitarian aspects of space and to consider the more subjective and emotional dimensions of place that give them meaning. Additionally, Bachelard's focus on the sensory and perceptual details of space can be a valuable resource for psychogeographic studies seeking to understand the ways which people navigate and interact with their surroundings. By incorporating Bachelard's insights into their work, place studies can gain a deeper understanding of the emotional and experiential dimensions of space, and how these dimensions shape our sense of place and belonging.

Bachelard's exploration of the symbolic, metaphorical, and intangible dimensions of place emphasizes the poetic and imaginative aspects of our relationship to the spaces we inhabit. Indeed, his philosophical approach to our observations of spaces and the places that are made within them contrasts to some of the more empirical and rationalist approaches that are more characteristic of social science academia. Hesse's (1972) collection of poems, *Wandering,* also explores how our internal experience of place can be captured in poetic writing, but he does so through the lens of his own personal encounters and reflections. While Bachelard's work was more focused on the symbolic and archetypal associations that certain places evoke, I reference Hesse's poetry as an example of how poetry can encapsulate the sensory and perceptual details of places in writing that is not bound by conventional linguistic norms. Indeed, Hesse's poetic accounts of his own wandering reflections suggests that places he encountered were not just physical locations, but also states of mind shaped by memories, emotions, and personal history – a theme which has been emerging in more contemporary academic place studies.

Place studies have also explored how place, landscape, and geography are represented in alternate artistic mediums, such as music (see Crang, 1998; Mitchell, 2009), dance (see Parker, 2019), and theatre (see Birch & Tompkins, 2012; Motum, 2022; Smith, 2019). For example, Mitchell (2009) considers the music of Sigur Rós, an Icelandic ambient rock group, as a psychogeographic expression of Icelandic landscapes but also describes how places of music have the power to bind people in imaginary spaces that offer surrogate communities in themselves, not only for the music itself or the shared emotions that it evokes from its community of listeners but for other causes as well; which in the case of Sigur Rós includes environmentalism. Bachelard's (1958) proposition that memories and the metaphoric representations that artists use to communicate their meanings in place continues to have legacy in contemporary place studies and place-based arts.

Indigenous Conceptualizations of Place

Indigenous land-based consciousness is a concept that emphasizes the importance of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the natural world (Deloria, 1999a; 1999b, 2002). Indigenous cultures have centred land-based knowledge of their environments as deeply connected to their cultural practices and identities (Deloria Jr., 1999a; Deloria Jr., 2002; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). Indigenous scholarship and activism have continually advocated that land-based knowledge can provide valuable insights into environmental management and sustainability. These advocacy efforts emphasize the importance of incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems into environmental education programs and recognizing the ways in which colonialism has impacted Indigenous peoples' relationships with their environments (Deloria Jr., 1999a). Decolonization activism recognizes the ways in which colonialism has impacted Indigenous peoples' relationships with their environments and involves challenging colonizing

narratives and power structures that have severed Indigenous peoples' relationships with their environments (Deloria, Jr. 1999a). By recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems and engaging with the land in a way that is respectful of Indigenous ways of knowing, place-based learning can help to foster a sense of connection to the land and to one's community (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). Furthermore, recognizing the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous peoples' relationships with their environments is crucial in order to work towards decolonization and the reclamation of Indigenous knowledge systems.

In recent years, a prominent example of society-wide advocacy for challenging colonial constructs of places and land has been a growing trend of Indigenous land acknowledgements, which are statements recognizing and honoring the Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories upon which events, organizations, or institutions are situated (Adade Williams, Sikutshwa, & Shackleton, 2020; Wark 2021). Indeed, these acknowledgements have emerged as a response to Indigenous advocacy for decolonization, recognition of Indigenous rights, and a commitment to reconciliation in efforts to challenge the erasure of Indigenous histories and affirm the ongoing presence and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. However, many institutions and organizations are failing to recognize that simply reciting a land acknowledgement without taking concrete steps to address ongoing colonial injustices is insufficient (Robinson et al., 2019; Wark, 2021). Instead, there are some efforts to promote emphasis on using land acknowledgements as a starting point for genuine engagement and building relationships with Indigenous communities; including actively involving Indigenous voices and perspectives in decision-making processes, supporting Indigenous-led initiatives, and working towards the restoration of Indigenous rights and self-determination.

Indigenous philosophies of land consciousness emphasize a deep and interconnected relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land (Deloria Jr., 1999a; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). Indigenous cultures view the land as more than a physical resource; it is imbued with cultural, spiritual, and historical significance (Deloria Jr., 1999a; Deloria Jr., 2002). Land acknowledgements, when coupled with concrete actions, ought to reflect a commitment to upholding these principles and engaging in the ongoing process of decolonization and reconciliation. In the sense that Indigenous approaches to promoting land-based consciousness encourages people to reconsider how they view and relate to their environmental surroundings, these ideas can be echoed in developing a critical psychogeographic exercise. Where psychogeography departs from more traditional Indigenous place consciousness perspectives is its prioritizing of focus on examining human-made social environments, such as urban landscapes, over examining our relationships with the natural world. I elaborate on considerations of how Indigenous wisdom about our relationships with the natural world may inform psychogeographical exercises later in this thesis. Indeed, I wonder if these psychogeographic exercises may resonate with Indigenous scholar's insights into the ways prevailing social ideologies and infrastructures distance, and even displace, a social consciousness that is deeply connected to the natural world. Increasingly, the requirement for this kind of shift of how our connection to land is conceptualized - from the colonial priorities of occupation and resource acquisition towards responsible stewardship and promotion of ecological balance and resilience - aligns with the need for sustainable practices and the urgent need to mitigate climate change which is likely to be the greatest threat to all human societies.

What is Psychogeography?

Psychogeography is a practice that explores the relationship between places and people's emotions, behaviors, and perceptions. It is concerned with how the physical environment influences people's experiences, and how these experiences, in turn, shape the environment. Psychogeography seeks to uncover the hidden meanings and emotional resonances of places, and the various conceptualizations of place in these works provide a framework for understanding these connections. The concept was first introduced by the Situationist International, a radical group of artists and intellectuals in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, who sought to critique modern capitalist society and transform everyday life through creative and subversive interventions in the urban environment (see Debord, 1955; Debord, 1967). According to Guy Debord, one of the key figures of the Situationist International, psychogeography is "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals" (Debord, 1955, p. 9). The practice of psychogeography is tied to an emphasis on walking, disorientation within geographical locations to stimulate naïve contact with places, and critical considerations of the power structures that shaped those places and their functions (Debord, 1958). Debord's legacy continues to be foundational to psychogeography's focus on exploring the emotional and psychological impacts of physical environments on our being through taking reflective walks.

Debord's (1955) *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography* is a foundational text of psychogeography. Debord argued that traditional urban geography was inadequate in understanding and addressing the social and political issues of the modern city and limited by its reliance on quantitative methods and its focus on the physical layout of the city, which neglected the subjective experiences and social relations that shape urban life. Debord proposed

psychogeography as a new approach to urban geography that is based on a critical understanding

of the social and political forces that shape urban space. In his *Theory of the Dérive* (1958),

Debord argued that the act of wandering aimlessly through the city, an act which he called a

dérive, would be a powerful exercise for subverting the dominant order, namely the emerging

neo-liberal capitalist ideologies in post-war Europe, and creating new ways of structuring and

experiencing urban spaces:

> "In a dérive, one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives
>
> for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let
>
> themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find
>
> there" (Debord, 1958, p. 62).

Debord's philosophical and social outlook is most wholly captured in his seminal work, *The*

Society of the Spectacle (1967), known primarily as a Marxist critique of modern capitalist

society in which he argues that the dominant mode of social organization is based on the

production and consumption of images, or what he called "the spectacle". In Debord's view,

spectacle had replaced traditional forms of social and economic relations and was characterized

by the production and consumption of images, rather than the direct experience of reality:

> "The spectacle is the ruling order's nonstop discourse about itself, its never-ending
>
> monologue of self-praise, its self-portrait at the stage of totalitarian domination of
>
> all aspects of life" (Debord, 1967, p. 26).

Debord saw the spectacle as a mechanism of social control, driven by the logic of capitalism,

which reduced everything to a commodity to be bought and sold on the market, and that this

logic created a culture of superficiality and spectacle in which everything is reduced to its

exchange value. From Debord's view, the spectacle creates a false sense of reality in which

people are encouraged to consume images rather than engage in critical thinking or political action, which in turn separated people from each other and from their own lived experiences resulting in social alienation and isolation. However, Debord argued that the spectacle was not inevitable and that it could be overcome through collective action and the creation of new forms of social organization and infrastructure.

Debord advocated for the dérive as a means for engaging its participants in breaking free from the constraints of everyday life and to explore the city in a way that is not determined by pre-existing social or cultural norms. Not only was this a very seriously politically charged exercise for Debord; he also advocated for the dérive as a means of critiquing and engaging with urban environments in a more playful and creative way to disrupt the normal flows and rhythms of the city. Debord advocated for participants to reclaim the city for themselves and to create new ways of living and interacting with others. Although Debord's political views have not remained central to all contemporary psychogeographical projects, his concept of the dérive and its general exercise of reflective walking and engagement with urban spaces has persisted and remained a central and characteristic aspect of psychogeography (Coverley, 2010; Ellard, 2015). Modern examples of dérive-based psychogeography include the works of Will Self (see Self, 2007) and Iain Sinclair (see Sinclair, 2003) who are British psychogeographers and are the most recognized contemporary advocates of psychogeography.

Psychogeography stands out as a distinct form of place study within the broader field due to its unique approach and focus on exploring the subjective and experiential aspects of place through an active participation and presence in the places being studied. Humanist geography is broadly concerned with understanding the experiences of individuals and communities, while psychogeography is specifically concerned with being an action-based practice as well as an

orientation towards politically motivated critical understanding of how human-built environments interact with human perceptions and experiences. While traditional place studies often emphasize objective and structural dimensions, psychogeography shifts the attention towards the emotional, imaginative, and transformative experiences of its participants in relation to their environments. At its core, psychogeography seeks to uncover the hidden meanings, narratives, and affects that emerge through the interaction between participants and their surroundings. Psychogeographic methodology rejects the notion of passive observation and instead encourages active engagement and exploration of the landscapes to disrupt habitual ways of perceiving and navigating spaces; allowing for new interpretations and connections to emerge and be acted upon.

Critiquing Psychogeography

Psychogeography is not without its limitations in its practice, scope, and applications. Psychogeography relies heavily on personal experiences and emotions, making it inherently subjective, which in turn means that the experiences and interpretations of the reflections that emerge from these types of exercises will vary from person to person. Due to its subjective nature, I would not argue that findings from these studies could inform generalizable conclusions about broader populations or a cohesive objective representation of the places being studied. Rather, they may be a complement alongside the more rigorously controlled social science efforts in order to represent how community members view their own communities; in their own words based on their own memories and experiences. To apply considerations of representation in these types of exercises, especially if they are to complement research efforts, we would require refinement of our considerations of accessibility of the exercise and removing any elitist or otherwise exclusive barriers.

Indeed, the field has been critiqued for privileging the representation of white European cis-gendered males and often ignores the experiences of marginalized communities; particularly those affected by colonialism and immigration (March-Russell, 2013). Scholars have even suggested that psychogeography characteristically embodies 'British nostalgia' (Bonnet, 2009; March Russell, 2013) and can therefore be critiqued for being reminiscent of colonial fantasies where white male explorers discover communities that they explore and travel within, while being ignorant of their privileges in being able to do so freely. Sidaway (2021) offers a critical review and analysis of the various ways in which psychogeography has been conceptualized and practiced. Sidaway (2021) explores the tensions and contradictions within psychogeography, including its relationship to dominant power structures and its potential for co-option by neoliberal economic agendas when white European males are so disproportionately over-represented. Sidaway's (2021) article also discusses the different ways in which psychogeography has been applied, including its use in urban planning and management, and its connection to environmentalism and ecological thinking. Bonnett (2009) critiques modern psychogeography for focusing on individual experiences and encounters with the urban environment over collective action, for prioritizing aesthetic experiences over political intervention, and for often celebrating the idiosyncrasies and quirks of urban spaces without engaging with their underlying social and economic structures. For example, Bonnett (2009) notes that Sinclair's work can be seen as an example of the tension between critique and celebration in contemporary psychogeography: while Sinclair (see Sinclair, 2003) is indeed critical of the negative effects of capitalism on the city, he also celebrates the idiosyncrasies and eccentricities of urban spaces, which Bonnet argues can sometimes be seen as a form of nostalgia for a romanticized past; thus, raising post-colonial tensions.

Indeed, works such as Micallef's (2010) *Stroll: Psychogeographic Walking Tours of Toronto* explicitly name that they distance their approach to psychogeography from political activities, such as those advocated for by Debord and the Situationists, in their proclaimed efforts to be more concerned with the importance of walking as a mode of exploring cities and developing a deeper connection with urban space and its inhabitants through playful and spontaneous engagement with urban landscapes. Although such works continue to recognize the importance of local knowledge and personal experience in shaping our understanding of a city and in creating meaningful connections with urban space, there is a missed opportunity to continue developing critical consciousness that was originally intended for in the conception of psychogeography. Indeed, there are opportunities to explore how individual experiences are fragmented in urban spaces along identity lines such as gender, age, ability, socioeconomic status, and race which would allow for more interesting and equity-seeking critical consciousness in the places we inhabit.

Some work along these lines of inquiry is represented by the work of Alex Bridger (see Bridger, 2013; Bridger 2022) who has sought to revitalize psychogeography with a politically critical lens within the field of psychology. In feminist research, Bridger (2013) and Parker (2019) have published psychogeographic studies focusing on the lived experience of women in urban spaces and what these experiences reveal about how public places are gendered. Parker's (2019) main argument is that the body plays a critical role in shaping our experience of space, and that gendered bodies are deeply implicated in the construction of gendered spaces. Parker then turns to the ways in which gendered bodies interact with space, arguing that gendered spaces are constructed through embodied experience. For example, she notes that gendered spaces are often marked by a range of physical cues, such as the size and layout of rooms, the

placement of furniture, and the use of colour and texture. In efforts to represent non-European psychogeography, Sharanya (2016) explored the practice of urban walking as a means of understanding the social and cultural landscape of the walled city of Ahmedabad in India. Her main argument also echoed the Situationist perspective that walking with an intent of social critique and reform could be a powerful means for reclaiming public space and challenging the dominant narratives of a city's history. Sharanya argued that the walled city of Ahmedabad was indeed a complex and diverse urban space with a rich history of trade, migration, and cultural exchange. However, this complexity was often overlooked or erased by dominant narratives of the city's history, which emphasize the legacy of colonialism and the influence of modernization. Indeed, some psychogeographical studies do continue to advocate for walking as a more embodied sensory engagement for experiencing and critiquing urban environment; however, there is still more work to be done for more equitable representation of diverse perspectives in its practice and literature.

Psychogeography and Pedagogy as a Practice of Freedom

Education as a practice of freedom has had many proponents, particularly in its development and advocacy by major public social critics of the 20th century. John Dewey (see Dewey, 1938) is often credited as a pioneering figure of 20th century philosophy of education who sought a reformation of public education that would promote social and moral development, which in turn would promote the development of an equitable democratic society made up of informed and engaged inquirer citizens. Bertrand Russell, another influential philosopher and public social critic, shared many of Dewey's views on education but was more skeptical of implementing democratic values in the practice of pedagogy - offering a critique that even democratic forms of education may enable ideological indoctrination through herd mentality

unless that education also centred the development of self-disciplined autonomy (see Harley, 1980; Russell, 1926). Noam Chomsky, a linguist, social critic, and political activist who has been one the most widely cited living scholars across disciplines, has continued to serve as a major contemporary advocate for education grounded in social justice and public enlightenment of the abuses of hegemonic power and developed a modern critique of the role of mass media in shaping the boundaries of how information is accessed, which in turn sets implicit boundaries on public thought and opinion (see Chomsky, 2003; Herman & Chomsky, 2010). In keeping with these principles of progressive education, critical social work pedagogy strives to equip learners with reflective and analytical skills for countering discourses that align with hegemonic ideologies.

Structural and reflexive analysis of social power is central to critical social work education (Fook & Askeland, 2007; Rossiter, 2005). In critical social work, Paulo Freire, whose perspective derived from both Marxist and existentialist thought, is often credited for being a major influence in pedagogy that promotes the learning of self-reflective critical consciousness (see Freire, 1973). Freire contended that true knowledge emerges only through critical inquiry with other people about their relations to the world. Freire advocated that learners should be allowed to develop praxis, an inventive way of life that encourages free, creative reflection, and thoughtful action in order to advance social justice in the world and argued that progressive social change could come through a process of dialogue, critical reflection, and coordinated collective action (Freire, 1973). Indeed, educators must themselves also be actively involved and committed to the process of self-actualization that promotes their own critical consciousness if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students (hooks, 2003; Freire, 1973).

Wong (2013) offers a critique of critical social work pedagogy for privileging conceptual-analytical thinking and knowing; such as structural and/or poststructuralist analysis and critical reflectivity. Wong (2004; 2013) suggests that contemplative education can complement the goals of critical social work by cultivating learners' inner awareness and presence through practices such as mindfulness, walking meditation, poetry, and yoga. Indeed, psychogeography was conceived to encourage participants to closely observe their experiences of places and consider how those experiences are embodied in the surrounding areas that are embedded with cultural norms and ideologies in their infrastructure. Hoff and Phillips (2019) develop an argument in their essay, *Mindfulness in the City: Taking Notice as Therapeutic Practice*, that explores how mindfulness practice can be incorporated in therapeutic psychogeographic exercises. I elaborate on considerations of how mindfulness and spirituality can inform the development of psychogeographical exercises later in this thesis. By emphasizing self-reflective contemplation inspired by emotional and intellectual reactions to physical environments, psychogeography is an activity that educators and learners can use to connect with each other, connect with communities, and perhaps better distinguish the ways that these physical environments operate to foster presence and belonging, or perpetuate marginalization and alienation.

Education as the practice of freedom is realized by promoting individualized teaching and learning while putting into consideration individual differences of learning experiences for the processes of thinking critically (hooks, 2003; Freire, 1973). Indeed, the physical and social contexts within which education occurs play a crucial role in shaping educational processes and outcomes (Nespor, 2008). Place encompasses not only the physical infrastructure of learning spaces, but also the cultural, social, and economic characteristics of the communities in which

they are located. The characteristics of a place, including its history, cultural traditions, and social dynamics, influence teaching and learning processes. Place-based approaches to education recognize the value of local knowledge, community engagement, and culturally responsive pedagogy in fostering meaningful and relevant educational experiences (hooks, 2003; Nespor, 2008). In a business school context, Hindley, Knowles, and Ruth (2015) published an article detailing their argument for the use of a dérive-based exercise in a research methods course with an inquiry focus on visual features in the locales being studied. Although this study pays homage to the Situationist origins and does promote a learner-centred approach to education, this study omits the emphasis of broader critical analysis of social structures that the Situationists intended for in psychogeographic practice. In keeping with the philosophical principles of its conception and of the structural analysis principles of critical social work theory, I argue that psychogeographic exercises can be designed to nurture learner's self-development, critical learning, and spiritual growth that are advocated for in critical social work pedagogy. Specifically, I envision that psychogeographic methods can be adapted with the critical social work lens as an opportunity for educators and learners to share reflective experiences in a praxis-informed approach to bridge divides between analytical structural theorization of social justice concerns and an embodied place-based reflection of their existential presence and opportunities to serve their communities.

Summary

This chapter introduced foundational concepts relevant to the way psychogeography can be implemented in critically oriented social work research and pedagogy. I have appealed to psychogeography for my research because its perspective emphasizes considerations of our own psychic life, perceptions, experiences, and existential being in human-made environments and

challenges us to consider how the construction of these environments have been influenced by prevailing ideologies that structure social life. I appealed to studies of human-made places, rather than places of the natural world, in the development of my research scope because social work fundamentally operates in human-made social environments. Rather than through armchair philosophizing, psychogeography's philosophical approach is uniquely characterized by its emphasis of on-the-ground exploration, self-analysis, and self-reflection. By integrating the considerations of a psychogeographic methodology into critical social lenses and analyses, a critically informed psychogeography may offer more inclusive and comprehensive learning opportunities for understanding the places where social work operates. Specifically, I argue that doing so would involve critical examination of how social power shapes the production and representation of places, representation of diverse cultural perspectives and experiences, reflexivity of our embodied and sensory engagements, and consideration of the historical layers of places. My greater hope is that enriching our understanding of the complex dynamics of places with more inclusive and holistic perspectives will inform the development of equitable social work practice for the communities we serve.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter focuses on how my theoretical positioning on psychogeography has been informed by phenomenology and critical theory. I develop my argument that these frameworks which have been applied in other forms of social work research can bridge psychogeography to relevance in critical social work literature.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, the study of consciousness and perception, aims to describe the world as it is experienced through sensory awareness (see Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956). By 'objects of perception', phenomenology refers to the material which concerns thought, sensory experience, and perception (see Heidegger, 1927; 1959). Heidegger (1927) refers to an analysis of subjective 'being in the world' which he termed Dasein – a departure from Cartesian dualism which suggests that the mind or consciousness is distinct from the physical body and operates independently (see Descartes, 1641) or pragmatism that emphasizes a practical and context-dependent nature of consciousness (see James, 1907). Phenomenology is a philosophical viewpoint that affords considerations to the interrelationships between perceiving bodies and environments where perceiving bodies exist – that is, our perception is always grounded in our lived experiences and our bodily interactions with the world shape how we make sense of it (Merleau-Ponty, 1948). Traditional phenomenology has focussed on disclosing the transcendental structures of subjectivity that condition the possibility of subjective lived experiences in a way which supposes that 'being' is inseparable from the world where being exists (Heidegger, 1927). Although place was understood to be central to an authentic human experience, some approaches to phenomenology did tend to rely on modeling a subject-object dichotomy of perception (see Heidegger, 1959; Husserl, 1931). That is, a subject capable of

perception exists with some background information and a perceiving body that works to either a) construct perception through mental faculties that piece fragmented perception images together into cohesion (idealist/rationalist approach; see Neuman, 1997) or b) develop mental faculties of perception that reflect the pre-existing cohesion of the world which is preformed prior to perception (empiricist/positivist approach; see Neuman, 1997). Phenomenology is an interpretative and inductive approach to understanding perception and being (see Mason, 2002; Neuman 1997). How perception of the world is best modelled is the principal area of debate amongst phenomenologist philosophers.

Husserl (1931) acknowledged that intersubjectivity exists through the functions of a perceiving body with background knowledge and a sophisticated sensory system. However, his conception of intersubjectivity overlooks the dynamic interrelations that arise when subjects and objects of perception merge, rather than existing as separate systems. Merleau-Ponty (1945) is known for his embodiment theory, which contributes to the existentialist lens in phenomenological interpretation of the merging of subjects and objects in perception. He argues that the world of perception encompasses human actions, concerns, and emotions; challenging empiricist views that the perceivable world exists independently before perception while also diverging from rationalist views that perception is solely a construction by the perceiving subject. Instead, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that perceiving bodies and the perceivable world have their own agencies, and consciousness as experience emerges from their interaction (Merleau-Ponty, 1954; 1948). This distinction is important to my positioning of psychogeographical study because it deviates from an exclusively social constructivist view of place offered in many critical and postmodern approaches to understanding social phenomena. That is, there is a phenomenological experience of places which we engage with through a full

body of senses in a synaesthetic interaction of knowledge in a way that is distinct from linguistic and social constructivist models of experience (see Tilley, 2001). Merleau-Ponty (1945) catches the paradox of phenomenology – it occupies a theoretical position that suggests that to study phenomenology, we must suspend the affirmations of our natural attitudes about the world's existence in order to understand a world that is 'already there' prior to perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Indeed, Merleau-Ponty argues this is not a problem of phenomenology but it is precisely this paradox that makes the philosophical exercise interesting. From Merleau-Ponty's view, the entire effort of phenomenology is to rediscover naïve contact with the world in order to finally raise our understanding of perception to a philosophical status – a viewpoint shared with Debord's (1958) psychogeographical methods discussed later in this chapter:

> "Phenomenology…asks if from the variety of ways which men and women (sic) behave in and experience their everyday world there are particular patterns that transcend specific empirical contexts and point to the essential human condition – the irreducible crux of people's life-situations which remains when all non-essentials – cultural context, historical era, personal idiosyncrasies – are stripped bare through phenomenological procedures" (Seamon, 1980, pg. 149)

Indeed, the real world is a "tightly woven fabric that does not wait for our judgments in order to incorporate the most surprising of phenomena or reject our most convincing of imaginings" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, pg. xxiv). Spaces exist in and of themselves and not simply as adjuncts of people or social interaction. The social interactions that people have with their experiences of places is what makes psychogeography interesting to critical social work research. As such, it is from this point that I appeal to critical theory to consider its applications to phenomenological methods and synthesis in psychogeographical exercises.

Critical Approaches to Social Sciences

Critical research is directed towards unveiling and critiquing social relationships that are the foundations of social systems, with the larger aim of informing transformations of oppressive social relations into equitable and empowering social relations (Fook, 2003; Mullaly, 2010; Neuman, 1997). Critical theory fundamentally views that social constructs and relations are fluid and dynamic in accordance with varying dimensions of the social contexts that exist in any given time; often citing observable and unobservable realities that layer how social relationships and their mechanisms are constructed and reinforced by prevailing social narratives and ideologies (Bhabha, 1994; Mullaly, 2010; Neuman, 1997). A focal issue of critical research is to develop understandings of social power. Critical research argues that social power works to reinforce its own definitions of hierarchy of citizens and to reinforce exclusion based on narratives of civility that in turn defines the 'others' for dehumanization, less social power, inferiority, consequent domination, and vulnerability to discrimination and violence (Crenshaw, 1991; Joseph, 2017; Thobani, 2007). Dehumanization occurs through several mechanisms which rely upon the construction of essentialist categorizations, biases, and prejudices, which in turn become reinforced through generalized discrimination through "-isms": colonialism, classism, racism, ableism, sexism, ageism are all examples of mechanisms that are intrinsically linked to the organization of social power.

My considerations of a critical approach in formulating the theoretical foundations of my thesis project are broadly motivated by an intent to incorporate anti-oppressive principals. Oppression refers to structural acts or processes in society that repeatedly target groups of people for repeated harm (see Dumbrill & Yee, 2019; Mullaly 2010). Anti-oppressive social work researchers are therefore most concerned with identifying predictable patterns of oppression in

society and developing social work practice so that it is better equipped to oppose oppression. Identifying predictable patterns of oppression examines not only the ways that oppression harms the oppressed, but also how oppression reinforces particular groups that benefit from those systems of oppression being in place (see Dumbrill & Yee, 2019). Anti-oppressive theoretical positioning often identifies how the importance of White European ideas are disproportionately represented and exaggerated in dominant narratives of society; to the exclusion of non-White European ideas of epistemology and ontology. Anti-colonial perspectives assist in understanding how White European ideas have been exalted through hegemonic narratives and consciousness in society that make colonization possible.

Critical research from an anti-colonial perspective offers that oppressor consciousness is defined by an ontology that characterizes peoples, land, and materials in the world as objects of domination (Deloria Jr.; 1999a; Freire, 1970; Said, 1978). Inquiry about whose experiences count and what counts as experience are central issues of critical epistemology, which aims to bring attention to the erasure and devaluation of the continuing repercussions of colonial-capitalist infrastructures on what is considered to be valued knowledge (Joseph, 2019). Anti-colonial social work research and practice is therefore directed towards taking active aims to dismantle white supremacy and colonization in the infrastructure of oppressive constructions embedded in social service systems in order to advance social justice and a more caring equitable society. Applying critical lenses to our considerations of place offers opportunities for thinking about oppression in contexts beyond social work practices in efforts to critique how places may have ideological infrastructures that perpetuate narratives of civility and dehumanization, which in turn can inform the re-imagination and development of places where people can exist with freedom from these forms of oppression.

Critical Phenomenology

Critical phenomenology bridges phenomenological sensitivity with critical lenses as to how subjectivity is constructed under quasi-transcendental sociocultural conditions (see Guenther, 2019). Broadly speaking, phenomenological approaches are characterized by analysis of subjective individual experiences whereas critical approaches are characterized by bridging the consideration of diverse and intersectional lived experiences towards a more broadly applicable critique of social structures and mechanisms (see Crenshaw, 1991). Rather than being purely inductive as per traditional phenomenology, critical phenomenology does recognize and presume an intentional ontological positioning of predictable social contexts and mechanisms that influence epistemic positionings of how we know, perceive, and experience – i.e. colonial ways of thinking, heteronormative ways of thinking, etc. Further, the desired outcome of applied critical phenomenology is to expose lived experiences of power and oppression and the role of social structures that shape this experience in order to reimagine how those social structures can be transformed through political activism (Guenther, 2019).

Critical phenomenology is strongly rooted in the philosophical concepts of traditional phenomenology but coupled with reflexive engagement of concrete principals towards practices of generating new and liberatory possibilities for meaningful experience and existence (Guenther, 2019):

> "As a philosophical practice, critical phenomenology suspends common sense accounts of reality in order to map and describe the structures that make these accounts possible, to analyze the way they function, and to open up new possibilities for reimagining and reclaiming the commons. It is a way of pulling up traces of a history that is not quite or no longer there— that has been

rubbed out or consigned to invisibility— but still shapes the emergence of

meaning" (Guenther, 2019, pg. 15)

Merleau-Ponty's (1945) concept of a corporeal schema is particularly influential for considering

bodies as a dynamic matrix of proprioceptive senses and embodied action derived from a

historical record of experience, context, emotion, taboos, and desires (Guenther, 2019). A critical

approach builds upon the corporeal schema concept conceived by Merleau-Ponty by recognizing

that social identity is inextricably linked to social structures within historical contexts. For

example, Fanon (1986) is attributed for arguing that the corporeal schemas in traditional

phenomenology was insufficient for adequately recognizing historic-racial schemas which he

was concerned with in his analysis of race. Ahmed (2007) also writes that whiteness and how

whiteness functions is a phenomenological issue – that is, the existence of whiteness is

intangibly abstract yet is perpetuated through its tangible performances by social agents rather

than through having an ontological existence in and of itself. Critical phenomenology has

developed traditional corporeal schemas to account for colonial schemas, gendered schemas,

sexual schemas, racialized schemas, disability schemas, and other aspects of embodied lived

experience (see Guenther, 2019). Critical phenomenology strives to be a transformative political

practice by going beyond descriptions of conscious experience and oppression in order to inform

development of concrete directions for dismantling oppressive structures and creating or

amplifying more liberatory ways of being.

Psychogeography as Applied Critical Phenomenology

Given that psychogeography is concerned with how our bodies and identities are

constantly interactive with environment, it sees place as an embodied relationship with the world

- constructed by people doing things and never 'finished' but continually being performed

(Cresswell, 2015). The consideration of how places integrate human motivations and actions, and how human activities and memory can be embedded into place, marks the departure from transcendental phenomenology and lends to appeal from critical theory perspectives that consider, analyze, and critique the potentialities for different ways for places to be performed. A critical place inquiry can be developed to maintain the integral principles of critical theory to address studies of place psychologically and politically (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014).

Situationist psychogeography emphasizes the importance of disorientation and unanticipated encounters in its study of place; a concept which resonates with the phenomenological practice of suspending affirmations of our natural attitudes about the world's existence in order to regain naïve contact with a world that is 'already there' (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Debord (1958) advocated for a method which he called the dérive – an unplanned walk, usually through urban landscapes, done in groups of like-minded people. Participants were encouraged to disconnect from preconception of place in order to allow for personal investigation into how places are viewed and experienced. Guy Debord and the situationist movement are most frequently attributed for giving psychogeography its philosophical background and political significance. The political significance of situationist psychogeography resonates with critical approaches that aim to devise theoretical work to inform practical actions for transformation of social systems. Although the situationists were most primarily concerned with critiquing the spectacle of capitalism in urban spaces (see Debord, 1955; 1958), psychogeography has been built upon to investigate schemas beyond post-capitalism; including gendered schemas (see Bridger, 2013; Sharanya 2016), racial schemas (see Cadogan, 2016); colonial schemas (see March-Russell, 2013; Sharanya, 2016) and other aspects of embodied lived experience (see Sidaway, 2021). This emphasis in psychogeography to

examine places with fresh perspectives while also promoting social justice values is what makes psychogeography an interesting possibility for critical pedagogical applications.

The act of moving through spaces can be an embodied and intentional practice of understanding and connecting with places. Walking methods of interviewing are represented in social science research (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Radley et al., 2010;) but psychogeography was conceived to be distinct in its critical approach to walking with politically inclined self-reflective observation of experiences (Bridger, 2022; Debord, 1958). Indeed, Debord (1958) did not present the dérive as an interviewing method per se; however, its use as a practice in collective social action heavily emphasized an exercise of dialogue in addition to the geographical reflection. Bridger (2022) advocates for an expanded notion of psychogeography which encompasses "a philosophical approach to the world and a way to spatially deconstruct the order of things whether this be via walking, thinking, or other means" (p. 10). Any consideration of identity as situated in places should then be considered in terms of an explicit political analysis of power and ideology; with regard to the social processes and political changes (Bridger, 2022; Keith & Pile, 1993). In addition to the heightened political awareness considerations, the psychogeographical exercise can also be an effort to reinforce its participants connectedness to being in the communities where they are completing a psychogeographic exercise. Some research already suggests that when people perceive more positive connections with places, then the likelihood of participating in their local communities will be greater (Nowell et al, 2006).

I argue that psychogeography works because its practice origins rooted from creatively engaging participants in their own articulation of psychogeographical experiences for the purposes of inspiring place-oriented social justice activism. In joint application, the philosophical

work of phenomenology and the action-oriented work of critical theorists can orient place studies

to be congruent with efforts of social work research to develop critical education and practice.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLGY

The present study is designed to present an example of how a psychogeographical exercise can be applied practically in social work pedagogy. It is my hope that this study will serve as a foundation for a research program that can inform further development of how psychogeography can be used in social work research and pedagogy that is focussed on better understanding the importance of 'place' and advance creative practices that can be applied to settings beyond research, classroom, and clinical settings.

To develop the interview questions with a phenomenological *and* critical social work lens, I aimed to adopt open and non-directive interview questions in efforts to facilitate participants' free expression of their experiences without imposing my own preconceived ideas. Analysis of the interviews involved coding, thematic analysis, theme comparison, and interpretation to identify patterns, commonalities, and essences within the interview content. In the process of designing this research, I had a few hopes for what the exercise may elicit: 1) that participants would report their experiences of engagement in a deeper examination of the relationships between their learning experiences and their developing identities as social workers, 2) that participants would find some of the questions challenging given that the geographical themes of these questions may not have been previously considered, at least explicitly, over the course of their social work education, 3) that the participants' articulation of feelings connected to the communities they were working within would vary as a function of their exposure to working within communities and engagement with service users' environments, 4) that the participants would articulate experiences and connections beyond the sensory and physical aspects of the places we were walking in and make connections of these experiences to a more developed critical consciousness of the symbolic aspects of these places, and 5) that the

participants would describe ways that the psychogeographic exercise became an opportunity to deepen their own connection to the geography of their placement environments.

Applying Critical Phenomenological Interviewing

Phenomenological methods in interviewing encompass an approach that seeks to understand and explore individuals' lived experiences and subjective perceptions of the world (Bevam, 2014). Rooted in the philosophy of phenomenology, this method emphasizes the importance of capturing the essence of human experiences as they are directly lived and perceived by the experiencers themselves. When employing phenomenological methods in interviewing, the focus is on eliciting rich and detailed descriptions from participants about their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and perspectives – an ideal that aligns with psychogeographical studies. Data collected from phenomenological interviews is typically characterized by being rich in descriptive detail, capturing the nuances and complexities of the participants' lived experiences.

Phenomenological interviews often involve a process of "bracketing" or "epoche" where the researcher sets aside their own biases, assumptions, and interpretations to fully immerse themselves in the participants' worldviews (see Bednall, 2006; Beech, 1999; Priest, 2002). Bracketing and epoche are ideas primarily influenced by Husserl's (1931) philosophical positioning which implied that prior knowledge could be suspended and set aside so that fresh impressions could be formed about phenomena without the interference of these interpretive influences in a phenomenological exercise. This approach intends to allow for a fresh and unbiased understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, allowing the essence of the experience to emerge organically; as well as a genuine and authentic exploration of the participants' subjective experiences free from external influences by the researcher.

Practitioners of phenomenology who followed Husserl, including his own student Heidegger (1927), disagreed with Husserl's notion of phenomenological reduction through bracketing and recognized the significance of past experiences and theoretical conceptions as a problem for interpretation of another experiencer's worldview (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Heidegger (1962) held that consciousness could not be separated from "being in the world" and therefore, we are unable to completely bracket prior conceptions and knowledge—we are necessarily embedded in a historical context. Merleau-Ponty (1945) expanded upon these considerations of prior conceptions and knowledge as being embedded in an existential context that was unique to each individual. In many approaches to existential and hermeneutic phenomenology, bracketing is considered, ultimately, an untenable project (LeVasseur, 2003). Indeed, critical social work recognizes that individuals' experiences and consciousness are shaped by broader social, economic, and political forces, and that power imbalances play a significant role in shaping each of our lived realities and how we perceive them in our daily lives and social environments (Fook, 2003). By bracketing one's own biases and interpretations, researchers themselves may themselves run the risk of overlooking or downplaying the influence of these structural factors on their own conceptual framing of a phenomenological investigation, which in turn puts them at risk of reinforcing the status quo and perpetuating oppressive systems. Indeed, an exclusively critical social work approach to interviewing would likely prioritize an explicit acknowledgment and exploration of power dynamics and social structures throughout the interview process. By incorporating a critical lens, a phenomenological investigation can also explore the social, economic, and political contexts in which the subject experiences being studied are unfolding. Reflecting upon and articulating these considerations may help critical researchers to analyze participants' narratives within broader structural forces; illuminating how

power dynamics, systemic inequalities, and social norms impact the lived experiences which are being studied. I argue that my position in deviating from traditional phenomenological methods is further justified by my intention of doing research that will inform pedagogical practices which inherently involves educators sharing knowledge with learners who are seeking the educator's perspective and knowledge as part of their intellectual and professional development.

By adopting this critical approach in conjunction with phenomenological methods, I aimed to engage participants in a semi-structured dialogue that would be open to discussing the interplay between personal experiences and structural forces in a way that would resonate with psychogeography. Rather than aiming for a value-neutral stance in traditional phenomenological methods, the psychogeographic exercise in the present study was designed to recognize the importance of advocating for social justice and challenging oppressive systems and inspire an open-ended reflection by actively incorporating questions that invited participants to explore the social, economic, and political factors that shape their experiences with the places we discussed. Indeed, this chapter has sought to outline the ways in which phenomenological interviewing invites researchers to suspend their own biases and interpretations temporarily to explore participants' experiences authentically. However, a critical lens encourages self-reflection and reflexivity throughout the research process. By integrating these approaches, my aim was to develop a method where I, as a researcher, am also modeling ongoing critical self-reflection, acknowledging positionality, biases, and potential blind spots. This reflexivity allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between the researcher, participant, and broader social contexts. By combining critical and phenomenological lenses, I argue that this interviewing approach can explicitly aim to identify participants' experiences of marginalization, discrimination, or resistance to oppressive systems. The focus extends beyond individual

narratives of subjective experience to encompass structural analysis of opportunities for social change. This synthesis facilitates a deeper exploration of participants' agency, resilience, and potential pathways for individual and collective empowerment.

Participants

I invited 5 students from McMaster University's School of Social Work to participate in this study. Eligible participants were completing, or had recently completed, their field education placements in social work. This protocol received ethics approval from the McMaster Research Ethics Board.

All participants described were undergraduate social work students who had or were completing a field education placement at McMaster University. The age range of the participants ranged between their mid 20s to mid 40s. All participants described their gender identity as cis-gendered females. P1 identified themselves as Indigenous/White, P2 identified as South Asian, P3 as White/French Canadian, P4 as White/Dutch, and P5 as Asian/Chinese. All participants described themselves as fluent speakers of English; however, English was not the first language for 3 of the 5 participants. I ensured that all participants were informed while collecting their consent that I could repeat, reword, and clarify any of my questions as needed. The non-native English speakers that I interviewed reported to me that they did not have any outstanding difficulties with understanding my questions or any other aspects of our dialogue. All participants were made aware by me during the consent briefing and during the interviews that they could request for any of my questions to be reworded or skipped.

Interview Settings

Three of the interviews were conducted in Hamilton, Ontario; each in different regions of the city, and two interviews in two separate cities close to Hamilton. All participants were

completing their student placements in different social work environments - including a neighbourhood food bank, a long-term care retirement home, a hospice, a play therapy clinic, and a public library.

Apparatus

Interviews were recorded and these recordings were used for transcription and playback for analysis purposes. I made transcripts myself and imported the transcript texts into NVIVO and coded the interview transcripts and analyzed themes. NVIVO is a widely used qualitative data analysis software program that provides researchers with a comprehensive set of tools for managing and analyzing interview data. NVIVO offers a systematic approach to organizing, coding, and exploring themes that emerge from interview transcripts. I compared the presentation of the emerging themes across different participants interview data to identify patterns, relationships, and variations within the interview dataset. Finally, I used NVIVO to generate quote excerpts that I deemed representative of the analysis process.

Interview Procedure

I invited participants to join me for psychogeographic excursions. The research was undertaken at public locations surrounding student participant field education placements. I accompanied participants on these excursions, the starting point for these excursions were determined through mutual agreement between the participant and I based on considerations such as whether these places were geographically close to locations of the participant's placement location, whether there were any specific places that were meaningful to the participant and their social work experiences, and whether there were any areas that the participant wished to avoid. All the participants elected to meet near the entrances of their placement offices.

The excursion routes were primarily guided by following any particular inclinations that the participant wished to follow. For example, if they wished to walk by a particular landmark, we allowed for the route to include passing by that landmark. Conversely, if the participant wished to avoid any particular areas for any reason, we ensured that the route did not include those areas. In the event that participants did not report any inclination for any directions during the excursion route, the route was determined by a dice roll. For example, if we approached an intersection, we designated that dice rolls between 1 and 3 would direct us to go towards the left direction and dice rolls between 3 and 6 would direct us to go towards the right direction. After about 30 minutes, we would start to return to the origin point of our excursion route.

Prior to the excursion, all participants completed a demographic survey (see Appendix I). All participants elected to answer the survey orally and their answers were included in the interview transcripts. During the excursion, I interviewed each participant following an interview guide that I designed for this study (see Appendix II). All questions were asked in the same order and as they are written in the interview guide; aside from occasional minor rewordings to assist with clarity when requested by the participant. No participants elected to skip any of the questions. Interview durations ranged from 37 minutes to 52 minutes in length; the average duration of the five interviews being 44 minutes and the median duration of the five interviews being 45 minutes.

After each interview, I made notes of my own observations of the participant and the locations we passed during the excursion; such as notes on any interactions that I noticed between the participant and any places along the excursion route, whether I noticed any buildings/structures/locations to be particularly distinctive, my own observations of atmosphere, or any signs/artwork/structures that stood out to me on the excursion route. I analyzed the

content of the interviews and coded them in accordance with emerging themes discussed in the next chapter.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a methodological approach used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and interpret recurring patterns or themes that emerge from a series of interviews or other qualitative data sources (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The goal of thematic analysis in this context was to identify commonalities, patterns, and recurring themes that would provide a deeper understanding of how the participants experienced and navigated the environments where the interviews were conducted during the psychogeographic exercise. After conducting the interviews, I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews into textual data. By reading and re-reading the transcripts, I was able to re-familiarize myself with the content of the individual interviews and then start to conceptualize what the content of the interview data revealed as a collection. Coding is a fundamental step in theme analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Researchers identify and label segments of the transcripts that are relevant to the research questions. This coding process may involve both inductive coding, which involves identifying themes that emerge naturally from the data, and deductive coding, which involves using pre-established categories or concepts (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In this case, I chose inductive coding to group similar codes into potential themes in an effort to be aligned with the phenomenological approach to the interviewing which I discussed earlier. Themes are overarching patterns or ideas that capture the essence of the participants' experiences and are identified based on the frequency and significance of specific codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The analysis process involved reviewing and refining the identified themes, ensuring they accurately represented the data, and organizing the data so that it

would present as coherent and meaningful. This process involved revisiting the original audio recordings and the transcripts to confirm the validity of the themes; particularly by making efforts to consider the contexts wherein statements were made during the interviews. The next chapter discusses how I interpreted the findings and explores the implications of these themes in the context of psychogeography and the research objectives by presenting quotes and excerpts from the interviews to illustrate each theme, as well as some narrative contexts to convey the depth and diversity of participant experiences.

RESULTS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the themes that emerged during the five interviews that I conducted with the participants for this study. My curation of themes includes selections of quotes from the interview transcripts which I considered to be representative of the main themes.

Place and Architectural Design

We did not enter the placement locations, but all the participants made reference to the physical features of their placement office's architecture and articulated the relationship between these architectural features and their emotional impressions of the places of their placements. Some design aspects of the environment, such as colours, lighting, and landscaping, were described as inspiring welcoming feelings:

"I love when I showed up here. They had a colorful sign. Everything inside is pretty, beside from the dark hallway, everything's pretty light. It's bright in there and there's a lot of windows…when I drove up, I noticed that we were in the same kind of court as one of childhood best friend's grandmother…I felt comfortable with that. And something about being in a small building that wasn't over crammed and didn't feel like there were so many staff that it overwhelmed me…I felt that was very comforting. Also, the trees. There's lots and lots of trees and green space around especially with the community garden…I'm obsessed with anything green because it reminds me of plants in the earth" (P1)

"The physical characteristics [of this place] are just saying that it's a place that's welcoming. Maybe people who were not from the downtown might feel like it's not as clean or nice as they would like, or expect for a therapy office. But I think it

just says that "We're here in [this place]. We belong to [this place]"… I don't feel

like I have to pretend to be somebody else here" (P4)

"[This place is] surrounded by trees and not just pretty to look at…It just smelled

amazing. You would walk to the front door and…get a whiff of lilac and all these

other different smells. The house is really light [with] neutral [colour] tones and

greens. So [the place] blends into the trees around it. I think it's in harmony with

its surroundings." (P3)

P3 also specifically how the architecture of their placement office was distinctly

recognizable for which they attributed positive associations:

"I love old buildings. So when I saw [my placement location], I was like, "Oh my

gosh, it's in this gorgeous historical Victorian mansion!" It used to be... a

residential home…[then] it was a hospice during the AIDS crisis. It's had a very

interesting history. I was just kind of in awe of the of the place. I just loved it."

(P3)

P3 described how she saw the service users also respond to the physical characteristics

of the place:

"I remember one of the first times that I really spoke at length with a man who has

now passed. He spent most days outside all day. I think [this place] brought him

the same peace…it almost feels like a little oasis, like the little side courtyard. It's

blocked off from the street and it's just surrounded by plants and little fountains

and things like that. I think people like it quite a bit. Anytime it's beautiful out,

you kind of get like a race of wheelchairs out of the building [to the gardens] and

everyone enjoys the sun…Also their guests don't have to wear masks [out here]

and things like that. So being outside [in the gardens] gives them a sense of

freedom as well." (P3)

Conversely, some participants described how the architectural design of their placement location

had an impact that felt alienating. They described feeling like an outsider and not belonging in

the office they worked in due to differences in race, socioeconomic status and values:

> "I feel like everything is very structured. All the trees are where they're supposed
>
> to be…everything's very, like, it's all manicured… I couldn't afford to live here. I
>
> couldn't send my parents here…It feels like a very elite area to be able to retire
>
> and…continue on with palliative care or long-term care…It's very manicured
>
> [and] it just feels like its own world…It's really a neighborhood I could never live
>
> in." (P2)

Whereas some participants described how some physical features of the environment were

symbolic of power imbalances. One of the participants reflected on a previous work environment

they had worked in and described a dualistic symbolism of security infrastructures:

> "There were so many things that just kind of became routine. I would say pressing
>
> the buttons to open the doors was something that you did like 20,000 times a
>
> day…we had two sets of doors. They both lock, they both need to be opened.
>
> There was cameras everywhere…I think sometimes people felt safety in
>
> it…Sometimes in the community, something would go awry…
>
> like sometimes a handoff between divorced or separated couples wouldn't be so
>
> smooth and [residents] did like the security of the doors. But most of the time,
>
> there was a fair amount of guilt for me because every time someone wanted to go
>
> out…they have to call and this girl in her mid 20s had to buzz them in…Just feels

a bit weird…There has to be a certain amount of safety, but it sometimes felt like

policing more than anything else." (P3)

These responses from the participants suggest that the physical characteristics of

architectural design had more than aesthetic qualities but also symbolic meanings to

them as well as to service users.

Place and Ideology

Some participants named how certain ideologies were represented in the

infrastructure and geography of the places of their placements. P2 described in great

detail how they perceived the place of their placement to embody the values of

capitalism:

"It feels like a microcosm of society in general…Capitalism, and things that are

wrong with capitalism and things that I don't believe in…from the first day, I'm

like, "Why am I here?"…it's been difficult to really reconcile everything we've

learned in school… I'd much rather be in a place where I find there's more

equitable resource distributions and just try to support people that have more

barriers." (P2)

P2 reflected in great length the various aspects of their setting, a privatized service

business, made them incredibly aware of their beliefs that service accessibility

prioritized service users from financially privileged backgrounds:

"If you can afford it, they have everything at your fingertips. They do assessments

every six months on all the residents…[but] every service comes at a cost. So if

you can afford it, you will be able to live this reality where you'll be well

supported [with] all your needs taken care of. They have all of the [services] you

could ever want, but you have to be able to pay for it. So that rubbed me the

wrong way from the get go…It's already so expensive to live here and then on top

of that, they add an extra cost to this and an extra cost to that." (P2)

P2 elaborated on their feelings of alienation as a response to how they perceived whiteness as

part of their placement environment; describing their perception that there were few culturally

significant places or landmarks in their placement area and that the area lacked diversity:

"I'd say 99% of the residents are white, and probably 90% of the people that are

working there are not. They're people of color. So right when I walked in, I saw

that dichotomy right away…The team leaders are white as well. So I didn't know

my place, I didn't really know where I fit in…I felt more connected to the people

that are of colour."

Conversely, some participants reflected on how they felt the places of their placements

did embody and reflect their ideological values:

"I think the place where I work now is the place where I feel like most fits my

values [and] feels the least like policing [compared to a previous social work role]

but I think that really comes from the population it serves." (P3)

P3 elaborated on how the hospice setting they worked in represents mortality and

described how the presence of mortality in this environment is in contrast to the outside

environments of society which are usually avoidant of discussing mortality:

"I literally work in a place where people go to die. So grief is a permanent thing.

Illness is a permanent thing. It's a part of the place of the building… And yet, I

feel more emotionally sound there than I have at any other place of work I've had,

including a shelter… for some [people] death terrifies them. So they don't

understand how it's a comfortable place to me. This is going sound so strange, but

this is what I tell people, when I explain why I like it better there than I do at a

shelter. Death is the inevitable destination of where I work. So my job is to

support people to have a good death, and to support their families. So we know

where the destination is. I just support them getting there. And I feel useful in the

work I do. In the shelter system, it's very different and the feelings are very

different. The emotions that I feel here [do include] sadness, but in the…shelter [I

felt] frustration…anger or guilt of not being able to support the service users. I

feel like I can do my job more here than I could at a shelter. I think that says a lot

about shelters. That's what drew me to hospice work. I'm comfortable around

death and what it involves." (P3)

Similarly, P4 shared how the place of her placement represented her own spiritual

outlook and values:

"I feel [that] the heart of my church is to love others and ensure Christ's love for

them is really in my heart working with people as well. It's my motivation. So I

feel that that represents my placement to me too." (P4)

The responses from the participants suggested that they started to associate the places of

their placements as being symbolic of ideologies and values.

Place and Invisible Borders

Participants described how the geography of certain places symbolized disparities in

social issues. Succinctly put by one of the participants: "When you actually look at the

geography it's almost a divide." (P2). Participants described how geography represented the

narratives that regions tell about social divides in their communities

"I was born and raised on the mountain…People on the mountain kind of think they're better than the people downtown for some reason and it's almost seen as a different lifestyle. Even though to me it's not really [any different] other than somebody living higher up geographically than the other. It doesn't make any sense to me, but people hold it this way. People often see it as one [place] being more safe and more upper class and the other…I've lived up here all my life and my parents sheltered me from going downtown for most of my life. I kind of feel safer up here and kind of feel like it's more like home. I live not too far from here, so I'm very familiar with the area." (P1)

P1 further elaborated on their own experiences growing up with the narratives of geographical socio-economic divide in their home city:

"One thing that I think people might believe, but isn't necessarily true, is that there's less crime uptown, there's less poverty uptown, the streets are more well kept, and the properties are more well kept. I think there's this misconception that it's more community based up here than it is downtown [but] there's tons of really well-kept communities downtown. But it's just people associate the mountain with a higher standard of living and the downtown as a lower standard of living where if you're downtown, you're bound to get hurt or crimes are bound to happen." (P1)

"When I'm up here and I talk to people, I think they assume that everyone up here has good intentions. Everyone here wants to be part of a really well-maintained positive community. So when you're up here, and you're in certain areas, there tends to be it's like a Keeping Up With the Joneses kind of thing to a degree. Growing up, I often went to a lot of community events up here, and I lived in a

really nice new suburb…Everybody on our street always had things at the same time: we'd have garage sales all at the same time, we'd have barbecues at the same time, and we'd have parties and invite everyone else over. You'd go to the community centers, or libraries, and you'd see the same people and you form communities that way…Again, there's always been that…image of prestige and that idea of prestige up here. I think people associate that with feelings of positivity and a sense of closeness that they don't feel downtown." (P1)

P1 described how their own experiences contrasted to the narratives that they had been exposed to in their home city:

"I spent a lot of time downtown…I've been to communities downtown that had really close communities within the neighborhoods, or had community centers that had a close community. For example, if you go downtown, and you go to the Regional Indian Center, they have a close community of the same people going in there. All the workers know the regulars that come in every day. That's a close community, but the area it's in isn't considered a nice area." (P1)

"When I think of historical landmarks, I think of a lot of things downtown because downtown [is] a lot older than uptown…There isn't anything up here…that's one of the reasons I don't like living uptown…I grew up uptown and I kept trying to get downtown because I knew there was so much more happening down there at all times…My parents never knew it but I was always going downtown" (P1)

P4 reflected on the narratives that they were told by peers who grew up in the areas surrounding their placement:

"I didn't grow up here [but] my friends who did grow up here say that there's a

difference in the people who are from [downtown] as opposed to [outside

downtown] which is where I live now… [outside downtown] would be upper

class [with] more nice houses [and] rural. [Some other area outside downtown]

would be much lower class. If you say you're from [some other area outside

downtown] that has a lot of negative connotations…[downtown] is just more

[associated with] prospering businesses [and] definitely more urban…I remember

some people saying "Oh, you live [downtown]. You must be like really be a city

kid"… but to me, it's just the place I came for school [and] I found my friends that

work here…but I guess I do love the city so I can be a city kid" (P4).

P3 described a stark contrast between the neighborhood where her placement was located and the

neighbourhood just a block away; describing how neighborhoods with different socioeconomic

statuses can be located close together but feel very different:

"I've noticed, and it's wild to me, because one time…I went a couple streets too

far…and all of a sudden, it felt like within all these trees were…areas known as

being kind of sketchy in lack of a better word. Then all of a sudden you had these

gorgeous houses [that] just seem so out of place." (P3)

P3 contrasted her observations of distinguishable regions to her experiences of seeing

the heterogeneity of lived experiences within regions:

"I've not actually experienced the physicality of [disparities] before. When I drove

one street past my old place of work, which is literally a shelter for homeless

families, and I turned on to these streets I was shocked. You can't work in a

shelter and not notice the disparity…I worked as a landlord-tenant worker so I

went to a lot of different apartments. I visited countless buildings. It's just so

shocking how big the differences are between people living in the same five

kilometers." (P3)

In some examples, there were no names for the regions that symbolized divisions. Some

participants described how infrastructures of certain areas represented divides that

symbolized the privileging of ableism:

"Start walking around even the local areas, which on a grid looks like…it seems

accessible. But then you get on the ground and you [realize there's] a lot of

challenges for 92-year-old to get around here…I'm getting a closer look at how

challenging that can really be…it's a different perspective [of an] architectural

designer and franchise planner [compared to] someone who's working as a social

worker with a critical lens, right?" (P2)

"I was trying to find out places in the community that people can support.

[Support] seems like it's really close, like it's about three blocks away from where

the facility is, but three blocks for an elderly person is a lot unless you can drive

or unless you can get transport. So it seems like it's really easy to get support

[nearby] but it's not easy. There's so many barriers. If something goes wrong, like

if somebody has an infection or they go into delirium…you have to pay for a full

day or 48-hour watch, which [costs] $28 an hour. The whole thing rubs me the

wrong way in terms of the privatization aspect." (P2)

P2 also described how they perceived the physical environment around them as being designed

with a specific body and population in mind and was not accommodating to people with mobility

issues or different needs which was at odds with the population of service users she was working

with who were an aging population:

> "I remember walking over with another student who's here and it was a hot day.
>
> When we were told, [the service clinic] is just around the corner, I'm like, "Okay,
>
> let's walk over and see what around the corner means." So every step of the way,
>
> while we're walking in this heat, I'm [realizing] this is not feasible. If this is how it
>
> feels on a nice day, this wouldn't be feasible on a rainy day, this wouldn't be
>
> feasible on a snowy day. So just realizing the barriers that come into play when
>
> you have mobility concerns…even though these are perfectly straight roads,
>
> there's no hill or anything, you notice every step. So that really was something that
>
> was impactful for me. You have all this beautiful land all around, but really,
>
> everybody's just walking around the parking lot. That's the farthest they'll go
>
> because it's just full of dangers…even crossing the street is a major concern…the
>
> parking lot feels like a moat. You have to cross this large barrier that's kind of
>
> dangerous because there's cars coming and going and they're in their walkers.
>
> That parking lot is huge…there was definitely the actual physical capacities that I
>
> wasn't as attuned to [prior to experiences in placement]". (P2)

P2 further explained how the place of their placement was itself a representation of the

borders between privileged access to care and those who have been marginalized from

equitable access to care:

> "I'm definitely more aware of how much money is required to take care of
>
> yourself as you age… how much you'd get if you could pay for [services] versus
>
> if you have to wait in line for the age CCSS or for homecare the length…It's just

made me so much more aware of the barrier that if you can't afford [services], you

have to just get what you get. And like I said, like this is a privileged place they

have. They're already at this higher level, whoever can afford to be here. But

there's a dichotomy of who can afford [services] here as well." (P2)

In contrast, P5 described how they saw the infrastructure of places surrounding their

placement as symbols of accessibility-focused spaces:

"[This place] is the most accessible mall I've ever seen compared to all the other

malls…[in most malls] you don't see a lot of people in wheelchairs, or walking

with a service dog. But in [this place]…I do notice a lot of people are accessing

the setting [as] a very low barrier environment" (P5)

Several participants commented on how central downtown areas were characteristically

represented by marginalized populations in need:

"[This place] makes me think about how broken the world is…you just see a lot

of people in need. Well, I do believe the world is broken. And I think that

everybody experiences it. But in the downtown, we see it more in tangible

ways…people are hurting, visibly homeless, in need of a lot of resources…I think

you see it more in the downtown and…I think that people are looking for a way

out of the pain that they're feeling and they are having a hard time finding it." (P4)

"Since it is a city centre, there is quite a lot of members from the communities

related to homelessness, mental health related distress, and addictions…Harm

reduction sites are around [and] quite a lot of agencies [around this place] provide

really good services. Once, I helped a person who was under the influence of

fentanyl, right beside the library. So that population, yes, but definitely not limited

to that. There's a lot of children's and families because we do have a children's

circle. A lot of parents bring their children here. A lot of seniors access the library

as well…also some students from [the local university]" (P5)

The increasing visibility of homelessness in city centres emerged as a theme in almost all the

interviews:

"I see so many [homeless] people being displaced from their encampments

…[there's] so much discrepancy between the lives of some versus the lives of

others. I think [this place] is just such an important place to be and a good place to

serve my community." (P3)

"There's been a lot of encampment disbanding… especially in my old

neighborhood. When I drive to and from a school, you see a lot more ad

campaigns popping up [about homeless encampments] so it's a lot more visible.

I'm not uncomfortable about it, but I know a lot of people are, which to me [is]

something we should address." (P3)

P3 explained how the displacement of homeless encampments represented the city's

efforts to conceal the severity of its increasing visibility through ignorance. P3 reflected

on their ignorance of how displacement of homeless people becomes justified by

dehumanizing borders of separation:

"It's the comfort of ignorance. I knew poverty existed…but you think of

homelessness as black or white; you either have a home or you don't…but then

you'd learn about the nuances of being housed: [dismantling of subsidized]

lodgings or people being illegally evicted and it reminds me of my own

understandings of things before I started school, versus now. For example, on

Tuesday, my parents drove over and all my mom could talk about when she saw

me was abut how there's so many homeless people… I noticed them, but it's not

shocking to me. I think [for them] coming from where they live to here [and

seeing homelessness] is was a big shock." (P3)

"It's easier to think of the homeless population as individuals that are somehow

different from ourselves, to excuse the fact that we're just letting them be outside.

Once you remove those separations…it's much less comfortable to just walk

past." (P3)

P5 observed that even though their placement experience provided limited exposure to

the communities outside the placement office, it still remained impossible to not notice

the increasing visibility of homelessness in their surrounding community:

"There is quite a lot of people experiencing homelessness…around the

library…It's not something new for me …because I do have experience working

in shelters. But it's…just like the feeling…I definitely see why this program is so

important… A lot of people experiencing homelessness really need…a basic

sense of safety." (P5)

The participants' observations and acknowledgment of the visibility of homelessness indicated an

increased awareness of the social issues prevalent within the communities they serve. These

reports suggest that their placement experiences sensitized them to the realities faced by

homeless individuals and the challenges they encounter in their daily lives.

Place and Presence

Participants shared how walking around the places of their placements helped them to appreciate their environments more deeply:

"I've noticed a lot of businesses that have gone up. I've never actually noticed some of these streets. I've never actually bothered to look and examine the houses [and how they are arranged]. Many buildings that I've driven by a million times but I've never actually taken the time to look at them and admire [their gardens]. I find that walking allows for a different perspective than driving. You could drive by places a million times, but not really take the time to look at things around you. One thing I do notice., at least walking now is this weird kind of division. It's almost like from here down it's chaos towards [the street] and then it stops here. As opposed to the subdivision area [we just walked past] that's a little bit more quieter, a lot more greener, and with less businesses. There's a library at the end, so that gives the impression of community as well [and] there's a church right beside [the placement office]…there are invisible borders where you can see how the atmosphere and the mood behind it kind of changes as you're going through the city." (P1)

"I guess I'm a lot more aware of the area…and it is interesting to me because when I would pass [the placement location] on my way to and from work to my like to go home…I never noticed it. I didn't know it was there. I almost drove right past it on my first day… so I guess that says something about how well it blends into its environment. It was just kind of shocking that it was there because any other hospices [are] on the fringe of cities out of the way where there's more

[open space]. But this feels very [in keeping with the character of this specific

place], that there's just a hospice wedged in between houses." (P3)

P3 also described how being in a place, rather than just passing through it, can give people a

stronger sense of belonging and kinship. P3 expanded on how their connection and contentment

in place was impacted by their own efforts to explore the place:

"I'm quite content here…[I feel] contentment and curiosity because I'm still

exploring the city even though I've been here for two years. So curiosity,

contentment, joy, sometimes a bit of loneliness mixed in there [because] it's my

first time living fully alone." (P3)

P3 described how places can take on new meanings for people as they spend more time there and

learn about the history and significance of those places.

"If you'd asked me before, like if you asked me about my previous employment

then I would say yes, that place has changed a lot of meanings, but not so much

my [current] placement. By the time I started my placement, I was more aware of

my surroundings and city in general." (P3)

P3 described how getting to know places is like getting to know a character, making

reference to how in some storytelling the setting represents its own character. P3

concluded that actually being present in places is a valuable experience in and of itself:

"I drive to and from work and I have blinders on. Reflecting on that, its really

strange to think of how little I notice…I think a lot of us do that, where we drive

to and from work [and think to ourselves] "Oh, how did I get here? Was I even

awake "…in a place like [this place] ignoring it is kind of at your own peril

because it's there's so much to gain from it. [This place] has a life of its own." (P3)

In contrast, P5 shared how their placement experience involved very limited exposure to the surrounding areas of their placement location:

> "I am the one and only person in the [social work placement] seminar doing a
> macro level practice [placement setting]. I do half of my work from home half of
> my work [here]… I primarily work with staff [from the placement location]…My
> job doesn't include direct [work with service users] in the communities [where
> they live] " (P5)

P5 reflected on how being present in the community would have been a completely different experience in contrast to how their placement experience had been set up.

Place and Memory

Participants who identified as living in the areas where their placement was located often articulated deeper senses of belonging and being and associated that sense of belonging with a sense of safety:

> "I think it's just some comfort in a familiar area and knowing that I know the
> streets around here. I know where I'm going. Sometimes I'll pass by things and it
> will remind me of [my] memories as a teenager or memories as a kid. So I think
> it's just comfort and familiarity [that makes this place feel safer]. (P1)

Participants described how the physical characteristics of a place, like the architecture, smells, and surroundings can evoke certain feelings and memories of home. P3 described how the flowers and smells at the hospice she was working in made her feel at home and comfortable:

> "I feel very at home surrounded by plants and flowers. And lilac and lilies of the
> valley are both really sentimental to me. Just through family members having

them in their yards and things like that. So to me it helped build the sense of being

at home" (P3)

P3 associated sentimentality with comfort for herself as well as for service users of the

hospice environment that they were working in:

"It's gorgeous. So in that tower...there's little sitting rooms, and they have 180

degree views. There's seats and there's plants and flowers…[it's] my dream place

where I like to have lunch…I love sentimental things and being surrounded by

pretty things. So to me, it's just so comfortable up there." (P3)

"We had a celebration of life for a…few people that have passed…We have this

little ceremony there [in the gardens]…We had music…we had candles…and we

hung doves with each person's name that had passed here in the trees. It was just

really a beautiful place to be. Now the lilac is gone, but now we've got lavender.

So there's always different smells. And it's really, really lovely that way…I just

feel really peaceful here." (P3)

P4 shared local restaurants and shops as significant locations that were symbolic of their

experiences and memories in the region. P4 shared that significant life events, such as where

they met their spouse for their first date, and fond memories of their everyday lives, such as

meeting with their friends and their church community, had occurred in nearby locations. P4 also

reflected on how the memories that they are currently forming in these places now may develop

in significance later in their lives:

"I think if I ever leave this area, I'll always feel pretty nostalgic about this place. It

just felt like this the start of my life. I just feel like it's a really sweet place. I love

it." (P4)

The participants who reported reflections on their home, upbringing, and memories all reported positive associations with their placement environments, which suggests that cues of familiarity with the placement environments influenced the deepening of their connections to the environments through their placement experiences; more so than for the participants who did not observe environmental cues that reminded them of home or past memories.

Place, Community, and Belonging

The psychogeographic exercise prompted all the participants to share reflections on their sense of belonging, or how belonging would be conceived by others, in the places of their placements. Participants described their reflections on the role of environment and neighborhoods in shaping people's perspectives and experiences in place-based social work:

"Being in placement especially a [neighborhood program] has really helped shift

my experience over even over a month of just being there…I'm starting to find

that I'm looking at communities differently, physical buildings differently,

individuals differently, cultures differently…the city and how people live as a

whole" (P1)

P4 described deep personal connections to the location surrounding their placement environment:

"The first thing that comes to mind…when I think of [this place] is all the

different people that I know here. It was the first place where I really felt like I

found my own community. I just see everyone's faces and the memories that I've

had right here walking the streets and meeting people and things like that." (P4)

"It feels like the heart of a place. So I love being there. And I love seeing that this is where people are coming for work or just because they live here. I just think it's great to have services right in that part of the city, because that's where people are…I think it's more accessible. So that's great." (P4)

P4 explained how her participation in the local communities was influential in her developing sense of the needs of people in the local community:

"As our church group was starting, we were just going around talking with a lot of people meeting a lot of people downtown. So we heard a lot of stories. I think that because I was connecting with a lot of people and hearing their stories that I saw, and heard a lot of the stories of drug use, broken relationships, people that were in financial need, and things like that. (P4)

P4 described her developing self-consciousness and awareness of her role as a community member now that she is doing her placement:

"[As] I'm walking here now, I just am more aware of the fact that I could run a run into someone who take services at my [placement agency]. Just walking on the streets feels a little more different just because I'm more aware of that…I don't want to make people who are in my community feel uncomfortable if they see me in in public. Not because we don't have great rapport in the clinical setting, but just because they certainly want to just be seen as normal people as we're walking past each other. I haven't encountered that yet [but] I think about it a lot…I want to be really mindful of how they might be feeling and just respect them in the best way I can." (P4)

P4 reflected that she wants to remain an ordinary community member while also being mindful of how her role as a social worker impacts how others see her.

> "The feeling of self-consciousness...just made me…think differently about myself as a community member…I know that we all hold roles in our community, but often we don't know what roles each other holds [when] we're passing [by each other]. [I'm] seeing a lot more of what might be happening to people…and [may] potentially see them [in my community]" (P4)

Finally, they concluded that the place of their placement symbolized the community that they built connections with over the course of studying and living there:

> "Before I came to [this place] I was coming as a student and didn't know anyone and hadn't lived away from home before really. So just meeting a lot of people for the first time and starting to do life with other people that are my age and had similar interests and passions, and just hanging out all the time and growing together in our faith and things like that too. That's what community feels like to me." (P4)

Participants described traits of the people in their placement environments that impacted their feelings of belonging:

> "They're very judgment free. A lot of people that come in are [newcomer] immigrants…I'd say most people that come…primarily speak Arabic [and] don't speak a lot of English…I don't even know if it really has much to do with the building itself primarily, as much it has to do with how kind and caring the staff are…the building is sort of an afterthought that kind of adds to the impression [of the environment being welcoming] that the employees and the overall

organization give to the customers that come in. If the staff were worse than they

are now, [the place would] have more of a negative energy and people wouldn't

feel as welcome…My placement brings calm, like happiness. When I'm there, I'm

very happy to be there. It's a very positive energy, very positive place." (P1)

In contrast some participants described how they differentiated the meanings of the

place that they associate with people as different from the associations that they

attributed to the place:

"I think all of my one-to-one interactions with people here are always lovely. I

just love talking to the people here because it goes beyond this structure. I haven't

ever felt unwelcome by the people. It's more of the surrounding and the layout and

everything else about the place but the people are kind and always welcoming. I

feel connected to the people versus the place." (P2)

P5 described initially seeing their placement setting, a public library, simply as a place to borrow

books but through their placement experience began to see it as a shared community space and

potential site for social work intervention; representing a broadening of their sense of the

community in which the library is located:

"Our library is basically not…just a place that we can borrow books it's not only

that anymore, it is slowly turning to a community hub…the space says to people

"I'm right here, so if you want access, feel free" (P5)

The responses from the participants suggest that the psychogeographic exercise

facilitated their reflections on changes they were experiencing in their relationships with

the community, as well as reflections on how a sense of community influenced their

having positive experiences and connotations with the environments of their

placements.

Places of Social Work

The psychogeographic exercise led some participants to describe how they conceptualized

places of social work. Participants described the presence of places of social work, as well as

absence of places of social work, as having symbolic meaning for their placement agency's

priorities:

> "The first week I got here, I'm like, "Okay, so where do we sit, there's no specific
>
> office for social work". You sort of go wherever there's a clinic. Sometimes the
>
> doctors are in, sometimes they're not. We might be lucky and you'd be able to use
>
> the office. Otherwise, we sit in the library. Sometimes the library is taken for other
>
> programs. We're sort of like, just an enigma that flies everywhere. So that's
>
> interesting and represents how nobody really knows what social work is here. We
>
> don't even have an office. (P3)

P2 described how the infrastructure of their placement office symbolized disconnect between

social work and the rest of the programs in their work setting:

> "The other displacement that I see is that there's only one team room in the
>
> basement. So [we have this] huge place, and the only place we can eat is a small
>
> room in the basement…The first thing I thought of was Upstairs,
>
> Downstairs…I've gotten used to it now like it's not that bad, but I never go down
>
> to eat there because it's just really odd. So I just eat my car…Like everybody who
>
> works here is supposed to just hide in a corner and do whatever…there's this

barrier between what's for the residents and what's for the people who work here. So that I found really strange and really disappointing." (P2)

"Social work doesn't have a place here; it's been inserted. I feel like COVID really brought out a lot of the struggles, even in a privileged population in terms of isolation and adding on to physical needs for care and loss of supports when everybody was shut up in a room. So just bringing everybody back and supporting them with their mental emotional health. I think the social work here is…new in the whole concept [of operating a privatized retirement home]. It's a new role." (P2)

"When I first came, I thought social work shouldn't be part of this team, like it should be a separate outside source… you can't be on the payroll and have this kind of privatized push and still do social work to a capacity that I would [be in keeping with] my values." (P2)

In contrast to P2's description of the absence of a social work space in their placement environment, P3 described positive attributes to the simple presence of a shared table where she met with her field instructor for briefings:

"In my field instructor's office there's a big roundtable. We have spent hours chatting at that table…it's a round table, not very big, has four chairs around it. I sit at one end of the table and she sits at her desk, which is a bit further away. So then we can take off our masks and just chat. The table is made of dark wood. There's flowers in the middle, but I'm 90% sure they're fake…there's always paper all over it…you know, the signs of a good office… So I'd say that's the place [that symbolizes my experiences as a student]. (P3)

P5 discussed how they initially felt lost and unsure in the new environment of their placement, but over time became more comfortable and familiar with the area as they got to know the library staff, social work staff, and the environment; representing some shift in their personal identity from being an outsider to feeling more integrated. P5 also described awareness that that they could use their position as a social work student to ask questions they may not normally be able to ask. P5 referred to circumstances where students are not expected to have expert knowledge; as well as circumstances where students can access privileged held by the social workers they worked with.

"As a student, one of the privileges I have is that I can go ahead and ask

[questions] and no one will judge [me]" (P5)

The participant responses suggest that having a space for social work was valuable to them. Although the presence of offices and furniture may be a somewhat mundane feature, the participant responses suggest that there is a correlation of having places of social work and more positive morale and identification with their emerging social work identities.

Places and Self Refection on Identity as a Social Worker

P1 described how their childhood perspectives changed as a result of their social work education and placement experiences:

"I think when you're a child, and you're growing up, your parents shelter you from a lot of the bad things that happen. And then you grow up and you start seeing all the things that your parents were sheltering you from: the poverty, the crime, the things that you'd see but your parents [didn't want you] to see. It's kind of hard to figure out if it's because your parents sheltering you from it, or that this never

happened [before like it's happening now], or if it's because something happened

over the last couple years that caused an increase in crime and poverty. Maybe

that's why it's changing your opinion and that's what you're seeing now...I'm

flicking back and I'm thinking of past memories that are nostalgic for me. At the

same time, I have to recognize that my parents did shelter me from things that I

did not understand. And those things are always there. But then COVID

happened, and everything else to do with the economy, and the housing crisis and

inflation, and that made everything worse. So it's always been in this area, it's

always been here, or even it's been invisible behind closed doors. You don't

always know when people are suffering. But now because I'm in social work, I

have more understanding of it. So sometimes looking at things in the area that I

was once really comfortable with, and looking at things from a different

perspective [has] really changed how I now see things." (P1)

Participants described how reflecting on their connection to the environment and community

while walking and talking made them "analyze things and see things in a different light" (P1),

suggesting personal examination of their perspectives. P1 discussed extensively how their views

of communities, neighborhoods, cultures and individuals have changed since starting their social

work program and placement:

"When I started working more with the community and the regulars that are

coming in, it started to change my perspective, more and more of certain

communities. So for example, that building over on the right there...I drive by

that building...and I think "Why would somebody want to live there?" I looked

down on people that lived there and [thought] "Why don't you want more for your

life? You probably made poor decisions and that's why you ended up there." This

was my perspective…before being in the program but now it's so much different.

Being in placement especially, a [neighbourhood program] has really helped shift

my [perspective after only] a month of being there. I find I'm starting to find that

I'm looking at communities differently, physical buildings differently, individuals

differently, and cultures differently." (P1)

P1 related the shifts in perspective to their experiences to working within the community of their

placement location:

"I do see certain communities in certain areas differently because of my

experience working with people who are struggling financially and dealing with

poverty. I'm gonna be honest…I grew up very privileged but people assumed I

wasn't privileged because of my Indigenous background. But I grew up super,

super, super privileged. I saw a lot of people who were middle upper class and

upper class make a lot of crappy financial mistakes that would basically put them

in the poverty area. So I had this misconception going in. After being [at

placement] for a whole day, I said "How can you tell the difference between the

customers that come in and actually [need the service] and the customers that

don't actually need it, but manipulate the system. [My field instructor] told me

"You've got to stop talking like that. That's not the mindset you want.…you have

to start thinking that you don't understand what's going on in somebody's life

based on appearances. You have to understand that most people, if not all people,

are not responsible for what happened to them and we cannot judge them for that.

So if somebody shows up in a Mercedes, we can't judge them because we don't

know what's happening. Maybe they're just struggling to keep that car, or maybe it

was given to them. Maybe there's other situations, we can't make assumptions, we

just have to be there to help. That is our job: not to judge but to help." (P1)

P2 described their placement experience as having shaped what they want to do in the future,

steering them towards working with more diverse and underserved populations. P2 described

how their experience has given them language and perspective to critically analyze social issues

and structures in a way they had not done before:

> "I find joy in talking to the people here. Because it goes beyond the structure. I
>
> haven't ever felt unwelcome by the people. It's more of the surrounding and the
>
> layout and everything else about the place, but the people… I feel connected to
>
> the people versus the place."

While the environment made them feel like an outsider, they found purpose in helping

individuals and having gained knowledge that would shape their future social work. Connecting

with residents on a human level helped counteract some of the negativity of the larger system:

> "I don't like the system that I see. But...the more I get to know the people like
>
> these residents, there's so many that need…support. So connecting with that…is a
>
> grounding aspect for me of being here….I look beyond the façade… that
>
> structurally seems wrong to me. They're still people at the end of the day [and]
>
> they're in a lot of pain. They need a lot of emotional and …physical support…If I
>
> can help somebody at the end of the day, with that, I'm happy."

> "I found this placement left me with such gaping questions…I didn't get any of
>
> the sense of the social work [experiences] I wanted from elderly care, which
>
> would be more community [focused] practice [with] less privileged populations.

So that sort of guided where I want to go next [for a second placement]. I want to

[work with] a diverse population [and] the problems that they're facing. There's

still a lot of things that we're helping with here, but it's always in the back of my

mind [that] these are the problems that a privileged population has. I can only

imagine how that's magnified if you [work with] issues of mental health, money,

and having no supports." (P2)

"I feel lonely…there's a sadness but it's also disappointment. I guess [this place

represents] my developing awareness. I'm becoming aware of the situation [faced

by service users in this community] and [learning] what I can control and what I

can't, and focusing on what I want to focus on rather than just the negative

because I still want to do everything I can to help (P2)

P4 also reflected on some inner tensions with respect to the shift she was experiencing in her

emerging identity as a social worker:

"I just want to stay a community member. But I realized that…as social

workers…you have the opportunity to be more well known in a community..

[and] that affects the way that people think of you. But you don't want that to

affect the way that you think of people." (P4)

In contrast, some participants described places as representing their growth of

confidence in adopting their new identities as emerging social workers:

"I think it's kind of hard to not associate [this place] with the work I'm doing and

hoping to do in the future. The population of [this place] impacts the work so

much. So to me, [this place] is the place to be if I want to practice the profession

that I've fallen in love with….now I see [this place] way more as my home than

pretty much any other place I've lived before…[This place] just feels more like

it's mine…I feel a really big kinship to the place…I think it reminds me of a

version of my hometown, but much bigger." (P3)

"I feel like I found a real place of belonging here and built really good

relationships with people. I think that that makes all the difference in life. I also

feel like this is where I had clarity about my career path and passion for it…This

placement specifically has given me a lot of hope about my career. Just knowing

that I love this work. I love working with people. I want to be doing something

like this and I can see myself doing it long term so that gives me a lot of clarity"

(P4)

The participant responses suggest that through experiential learning and reflection on

their placement experiences, they are starting to understand and accept their emerging

identities as social workers.

Psychogeography as a Reflexive Exercise

Participants described the psychogeographic exercise as a challenging but

valuable experience that brought focus to self-refection of their feelings and

connectedness to places:

"You're making me answer questions that I've never had to answer. But like I said,

I always knew the answer to [the questions] somewhere deep down. I knew the

answer, or thought I knew the answer, but I didn't really. I'm just more surprised

about having to think about things I never thought about before but seem

somewhat obvious…When you were asking me questions, and I was answering

them, I had a lot of emotions come up. Nothing too negative. But I'm thinking

about my connection to the environment; my connection to the community. It just

makes you analyze things and see things in a different light than you would when

you're working on a day to day basis, you don't actually take the time to think

about these things…[I felt] happiness -something about walking makes you

happy. And then at certain periods, I felt sadness and disappointment…this was a

really cool study in my opinion" (P1).

Participants described the psychogeographical exercise as a positive experience that

helped them articulate their thoughts and feelings about the intangible aspects of places

in new ways:

"I can't actually describe it I think it's more of a subconscious kind of gravitational

pull towards something that I don't understand" (P1)

"It's really hard to answer some of these questions. It's like, it's a feeling you kind

of know, subconsciously, what the answer is to your question, but actually putting

it into words and being able to describe it is really difficult." (P1)

Participants described the psychogeographical exercise as a positive experience that

helped allowed them an opportunity to appreciate the places where we walked:

"This is an interesting research project because the people who you're asking are

not necessarily from the city. so it's about their perspective [of the area]…[This

interview made me] think just how special this city is for me…walking around

downtown again and seeing it made me feel that." (P4).

Over the course of the interview, P5 realized that they did not know the surrounding area well,

but through this interview began to notice more about the surrounding streets, landmarks and

communities. P5 shared how the psychogeographic exercise was a departure from their typical

interactions with the place of their placement:

"I'm either achieving [reaching] my destination to work [at placement] or I'm

leaving…I wish I had more time [for] walks around here…walk around enjoy the

sunlight. Most of our work is sitting down [inside the office]… So I do wish I had

more time to enjoy the setting the of the environment around here." (P5)

Participant take-aways from completing the psychogeographic exercise with me

included a newfound motivation to explore the places around their placements:

"Now I want to know if there's any historical landmarks around here that I've been

ignoring for years and years…I'm gonna notice how things change and how the

atmosphere changes…These are all things I already knew subconsciously, but I

just never actually had to ever think about it. I love it." (P1)

"Now I'm more likely to look at the individual facades of buildings, but also

notice holes in the walls…It just shocked me so much that I could just fully pass

by a building every day and not even notice it. So it's made me very aware [that]

there's things hidden everywhere in this city. So I guess now I'm just more

appreciative of my surroundings in general." (P3)

"I actually never see this institute from outside. This is [the] first time for me

[seeing] the surrounding areas. Actually, I'm probably gonna start walking around

here a little bit more, instead of just sitting in the office for seven hours straight. It

doesn't make sense." (P5)

The participant responses suggest that they enjoyed the psychogeographic exercise and

they were already able to articulate some benefits in reflection of their past experiences,

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their current experiences, and how they wish to apply what they learned from those

experiences in their futures.

DISCUSSION

If we view social work as only a discipline of services, then the considerations of the roles that environmental and atmospheric features of place may be considered superfluous to a more utilitarian approach in assessing the qualities of social work service delivery and practice. My argument is that a critical social work analysis - which involves micro, mezzo, and macro levels of the structural analysis of power (Tan 2009) – would be interested in encouraging a more embodied analysis of how power and hegemonic ideologies can be identified, enforced, acted upon, and indeed counteracted upon, through place-based explorations of infrastructure and geography. Psychogeography aligns with these ideals of reflexive analysis.

In designing this research project, I anticipated that participants would engage in a more profound examination of the relationships between their learning experiences and their developing identities as social workers. Through psychogeographic exploration, participants would have the opportunity to reflect on how their surroundings shaped their understanding of social work practice, their evolving professional identities, and their role within the communities they served. Findings indicated that participants did describe interplay between their personal growth, learning, and the geographical landscapes they encountered as part of a shifting of their personal identity in self and in community. I was also curious as to whether the participants would find some questions challenging because they might not have previously considered the implications raised during their placement experiences. This psychogeographic exploration was intended to introduce unfamiliar perspectives and raise thought-provoking questions about the ethical, social, and political dimensions of the places where social work is practiced. Indeed, all the participants described some form of initial surprise and uncertainty when I asked them questions related to geographical themes in contemplating the broader implications of their work.

This chapter dedicates some examination of ways that the main findings from this study may be critiqued.

Considerations of Familiarity and Unfamiliarity with Places

Participants feeling of connectedness to the places of their placements varied over a range of experiences, from a deep sense of belonging and rapport with their communities to a sense of detachment and cultural dissonance. The data does suggest some factors influencing participants' connections, such as the extent of their exposure to the communities and their immersion in local contexts with service users. For example, one of the participants shared that they were studying macro-level policy practice in a hybrid (virtual and in-person) work setting and their reflections indicated that they had limited opportunities for exposure to the local communities and direct interactions with service users. This participant advised that they did have difficulty answering questions about the geography of their placement because they had not explored the areas surrounding their placement prior to my interview with them. These findings suggest that the psychogeographic exercise may be a particularly suitable learning experience for students in macro-level policy work placements to ensure that they are experiencing some connection between the policy work being done and the target communities they are intended to serve.

I was curious about whether the participants would articulate experiences and connections that would transcend the sensory and physical aspects of the places of their placements. The findings suggested that some participants had awareness of the historical, political, and social meanings embedded in the places of their placements; while others had limited awareness. Two of the participants expressed a highly conscious awareness of power dynamics, social inequalities, and structural issues that shape the communities they engaged with during their social work practice, and did so with very little prompting from the interview

questions. These responses were in line with my hopes that although none of my questions make direct inquiries about the geographical representation of marginalized populations and inequities (see Appendix II), observations of these issues would arise organically as a result of the reflective nature of the interview process.

The variations that participants reported in their prior exposure to the surrounding areas of their placements is likely to have influenced the depth and breadth of participants' experiences during the psychogeographic exercise. Particularly for the students with limited exposure to the local community areas surrounding their placement, their understanding of the broader social and physical environment could be constrained, potentially affecting the themes and insights that emerged from the study. However, I note that disconnection between social work service delivery and the wishes of local communities of service users has often been cited as a tension for a number of reasons; including the imbalances of privileges (Janes, 2016), lack of community partnerships, or even the increasing workload demands on social workers that restrict opportunities for such connections. Indeed, the participants may have been primarily focused on their day-to-day responsibilities and had limited opportunities to venture into the surrounding areas. Additionally, participants who were new to the locations of their placements may have required time to familiarize themselves with the surrounding areas. They might have prioritized becoming acquainted with their immediate work environment and establishing rapport with local staff before venturing further afield. Limited exposure could be a result of the initial phase of settling in and acclimating to the new surroundings.

Recognizing the student participants' variations in exposure to community, field instructors could consider incorporating opportunities for participants to explore the broader areas surrounding their placements. This may involve allocating dedicated time or organizing

structured activities that encourage participants to engage with the wider community, gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural, and environmental contexts.

Considerations of Implementing a Novel Methodology

The participants' responses suggest that the psychogeographic approach introduced a novel and reflective experience for them. By incorporating questions and discussions about geography, the study provided a unique opportunity for participants to delve into their thoughts, feelings, and reflections in a new context. Some participants indicated that they had not been asked these types of questions before and did share that they found the experiences of considering geography to be an interesting and valuable opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings, and reflections about the places of their placement. The participants' positive reception suggests that the psychogeographic approach may have facilitated a deeper level of self-reflection and self-awareness, enabling participants to communicate their perspectives in a supported and meaningful way. The fact that participants found the experience enjoyable suggests that they felt validated and recognized; as a result of being able to share their memories, reflections, and experiences. In an education setting, these findings suggest that this recognition of students' perspectives while being guided by thoughtful mentorship can foster a sense of value and appreciation for the students' unique insights and experiences, contributing to their professional development and motivation. The participants' positive response highlights the importance of incorporating diverse methodologies and prompts in research and educational contexts. By introducing innovative approaches, researchers and educators can provide learners with unique opportunities for self-expression, reflection, and exploration. This can deepen learners' engagement, foster personal growth, and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences from their own viewpoint. The participants' feedback

underscores the value of ongoing professional development opportunities that encourage self-reflection and exploration. Integrating psychogeographic approaches into social work training and continuing education programs can provide social workers with tools to critically examine their practice, expand their perspectives, and enhance their overall effectiveness in supporting individuals and communities.

A potential critique is that the participants were more responsive to the novelty of the types of questions, rather than the inquiry of geography in their reflections. To mitigate the potential bias towards novelty of the interview questions, future studies could consider conducting multiple interviews with the participants, such as a research designs where participants are interviewed at different stages of their placement akin to how placements are evaluated at mid-term and end-of-term evaluations. Such a method would also capture a novel temporal dimension to the data analysis that this study did not investigate, which I hope would capture interesting insights and dynamics of how the placement students' perceptions shift as they gain more experiences in their placement and perhaps re-evaluate their connections with the places of their placements. Future studies could also consider integrating multiple types of psychogeographic exercises that allow for a more comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences, how they are expressed, and how they are interpreted. This can include combining psychogeographic walking with other established methods, such as reflective journaling, photovoice (see Arnold, 2019), mapmaking, or other arts-based activities. By employing different methodologies, researchers can gather a more multifaceted understanding of the participants' perspectives. Alternatively, before delving into the psychogeographic exercise, future studies may consider ways of providing participants with relevant background information that contextualizes a consideration of geography in social work practice. This can include

briefing that discusses how physical environments influence community dynamics, social issues, and individual well-being. By establishing this context, participants may be more oriented to the psychogeographic outlook prior to the exercise and better understand the intended purpose, relevance, and value of the exercise in relation to their professional learning experiences. Engaging in reflective discussions and collaborative reflections with participants could help compensate for variabilities in their limited exposure to the geographic environments being studied when interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions from the reports made by the participants during a psychogeographic study.

Considerations of Researcher Positionality

Another potential critique is that the participant's responses may have been influenced by their having knowledge that I am also a social worker and graduate student at the same school of social work. Indeed, some of the participants shared with me during debriefs after the interviews that they had known me as a teaching assistant from a course that they had completed in the previous semester. Some participants also reported during the debriefs that they were aware that I am a social work field instructor affiliated with their school of social work. Participants' responses may be influenced by social desirability bias, where they provide answers that align with perceived expectations or motivations to be seen as more favourable (Nedorhof, 1985). Participants may present themselves in a positive light or offer responses that align with what they believe the researcher wants to hear. Critiques may arise regarding potential power dynamics, perceived expectations, or social desirability in the researcher-participant relationship.

These issues raise a reminder that critical social work research requires the researcher to reflect on and acknowledge positionality as a social worker in the research process to maintain transparency in reporting and discussing any potential biases or influence that may have arisen

due to having an identity as a social worker. Indeed, I designed this study to include myself as

the interviewer in order to demonstrate how the psychogeographic exercise could be conducted

as a pedagogical exercise; given that I also carry identities as a social worker and field instructor.

As the researcher, I made efforts to maintain a neutral stance and refrain from explicitly

expressing my own opinions and beliefs during the interviews or interactions with participants.

This effort was intended to help create an environment where participants would feel

comfortable sharing their genuine thoughts and experiences without feeling the need to align

with my perspective. I also designed the interview guide to be made up of open-ended questions

that were intended to allow for diverse interpretations and responses to help mitigate the

potential influence of my identity on participant responses. Future studies can consider

employing multiple data collection methods, such as independent co-researchers, and analysis of

alternate mediums that do not involve direct interviewing by a researcher, such as arts-based

approaches, to help strengthen the validity of the study's findings and mitigate the potential

influence of the researcher's identity, incorporate additional perspectives, and enhance the overall

robustness of psychogeographic research studies.

Considerations of Language

All the interviews were conducted in English, although at least three of the participants

were multi-lingual and identified that English was not their first language. A potential critique of

the interview data may include consideration that not speaking in their native language may have

influenced some participants' responses to the interview questions due to constraints of not being

able to fully articulate their reflections and experiences, which in turn may have impacted my

interpretation and analysis of their responses. I did clarify with all the participants that they were

able to communicate fluently in English, but I would also maintain that diversifying the

languages used in psychogeographic exercises would assist in diversifying the sample representations for these studies. Language is instrumental in the construction of narratives and stories about places. Future psychogeographic exercises may involve engaging with multiple languages and valuing diverse linguistic expressions, fostering inclusivity and recognizing the importance of linguistic diversity in shaping our experiences of place. Having multi-lingual interviewers in the psychogeographic exercises may provide opportunities for multi-lingual interviewees to explore for themselves how using different languages may influence their own articulations of reflections on place.

Language justice is a concept and practice that strives for equitable access to information, resources, and decision-making processes by ensuring linguistic inclusivity, respect for diverse languages, and the active participation of all language speakers in social, cultural, and political settings (Alcade, 2018). From a language justice perspective, invitation of multi-lingual representation would be more inclusive of non-English speakers' participation in the narratives of our social spaces. Inclusion of participants who speak different languages can be opportunities to share diverse insights into the meanings, stories, and perspectives associated with a place and would enhance the richness and complexity of the storytelling process. Multi-lingual psychogeographic approaches can involve artistic expressions such as performances, spoken word events, or visual representations that incorporate multiple languages. These creative practices could be opportunities to celebrate linguistic diversity, challenge linguistic hierarchies, and invite participants and audiences to engage with place in a multi-sensory and multi-lingual manner.

The opportunities for deeply exploring language in places represent a vast opportunity of its own dedicated field of research. Indeed, the act of naming places and features within the built

and natural environment is a form of language that affects our perception and attachment to those places (Cresswell, 2015). Some names hold historical significance, memorializing important events or periods in the past. For example, streets named after historical figures serve as reminders of historical knowledge to future generations, telling a narrative of the region's social identity and values. Public spaces, buildings, or neighborhoods named after prominent figures from different fields, such as artists, scientists, or activists, can embody the ideals and aspirations of a community. The choice of these names communicates a message about the values that the community cherishes and seeks to uphold. The visual presence of these names in human-developed environments becomes a constant reminder of their cultural, historical, or social meanings. Such visual representations can influence how people perceive and interact with these spaces on a daily basis, reinforcing the significance of these named places in their consciousness (Cresswell, 2015). Depending on the historical context, cultural associations, and societal values represented by the narratives that these names commemorate, their presence can have an effect of exalting or marginalizing people based on whose identities and whose citizenship is most present, or absent, in those narratives and values (Joseph, 2017; Thobani, 2007). As an extension of Adichie's (2009) statement that our lives and identities are composed of many overlapping stories, we can centre a deeper consideration and representation of how the places we occupy are also composed of overlapping stories. Psychogeographic studies may consider how linguistic landscapes and the narratives that they represent symbolize the power dynamics, cultural expressions, and contested meanings present in public spaces.

In an earlier discussion, I discussed how Bachelard (1958) presented an argument for how a viewpoint that embraces the poetics of space can deepen our own reflections on the meaning of the spaces. Bachelard primarily discusses the power of poetic language in capturing a

metaphorical meaning, which alludes to how poetic writing can assist with articulating experiences without the confines of conventional linguistic constraints. Further elaboration on the implications of how language is used to describe our experiences with reality could appeal to considerations of how language is constantly evolving and context dependent; shaped by the practical and social aspects of how language is used while also considering the limitations that are also set by those aspects (Wittgenstein, 1953). Poetry, as a form of artistic language, exemplifies these ideas. Poets use words not merely to convey literal meaning but also to evoke emotions, create imagery, and explore abstract concepts. The dynamic and imaginative use of language in poetry allows poets to express complex ideas and feelings beyond ordinary linguistic boundaries. Indeed, future psychogeographic research may be designed to more specifically encourage participant engagement in poetic or other experimental writing styles to convey the multisensory and emotional dimensions of place. By diversifying oral, written, and non-verbal mediums of expression, psychogeographic exercises may provide deeper and more creative opportunities for participants to connect with, understand, and share meanings of the places they explore.

Considerations of Sample size and Representativeness

Critiques may arise concerning the sample size and its representativeness. This study involved a small number of participants and a specific group of social worker students from the same cohort of field education. As such, there may be cohort factors that may limit the transferability of the findings. I endeavoured to present the interview data through richly detailed transcripts and long quotations in order to present the data samples in forms true to their original contexts. These efforts were cognisant in attempting to avoid overgeneralization and in efforts to preserve the integrity of the interview data so that they may be considered for future analysis in

the event that a meta-analysis or research program in psychogeographic studies were to emerge in social work research literature. This sample included only cis-identifying females, which calls for future studies to represent the perspectives of non-cis and non-female identifying participants. The cultural backgrounds of the participants were diverse, given that all the participants identified themselves as having distinct cultural and racial backgrounds from the other participants. However, the opportunity remains for underrepresented perspectives, such as people representing Black, Indigenous, and other non-White heritages, to be invited to future psychogeographic studies. All participants were able to walk without assistance for their mobility, although I had not specified in my recruitment that participants needed to be able to walk freely in order to participate. Future studies ought to include opportunities for participants of varying abilities and disabilities to be invited for inclusion in representation. In this study, I did not inquire about the participants' sexual orientations as a more suitably dedicated consideration of how the spectrum of these identities intersect with place was outside the scope of this study; however, I wish to name that the opportunities for inclusion of these populations ought to be considered for representation in future studies to better understand the interplay of intersectionality and experiences.

Intersectionality is a concept that acknowledges and examines the interconnected nature of various social identities and systems of oppression. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (see Crenshaw, 1991), intersectionality recognizes that people can experience multiple forms of discrimination and privilege based on their intersecting identities, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability. The core idea of intersectionality is that the social categories we belong to are not experienced in isolation; rather, they intersect and interact to shape our experiences and opportunities in complex ways (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality emphasizes the

importance of recognizing and addressing the unique experiences and vulnerabilities that result from these intersections of identity and calls for an inclusive and nuanced approach to social justice and advocacy - one that takes into account the multiple layers of privilege and marginalization that people may experience. Namely, an intersectionality lens in critical theory considers the ways in which systems of power, such as patriarchy, racism, and classism, interact and reinforce each other, leading to compounded forms of discrimination and oppression. A more explicit intersectionality lens can be more thoroughly investigated in future psychogeographic studies by implementing a more direct focus on designing opportunities for participants to share their experiences with places and landscapes based on their intersecting identities. Indeed, an intersectionality lens in psychogeography would assist in opening up more opportunities for inclusive and participatory research while also avoiding simplistic or essentialist generalizations about people's relationships with the environments being studied.

Summary

Overall, I argue that the themes that emerged from the interviews show that the psychogeographic exercise inspired a diverse range of reflections; including the impacts that places of placement environments had on the student participants' development of their existential identity and critical consciousness which were atypical of more conventional self-reflection exercises which are characteristic of critical social work pedagogy. I explored several areas of this study which warrant critique and consideration that can inform the development of a more diversified research program that could continue the main inquiries put forward by this study and be aligned with equity-seeking inclusion and representation. I dedicate further discussion in the following chapter regarding how future psychogeography-driven social work research can be applied in investigations of other critical social work issues and beyond.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL WORK

This chapter discusses the ways in which psychogeography can offer valuable insights for critical social work. I explore some suggestions of how psychogeography can be developed as a method of examining the relationship between physical spaces and human experiences, and how it can be applied to understand social infrastructures of how we construct ideas about social justice. I also discuss the limitations of critical social work conceptualizations of community and how psychogeographic studies can be utilized in research programs that aim to conduct place-based investigations that may offer insights into community experiences, citizenship, exaltation, and marginalization in relation to infrastructures associated with whiteness, neoliberalism, and colonialism. I extend these considerations towards larger emerging social problems that are not exclusive to the conventional boundaries of social work research and practice.

Psychogeography and Epistemic Justice

Epistemic justice is the idea that there are systemic and structural barriers that prevent certain individuals and groups from accessing and participating in knowledge production and dissemination (Johnstone, 2021). These barriers can include factors such as race, gender, class, and other forms of social identity, as well as cultural and historical factors. The relevance of epistemic justice to critical social work lies in the recognition that knowledge production and dissemination are central to social work practice, and that structural inequalities can create barriers to accessing and participating in knowledge production (Code, 2014; Johnstone, 2021; Lee et al., 2019;). Epistemic justice emphasizes the need to address these barriers by recognizing and addressing the ways in which social, cultural, and historical factors shape knowledge production and dissemination. In the context of critical social work, this means recognizing the importance of diverse perspectives and experiences in shaping knowledge, and challenging

dominant knowledge paradigms that reproduce social inequalities. This includes active efforts to seek opportunities for challenging the ways in which dominant knowledge paradigms can reinforce social hierarchies and recognizing the importance of diverse voices and perspectives in shaping knowledge and institutionalized practices (Gallop, 2013). By emphasizing the importance of epistemic justice, critical social work can also promote more participatory and collaborative approaches to knowledge production. This means honouring the autonomy of service users and other marginalized groups in creating spaces for their voices to be heard in knowledge production and dissemination.

Psychogeography has significant implications for epistemology; particularly nonjustificationist epistemology that views knowledge as not certain and is concerned with subjective aspects of experience and knowledge construction (Gambrill, 2006). By focusing on the experiential and emotional dimensions of physical environments, this positioning challenges traditional liberal epistemological views that knowledge can be objective and neutral, and instead suggests that knowledge is always shaped by our personal and cultural perspectives (Gambrill, 2006; Phillips, 2007). Psychogeography can be connected to the concept of epistemic justice by emphasizing the embodied and situated nature of knowledge from a place-oriented perspective shaped by our personal and cultural perspectives in places. This is important because personal experiences can be shaped by social and cultural factors and can also be influenced by systemic inequalities that shape our access to participation and citizenship in social spaces. By recognizing the importance of personal experiences in knowledge production, we can adapt future exercises in psychogeography to invite dialogues that address the ways in which social infrastructures can create barriers to epistemic justice.

Psychogeography and Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure refers to the physical and social spaces, systems, and networks that enable the functioning of society (Hall, 2020). Social infrastructure is relevant to critical social work because it plays a critical role in shaping social inequalities, the distribution of resources and power, systems of thought, and knowledge production that shape our understanding of social problems and solutions (Berlant, 2016; Wakefield, 2018; Wilson, 2015). For example, dominant paradigms of knowledge production, such as positivism (Phillips, 2007) or neoliberalism (Berlant, 2016; Wakefield, 2018), can shape how we understand social problems, what solutions we consider, and what values we prioritize. Cultural narratives and representations, such as media representations, can shape public perceptions and attitudes towards critical social issues based on what information is available to for public access and what information is kept restricted (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). Historical legacies of oppression and discrimination shape our understanding of social problems and who is considered worthy of receiving support and resources. In the context of critical social work, understanding social infrastructures is crucial because it enables us to recognize the ways in which paradigms of knowledge production and cultural narratives can reinforce social inequalities and exclude marginalized perspectives and experiences. That is, dominant forms of knowledge production often prioritize and exalt the perspectives and experiences of privileged groups while excluding the perspectives and experiences of marginalized communities (Joseph, 2017; Thobani, 2007). Examinations of social infrastructures as being related to epistemology, being, ideas of citizenship, and social norms are relevant to critical social work because they play a symbolic and critical role in shaping social inequalities and the distribution of power and resources.

Psychogeography can be a useful approach for studying the relationships between physical and social infrastructures of places. By exploring the subjective experiences of individuals as they navigate social environments, psychogeography can be an exercise of examining how social, cultural, and historical factors shape our relationship with physical spaces while also exposing how particular ideas and narratives of history and social order are more represented than others in public spaces (Berlant, 2016). This approach enables us to recognize how physical infrastructures are not only shaped by technical and material factors, but also by social and cultural factors, such as power relations, histories of exclusion, and dominant narratives (Joseph, 2017; Thobani 2007). Psychogeography can also be used to challenge dominant power structures and promote social change by exposing how physical infrastructures can be designed to reinforce inequalities and marginalize certain groups. For example, one of the participants shared their observations of how certain urban designs may prioritize the needs of able-bodied individuals while disregarding the needs of those with disabilities, or some infrastructures may restrict the mobility of certain groups based on socioeconomic status or race. Future studies in psychogeography can be directed towards a specific investigation of social spaces and the social infrastructures that they represent as part of an ongoing commitment to developing more accessible communities.

Psychogeography and Community Development

In critical social work, community is often conceptualized as a complex, dynamic, and multifaceted concept that is shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors (Burkett, 2001). Community is not simply a physical location or a group of individuals who share a common identity or geographic region, but rather a social structure that shapes the relationships between individuals and groups within a particular context (Burkett, 2001). Critical social work

recognizes that communities are not homogenous, but rather are characterized by diversity and difference, including differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and other factors. As such, critical social work emphasizes the importance of understanding the unique needs and experiences of different communities, and of engaging in culturally sensitive and responsive practice. Indeed, predetermined fixed ideas of communities have historically been imposed as a discursive technique for subjugation of target peoples in colonizing agendas (Joseph, 2017; Said, 1978). Furthermore, critical social work recognizes that communities are shaped by power relations, historical legacies of oppression, and ongoing struggles for social justice (McGrath et al., 1999). Community development in critical social work is therefore focused on building capacity and empowering communities to challenge dominant power structures, and to work towards social change.

Critical social work aims to elaborate our conversations about community to recognize and respond to difference that is inclusive and equitable. Seeking and including marginalized narratives in discourse is key to directing action that opposes systems of domination and violence. Our ability to do so will continue to be doomed to fail when these discourses obscure the historical and structural contexts which provide insight into how systemic exclusion and marginalization emerged and continue to be maintained. In community work, social workers who do not consider their own potential for complicity with colonial-capitalist infrastructures are themselves at risk of reinforcing the status quo of epistemic privilege (Janes, 2016; McGrath et al., 1999). Janes (2016) cautions that we can identify specific techniques such as differentiation, subjugation, and assimilation which are characteristic of colonial-capitalist infrastructures in the practices of community-based participatory research which claims authenticity and voice in order to promote researchers' agendas rather than community knowledge. These observations

raise troubling cautions that social work rhetoric emphasizing on diversity and difference can sometimes lead to essentializing and stereotyping of communities, which can reinforce existing power structures and limit opportunities for solidarity and coalition-building across different groups. Focus on empowerment and community development in social work can also be narrowly focused on individual-level interventions and overlook the structural factors that shape community experiences and opportunities (Roberts, 2008). For example, interventions that focus on building individual skills and capacities may overlook the impact of broader economic, political, and social factors that contribute to poverty, inequality, and marginalization.

Psychogeographic exercises with these considerations can offer opportunities community-led initiatives and conversations for addressing the limitations of social work with communities. A place-based approach to understanding the complexity of community experiences must emphasize value for respect and integrity of the perspectives being shared by the community, rather than a disproportionate representation of academic researchers' perspectives. By exploring the subjective experiences of community members as they navigate community environments, psychogeographic exercises can be shared reflection experiences with community members. For example, future psychogeographic studies can examine the ways in which physical infrastructures and urban design shape the experiences of different communities, such as the ways in which certain neighborhoods or public spaces may be more accessible or welcoming to particular groups in communities, while excluding or marginalizing others.

Critical ethnography may also be applied in conjunction with psychogeographic exercises to bring focus on the detailed observation and description of social groups or cultures (see Jordan & Yeomans, 1995; Madison, 2011). Ethnography is well suited for investigations seeking to understand the cultural practices, beliefs, social interactions, and behaviors within a specific

community or society (see Goodall Jr., 2000; Madison, 2011). Indeed, I had considered ethnography as a method framework for this study; however, the ethnography work I am interested in typically involves prolonged fieldwork and participant observation where researchers immerse themselves in the cultural context they study (Madison, 2011). Future studies could be developed to include ethnographic efforts to observe and interact with individuals or groups over an extended period, take field notes, conduct interviews, collecting artifacts, and document cultural practices. These efforts would certainly be in alignment with developing a holistic understanding of community spaces. This scope of this study was focussed on using psychogeographic exercises as an opportunity for in-depth interviews, open-ended questioning, and reflective analysis to delve into student participants' subjective experiences; which is why I deemed an appeal to phenomenological frameworks to be more appropriate to the context of this study.

As previously discussed, phenomenological approaches would remain useful to these investigations as well for capturing how individual people interpret and make sense of their lived experiences and how they encounter the phenomena in community spaces. Phenomenologies of whiteness, neoliberalism, and colonialism could be developed in community literature that aims to critically examine how their associated ideologies lead to the marginalization and exclusion of particular groups within communities (Ahmed, 2007; Roberts, 2008); and through examination yield new ways of interrupting those mechanisms of exclusion through re-envisioned community spaces that promote inclusion, social cohesion, care, and wellbeing.

Psychogeography and Psychotherapy

Psychogeography can be further explored for its applications in clinical social work settings. Indeed, some emerging work is already developing the incorporation of

psychogeography in psychotherapy and promotion of well-being (See Chrześcijańska, 2020; Rose, 2019; Poole, Scott, & Marichalar-Freixa, 2020). By incorporating psychogeographic exercises into therapy, clinicians can deepen their understanding of clients' experiences, explore the influence of their physical and social environments, and facilitate transformative healing processes. As a psychotherapist, I have already explored the inclusion of psychogeographic walks in my own practice and have observed interesting results in the unique dynamics of conducting therapy with some of my clients outside of my clinic office. In therapy, we often engage clients in discussions about their lived environments, paying attention to the spaces that evoke certain emotions or trigger specific memories. In psychoanalysis, free association is a technique used to explore unconscious thoughts and feelings (see Lothane, 2018). Similarly, in psychogeography, wandering through spaces can bring to the surface subconscious associations with certain places. Walking with clients and conducting a free association-like exercise may assist with developing the client's insight into their emotional connections to particular environments and the memories they evoke; as well as offer an alternate environment for a therapeutic clinic (Schen, 2020). Psychogeographic exercises, such as walking practices, mapmaking, and other arts-based approaches, can be adapted in therapy to help clients represent and explore their emotional landscapes. Therapists can invite clients to create maps or other artistic representations that visually and physically represent their inner emotional terrain, connecting specific emotions or experiences to physical places. This process may be healing to clients who are able to gain a tangible perspective on their emotional states through such exercises and may provide fresh starting points for deeper exploration and reflection in their therapeutic process. In therapy, clients often navigate transitions and thresholds within their lives, such as moving, changing jobs, or transitioning between relationships which often

prompted them to acknowledge experiences of depression and anxiety that brought them to the therapeutic space. Therapists can utilize psychogeographic concepts to assist their clients in exploring the emotional and existential significance of these transitions, offering support and guidance in navigating the uncertainty and challenges associated with crossing these thresholds.

Psychoanalytic therapy strives for a deep exploration of the unconscious mind and underlying psychological processes and takes a holistic view of the individual, considering various aspects of their life, childhood experiences, and relationships (see Safran & Hunter, 2020; Stolorow, 2012; Yakeley, 2018). This approach has continued to resonate with patients seeking a deeper understanding of themselves within a broader creative context and has some alignment with phenomenological approaches that I previously discussed. In Jung's (1951) *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, he wrote of a "phenomenology of the self" that refers to his exploration of the nature and structure of the self as experienced and perceived by the individual. In Jungian psychology, the self represents the center and totality of the psyche. The self is an archetype of wholeness and integration, encompassing both conscious and unconscious aspects of the individual. The self is not simply the ego or the conscious self, but a larger and more encompassing entity that includes the entire range of human experiences, feelings, and potentials. Jung's concept of phenomenology of the self involves studying how individuals experience and become aware of this central and unifying aspect of the psyche through direct subjective experiences and examining the ways in which individuals perceive, interpret, and relate to their inner and outer worlds. One of the primary aims in a Jungian approach to psychotherapy is to assist patients with their process of individuation, which is the journey towards self-discovery and self-realization. The individuation process involves a conscious integration of the self, which leads to greater self-awareness, personal growth, and a

sense of wholeness. Jungian therapists assist their patients with exercises that examine the various ways in which the self is manifested and expressed in dreams, myths, symbols, and other forms of individual and collective experiences. The external environment, including specific places and landscapes, can play a role in this process, as it offers opportunities for the individual to encounter and integrate different aspects of their psyche. By exploring the meaning of specific places, landscapes, and environments through a psychogeographic exercise in conjunction with psychoanalytic exercise, patients who are interested in a psychoanalytic approach in their therapy can be engaged in a deeper analysis of their inner world and unconscious processes, as well as an engagement in consideration for how physical environments evoke or impact their emotions, behaviours, and memories in their journey towards self-discovery and wholeness.

I have previously alluded to the possibilities for including mindfulness as part of a psychogeographic exercise. Mindfulness is increasingly gaining recognition for its benefits in mental health treatments (see Hofmann et al., 2010; Khoury et al., 2013; Shapiro & Carson, 2009)) As a therapist trained in dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), I have already experimented with combining walking exercises with mindfulness and grounding techniques that encourage my patients to tune into their sensory experiences within a particular place or moment. Mindfulness exercises, as well as exercise, are key coping skills that are part of DBT (see Linehan, 2014). By fostering present-moment awareness and encouraging clients to engage mindfully with their surroundings, therapists can help clients develop a deeper connection between their bodies, emotions, and environments (Hoff & Phillips, 2019). Psychogeography offers a lens through which clients can reclaim and transform their relationship with spaces that hold negative or traumatic associations. Therapists can support clients in reframing their narratives around these spaces, helping them find new meanings, reclaim a sense of agency, and

develop strategies for coping or healing within these environments. Through this process, clients can develop a sense of empowerment and resilience in navigating their surroundings. By recognizing the influence of place on emotional well-being, navigating transitions, utilizing mindfulness practices, and facilitating the transformation of spaces, clinicians can enhance their therapeutic approaches and support clients in their healing journeys and their capacities to cope with challenging times.

Psychogeography in the Time of COVID-19

As mentioned in the introduction, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on psychological perceptions of place, reshaping our experiences and understanding of the environments we live in. The pandemic introduced new challenges, restrictions, and anxieties that have fundamentally altered how we perceive and engage with our surroundings. The pandemic heightened concerns about safety and threat in our physical spaces and this shift in perception led people to reassess their level of comfort and security within various environments, leading to cautious behaviors and changes in routines. With lockdowns and stay-at-home measures, the home environment also took upon new meanings. Home became not just a place of shelter and rest but also a multifunctional space for work, education, recreation, and social connection through virtual platforms. The perception of home expanded to accommodate these additional roles, and people had to adapt their psychological relationship with their spaces accordingly. The pandemic also disrupted our opportunities to freely connect with and form emotional attachments to places and people as we once had. Travel restrictions, social distancing, and limited mobility resulted in a sense of disconnection from our familiar spaces, communities, support networks, and perhaps even our homelands. This altered perception of place led to feelings of isolation, longing, and a yearning for a return to the pre-pandemic connectedness. The

pandemic also sparked discussions about the importance of equitable access to public spaces and the need for adaptable urban planning. As physical interactions became restricted, virtual spaces and digital platforms became essential for communication, work, and socializing. The perception of place expanded to include virtual meetings, online events, and digital communities taking on a new significance. The blurring of physical and virtual spaces altered our sense of presence and the boundaries between different environments. It is likely that these changes have significantly influenced how we navigate, relate to, and find meaning in our environments, and they are likely to have a lasting impact on our psychological perceptions of place; especially on children who grew through crucial development stages during the pandemic. Even as the pandemic has subsided at the time of this writing, it remains uncertain for how long and in what ways the impacts of the pandemic will continue to affect us. Future psychogeographic studies could investigate how these lasting impacts continue to shape how people relate and connect with places. This research would also lead into some interesting implications about the increasing relations and connections that people are having with virtual spaces.

Psychogeography as an Antidote to Environmental Apathy in a Changing Climate

While the pandemic has presented immediate and acute challenges, climate change poses long-term and wide-ranging consequences for our relationship with the environment. Similar to the pandemic, climate change has generated feelings of safety concerns and threats to physical spaces. The increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, can create a sense of vulnerability and anxiety about the safety of our surroundings. Rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and increased risks of natural disasters threaten to disrupt the stability and permanence usually associated with the places we call home. These changes will lead to human displacement, forced relocation, and a sense of loss and

disconnection from familiar places; similar, but more drastic, than the disruptions we experienced during the pandemic. This upheaval will lead to widespread social emergencies and profound senses of loss, disorientation, and trauma as people and their communities become uprooted from their homes and familiar environments; which in turn will result in immense interruption to social cohesion.

The psychological impacts of displacement, including the loss of social networks, cultural heritage, and a sense of belonging, will be long-lasting and deeply challenging. Eco-anxiety refers to the anxiety and distress caused by the perceived or anticipated ecological crisis, while eco-grief encompasses feelings of sadness, guilt, and despair related to environmental loss (Pihkala, 2022). These psychological states can profoundly impact our relationship with place, as they evoke a sense of powerlessness and existential questioning about our role and impact on the environment. Climate change is also anticipated to disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalized communities, exacerbating existing social inequalities. This will lead to heightened feelings of injustice, anger, and frustration among affected populations. The unequal distribution of climate impacts and resources can further erode the sense of place-based identity, belonging, and agency for marginalized groups, deepening their psychological challenges and exacerbating social disparities. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, we may proactively develop strategies to foster resilience, promote adaptive coping mechanisms, and facilitate a deeper connection with the changing natural and built environments. It is crucial to consider the psychological impacts of climate change alongside the scientific and policy dimensions to ensure holistic responses to this complex global issue.

The absence of climate change themes in the interviews from this study, despite the presence of smoke warnings from nearby wildfires and record-breaking high temperatures at the

time that these interviews were conducted, raises some unsettling considerations and implications. The participants' attention may have been primarily directed towards their social work practice and community dynamics because climate change might not have been a prominent aspect of their professional or personal frame of reference at the time of the study. Climate change, despite its relevance and impact on the environment, may not have been a salient aspect that they consciously noted or connected with during their experiences. The participants' preconceived notions or expectations of what constitutes relevant data for the study could have also played a role. Participants may have held views that climate change issues were unrelated to their social work practice, and therefore they may have overlooked or not considered these issues noteworthy enough to comment on during the interviews. The absence of climate change themes in the interviews suggests a potential gap in the participants' awareness or prioritization of environmental issues. It highlights the need for raising awareness and integrating environmental concerns, such as climate change, into social work practice. The findings present an opportunity for incorporating climate change education and training within social work programs and a potential area for future psychogeographic research. This research can contribute to the development of frameworks, guidelines, and interventions that address the complex interactions between social and environmental issues.

Social apathy towards our sense of place is a pressing concern for social workers. Apathy towards our sense of place refers to a lack of awareness, connection, and engagement with the environments in which we live and the social, cultural, and ecological dynamics that shape them. This apathy can be seen in the disregard for the impacts of climate change, the loss of cultural and historical heritage, the erosion of social cohesion, and the neglect of marginalized communities. Apathy towards environmental activism may be a primary underpinning collective

consciousness that may provide some explanation for making sense of the disproportionate lack of collective action on this emerging threat. This lack of collective action continues to hinder progress in mitigating climate change and will exacerbate the acceleration of its effects. When there is a lack of public demand for environmental action, public leaders and political agendas are enabled to prioritize other issues over climate change and sustainability. Climate change impacts, such as extreme weather events, food and water scarcity, and displacement, will affect vulnerable populations the most. Indeed, apathy and the comfort of ignorance, so aptly described by one of the participants from this study, perpetuates social inequalities as those with the least resources and political power are more likely to bear the brunt of climate change consequences. This will lead to social unrest, displacement, and exacerbation of existing social disparities. Environmental activism is crucial for combating climate change and fostering social cohesion. The urgency of climate change threats calls for raising awareness, promoting education, and inspiring collective action at both individual and systemic levels. I am hopeful that participatory activities such as those involved in psychogeography can provide valuable experiences for understanding and addressing apathy towards our sense of place. By encouraging individuals to actively engage with and critically reflect on their environments, social workers can promote a sense of agency and inspire transformative action towards environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and social cohesion.

Psychogeography and Spirituality

My conception of psychogeography as an examination of our values, meaning, purpose, and existentialism has some rooting in my views towards spirituality that could be explored further in future studies. I discussed in an earlier discussion of Indigenous concept of place that Indigenous spirituality of land is deeply rooted in the belief that the natural world is sacred and

interconnected with all living beings (Deloria Jr., 2003). For Indigenous communities, the land is

a spiritual entity, a source of sustenance, identity, and cultural heritage (Deloria Jr., 2003;

1991a). The relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land is one of reciprocity, respect,

and reverence, shaped by centuries of ancestral wisdom and ecological harmony. Honouring

Indigenous ideas of responsible land stewardship into our reflections of place provides an

essential message in our present global confrontation with the threats of climate change.

Considering spirituality more explicitly in psychogeography would open up additional

dimensions to the exploration of places, the human experience, and the transcendent. Spirituality

refers to a deeply personal and subjective aspect of human existence that involves seeking

meaning, purpose, and connection to something greater than oneself. Indeed, at least one of the

participants made connections between their spiritual beliefs by explicitly referring to how the

places we walked through had reminded her of her spiritual community and her ideas of religious

purpose. Indeed, the conception of this project was partially inspired by my research supervisor's

own emerging research interests in religious sites, religious monuments, and places where rituals

are performed. All human cultures have recognized and dedicated immense creative and artistic

efforts to preserve or construct spaces that evoke spiritual feelings of awe, reverence, or

transcendence, and their exploration can provide insights into the ways in which spirituality and

place intersect. Spirituality often involves practices of mindfulness, meditation, or

contemplation. Mindfulness practices are an ancient, but have only been more recently

recognized through empirical studies to have numerous physical, mental, and spiritual health

benefits (see Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In psychogeography, researchers may encourage participants to

engage in mindful walking or other contemplative activities to deepen their connection to the

environment and facilitate a heightened awareness of their inner experiences in relation to place (Hoff & Phillips, 2019).

Walking meditation practices have a rich and diverse history in various cultures, dating back thousands of years. The tradition of walking meditation can be traced to different regions of the world, each incorporating unique spiritual and contemplative elements. In Buddhism, walking meditation is known as "kinhin" or "cankama" (see Riggs, 2008) and is an integral part of mindfulness practices, especially in Zen and Theravada traditions. In kinhin, practitioners walk slowly and mindfully in a straight line, focusing on the sensation of each step and coordinating it with their breath. The practice aims to foster a deep sense of inner peace, concentration, and self-awareness. In Daoism, walking meditation is called "Dao Yin" or "Daoist contemplative walking" (see Chen at al., 2019). This practice combines physical movement with meditation and breathwork to balance and harmonize the flow of "qi" - life force energy - in the body. Dao Yin involves slow, deliberate movements while maintaining a meditative state of mind, encouraging practitioners to cultivate vitality and inner balance. In Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, walking meditation is referred to as "sama" or "sufi whirling" (see Mirdal, 2012). This practice involves walking in a circular pattern, often accompanied by music or chanting, as a form of devotion and surrender to the divine. The circular motion symbolizes the unity and continuity of existence, and the practice is considered a way to transcend the material world and attain spiritual enlightenment. In Shugendo, a Japanese mountain ascetic tradition, walking practices called "shugyo" are central to the path of spiritual training (see Koshikidake, Honshu, & Faulks, 2015). These practices involve walking in nature, engaging in ascetic rituals, and seeking enlightenment through communion with sacred landscapes. In Shinto, traditional walking pilgrimage routes, such as the Kumano Kodo and the Shikoku Pilgrimage, offer

opportunities for spiritual reflection and connection with sacred sites and deities (see Kato, 2017).

Throughout history, walking meditation practices have served as transformative and contemplative tools for seeking spiritual growth, inner peace, and connection with the sacred. These practices continue to be valued and embraced in their respective cultural contexts, demonstrating the enduring significance of walking as a pathway to self-awareness, healing, and spiritual awakening. The concept of pilgrimage and journeying to specific destinations is an ancient practice that represents the epitome of human understanding of the motives, rituals, transformative aspects, and benefits of walking on foot with an intention for connection with a transcendent sense of being (Coleman, 2021). Throughout this discussion of psychogeography, I have emphasized the potential of its exercise as an embodied reflection of the invisible impacts of the places in our world around us which transcends what can be captured in describing merely their physical aesthetic features. In alignment with ancient spiritual practices that already exist and seek to do so, psychogeographic researchers may examine the symbolic and spiritual significance of sacred places, thus bringing more representation of the diversity of spiritual beliefs and cosmological understandings that have influenced the creation of sacred spaces in a contemporary context beyond traditional religious boundaries.

Nature is often regarded as a space where we can experience a sense of awe and spiritual connectedness. Psychogeographers may expand their primary concerns in exploring urban spaces to explore how encounters with natural landscapes influence people's spiritual experiences and beliefs, foster a deeper sense of interconnectedness, and contribute to their overall well-being. Indeed, Indigenous cultures have long recognized natural sites such as mountains, rivers, lakes, or other distinctive geographical features as sacred sites that hold immense spiritual significance;

enough significance that these geographical features are often the basis for names given to these places by Indigenous peoples (Abram, 1996; Deloria Jr., 2003). Indeed, the land is often considered a teacher and a source of wisdom to be treated and lived in with the deepest reverence and practices of harmonious co-existence. Again, I appeal to Indigenous wisdom for the concept of land-based healing which describes practices of nurturing our connections with land in order to address physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Thin places, also known as thin spaces, is a term used to describe locations where the boundary between the physical world and the spiritual or transcendent realm feels unusually permeable (see Dean, 2015). In these places, there is a sense of heightened spiritual energy or connection, where people have described experiencing a profound feeling of closeness to the divine or the sacred. Thin places are often associated with a deep sense of peace, awe, and spiritual presence, and they are believed to offer opportunities for contemplation, healing, and spiritual transformation. These locations can vary and may include natural landscapes, sacred sites, places of pilgrimage, temples, churches, or any space where people feel a strong sense of spiritual resonance and connection with the beyond. Thin places are found in different cultures and spiritual traditions, each imbuing them with unique meanings and significance. Future psychogeographic studies can explore the spiritual aspects of spending time in such places and the ways in which they can facilitate healing and connection to the self, community, and the transcendent.

The emerging research on the therapeutic use of psychedelics may also provide interesting future avenues for studies concerned with alternative approaches to holistic spiritual healing (see Letheby, 2021; Marks & Cohen, 2021; Penn et al., 2021; Pollan, 2018). Psychedelics, such as psilocybin and ayahuasca, have been used for centuries in various

Indigenous and spiritual practices to induce altered states of consciousness and access experiences described as higher levels of awareness for the purposes of exploring the interconnectedness between the physical and the spiritual realms. Indeed, users of psychedelics often report experiencing a heightened perception of nature's beauty and revelation of hidden meanings and symbolism within their surroundings (see Humphries & Vayne, 2018; Huxley, 1963). However, it is essential to acknowledge that the use of psychedelics in this context carries significant ethical and safety considerations. Psychedelic experiences can be powerful and potentially overwhelming, requiring a supportive and controlled environment for the individual's well-being (Phelps, 2017); a role which shamans used to perform in the ritual ceremonies that involved the consumption of psychedelics for spiritual purposes. Furthermore, the cultural and historical context of traditional psychedelic use, particularly in Indigenous practices, must be respected to avoid cultural appropriation or misinterpretation of sacred rituals (Celidewen et al., 2022). In a psychogeographic context that emphasizes spiritual connection, the responsible and intentional use of psychedelics may serve as a catalyst for transformative experiences and deepened spiritual awareness to inspire a renewed sense of reverence for the natural world and a recognition of the sacredness inherent in the places we inhabit. Nonetheless, this approach would require thoughtful consideration, ethical sensitivity, and a commitment to understanding the cultural, historical, and individual contexts in which psychedelic experiences occur.

Summary

Psychogeographic exercises in social work research and pedagogy may be an opportunity for incorporating considerations of our sense of place and addressing the consequences of apathy towards the protection of places and their communities. This thesis argues that social work pedagogy can incorporate psychogeography as an experiential and reflective learning approach

that encourage students to actively engage with their sense of place. Field placements, community-based learning projects, and outdoor experiential activities can provide opportunities for students to connect with their environment, critically reflect on their relationship to place, and apply ecological perspectives to their social work practice. By integrating these considerations of sense of place into social work research and pedagogy, we can enhance the profession's understanding, practice, and impact in relation to environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and social justice through interdisciplinary collaboration. Collaborating with experts from fields such as geography, environmental studies, psychology, and sociology can provide valuable insights and perspectives, enriching social work's understanding of the complex dynamics between individuals, communities, and their environments. Critical social work research and pedagogy calls for initiatives in education that will foster critical consciousness around the impact of apathy towards our sense of place by engaging students and researchers in critical discussions, challenging hegemonic narratives, and promoting self-reflection towards a deeper understanding of the connections between place, power, privilege, and social inequities. Aspirations to develop critical consciousness through experiential education are the basis of critical social workers' responsibility to engage in transformative practices and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting social and environmental justice.

By involving communities in research, education, and action projects, social work can empower individuals and communities to reclaim and shape their environments. This engagement can include participatory approaches, cultural preservation initiatives, and community-based environmental interventions that address local needs and promote a sense of ownership and belonging. Ethical considerations related to sense of place in community building would include recognizing and respecting Indigenous knowledge and land rights, acknowledging

the impacts of colonization and displacement, and promoting cultural humility in working with diverse communities. Ethical considerations also involve advocating for environmental justice, challenging policies and practices that contribute to environmental degradation and social inequities, and promoting sustainable and equitable approaches to community development. I am hopeful that these integrations can be explored through further research and practice in efforts to empower social work practitioners, educators, and students to effectively address the overwhelming culture of environmental apathy, promote transformative change, and advocate for inclusive, sustainable, and just environments.

CONCLUSION

In our current times, the importance of inclusive communities cannot be overstated. The positioning of my arguments in this thesis aimed to centre a principle that we all have opportunities, and indeed a shared responsibility, in creating inclusive community spaces that embrace diversity in all its forms. Such spaces would be guided by envisioning cultural environments where people feel valued, heard, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. My research scope was primarily focused on how spaces of social work and education could be envisioned to reflect these values; but has also alluded through the broader discussions on the importance for all disciplines to consider how their spaces can embody values of inclusivity and maximize their nurturing of the strengths that people can offer through social participation. These values are guided by a belief that inclusivity cultivates a vital sense of belonging and social connectedness, which, in turn, enriches mental well-being and promotes a stronger spirit of purpose, cooperation, and collaboration. Indeed, critical social work ethics are supposed to guide us to actively dismantle barriers that people may experience in accessing care, ensuring that everyone has equitable opportunities to participate, thrive, and contribute to the betterment of society. By fostering inclusive communities, we can forge a path towards a more compassionate, understanding, and united world where people can come together to address shared challenges and create a more equitable and just future for all.

My research is based on an argument that psychogeography can provide critical social workers with a valuable lens and method for understanding the ways in which power relations are embedded within physical spaces and contribute to experiences of exclusion and marginalization; as well as how social environments that represent inclusivity can be replicated and re-envisioned. By offering a more nuanced understanding of the diversity and differences

within and across social spaces in our communities, psychogeography can also empower the communities that inhabit them. By recognizing and challenging the ways in which cultural values and ideologies shape our environments, critical social workers can promote social justice activism that advocates for a more just, equitable, and caring society.

In this exploration, I appealed to multiple disciplines to weave together threads from geography, psychology, sociology, philosophy, art, and spirituality. Through the lens of psychogeography, I endeavored to explore the profound interconnections between our personal and cultural histories of belonging and displacement, of power and resistance, and of joy and sorrow that reside within the overlooked places of our everyday lives. This thesis aspired to be an inquiry that transcended the traditional confines of academic disciplines, beckoning us all to engage with place not as distant neutral observers but as active participants in the ongoing narrative of our shared humanity with the rigorous thoughtfulness of the philosopher, the abstract sensitivity of the artist, and the awe-inspired reverence of the pious. At the conclusion of this writing, I cordially invite you, the reader, to embark on your own journey of exploration - to immerse yourself in the richness and complexity of the places that embody personal sentiments, cultural identities and resilience, and perhaps even interconnectedness with the divine - and rediscover the ways in which places shape the meaning of our lives. For within the folds of the familiar, the mundane, and the overlooked, lie stories waiting to unfold and be told of our shared human experience.

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APPENDIX I - DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please provide the following demographic information. Answering any of these questions is optional. This information is being collected in order to better understand your social location.

1. What is your age (in years)?

2. How would you describe your gender identity?

3. How would you describe your racial background?

4. What is your native (first) language?

5. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?

6. What year of study are you in for your social work program?

APPENDIX II - INTERVIEW GUIDE

A reminder, you can skip questions if you don't want to answer them, you can end at any time, and up to one month after being interviewed you can change your mind, just reach out to me using the contact information I gave you, and I will delete your interview.

1. Is this your first or second field placement?

2. Do you live in this region? If yes, for long have you lived in this region?

3. Are there places in this area that had any significance to you prior to starting your placement here?

4. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of this place now?

5. What does this place make you think about?

6. What were some of the things you first noticed about your placement office/site?

   - When you first walked in?

   - What stood out to you?

   - Why did that stand out to you?

   - What did that make you think/feel

   - If that thing could talk, what would it be saying to you?

   - Might it be saying something different to a client

   - Places don't literally talk but what features of that thing suggests to you that this

      is what it might be saying?

7. Are there any surrounding sites which are significant to you?

   - Can you tell me about a memory in that/those places?

8. Are there any places that make you feel differently now, than they did before your

   placement?

   - Can you share a memory of that place?

9. Is there a place that symbolizes your experiences as a student here? What are the features of the place that stand out to you?

10. Is there anything about this place that you now notice that you did not notice before this interview?

11. How would you describe the community/communities that are located in this area?

12. If you were trying to describe the geography of this place to someone who was unfamiliar with the area, how would you describe it?

    ▪ Are there any landmarks you would identify?

    ▪ Are there any culturally significant places that you think of when you think of this area?

13. If you were to imagine the geographical boundaries of this area, are there any 'borders' that set apart this area from others?

    ▪ Are the boundaries geographically distinguishable? How so?

    ▪ Are the boundaries distinguishable in any other way? How so?

14. Is there anything else you would like to say?