"There are those who globalize, and then those who are globalized": Canadian accounts of globalization"

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Introduction

Peoples' experiences are deeply embedded in complex social systems structured by historic and contemporary power relations. These power relations are variously understood in terms of class, gender and ethno-culture, and by reference to geography, sexual orientation and social exclusion amongst other forms of social stratification. Drawing from Giddens' work on contemporary capitalism and structuration (1984), and Sen's work on the capabilities approach (1999), socially structured power relations can be seen as conditioning (or enabling) and constraining peoples' capacity to live a healthy life. In recent decades one of the more important forces shaping these power relations has been globalization, which can be defined as "increasing interconnections between peoples, economies, cultures, governments, environments and other various networks at the global level" (Brown and Labonté, 2011).

In this paper we explore what 'globalization' meant to a number of Canadian families, how they saw it affecting opportunities for and fairness to people, or changing how they thought about themselves and the world, and how it affected government policies and programs. Our in-depth qualitative study, which was part of a larger research program on globalization's impacts on the health of Canadians (2006-2012), comprised interviews with 147 Canadian low-income families with young children living in relatively deprived neighbourhoods in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, Canada's three largest cities. Our focus was on immigrant families, immigration being one of globalization's defining features.

While there is an emerging international literature on lay perceptions of globalization (e.g. Yang et al, 2011; Chui et al, 2011), little is known in Canada about the attitudes of marginalized families towards globalization and how they believe it affects their lives. Existing studies tend to be driven by quantitative methodologies often using large surveys (e.g. Mendelsohn, Wolfe, and Parkin, 2002), and most studies provide little insight into how those (at the margins) most strongly affected by globalization processes are experiencing its effects and assessing its desirability. Our findings suggest that peoples' perceptions of globalization are well captured with a critical political economy lens that allows for the dialectical and variegated qualities of globalization as comprising both enabling and constraining conditions. This is not surprising since most families interviewed were immigrants who have benefited from the increased movement of people afforded by globalization processes, while also struggling to establish

themselves as new workers in an economic environment that is increasingly characterized by precarious forms of employment and welfare state retrenchment.

The article starts by outlining the contextual and theoretical background to our analysis, before describing the qualitative methods used in the study. We then present the empirical findings of how marginalized Canadians perceive globalization organized into five main categories: the compression of time and space; economic opportunities and challenges; fairness and a healthy environment; living across global spaces; and governments in a globalizing world. The discussion section connects our empirical findings to the existing literature on lay perceptions of globalization, before concluding with some reflections about the importance of inter-subjective understandings as the ideational glue that gives globalization meaning and traction.

Context and Theoretical Background

While globalization has been subject to extensive theorization, three widely used and broadly defined conceptualizations of globalization have become popular. The *globalist* approach views globalization as a progressive process that erodes economic barriers between nations and reduces the sovereign weight of nation-states. The *sceptic* approach largely agrees with the globalist assessments of what is happening (i.e. trade and investment liberalization, growth in size and breadth of transnational corporations, and the rise of global production chains and increased labour mobility) but sees these processes as largely negative for human well-being. The *transformation* approach, closest to our own conceptualization of globalization, regards globalization as simultaneously embodying positive and negative characteristics, while ineluctably "restructuring the ways in which we live … in a very profound manner" (Giddens, 2002). Understanding how this restructuring is affecting people's lives requires qualitative methods that can probe for globalization's variegated and dialectical effects.

Much of the recent research on lay perceptions of globalization has relied upon survey data (e.g. Cook and Underwood, 2012; Mendelsohn, Wolfe, and Parkin, 2002; Scheve and Slaughter, 2007) or psychological studies examining how specific aspects of globalization (e.g. cultural symbols or exposures) affect peoples' perceptions of it (Edwards, 2006). A methodological advantage of our study is that it was based on open-ended, semi-structured interviews, which afforded broader, reflective responses to questions about globalization. Our analysis draws theoretically on the tradition of critical and interpretive approaches to global political economy, especially Robert W. Cox's historical materialism (Cox, 1981 and 1987). Cox is known for his work on shared meanings of events and processes, identifying three forces that construct a reciprocal and dynamic relationship: material capabilities, ideas and institutions (Cox 1981: 135). In reference to the second force, Cox presents two kinds of ideas. One set is historically

conditioned inter-subjective meanings of social relations, for instance, that the world is divided into sovereign territories and people are ruled by states (1981: 136). Similarly, globalization provides a common base for social discourse on a range of processes that broadly restructure and integrate national economies, institutions and civil societies. Globalization is a global story told through mediated discourse (Cameron and Palan, 2004: 3). As such, participants in our research identify this phenomenon called globalization and narrate how their lives and those of their families are part of this broad process or are negatively affected by its structure and movement.

While many aspects of globalization are institutionalized and reflect relations of interest and power, such as those governing cross-border trade and investment, much of what we understand as globalization remains in a more fluid state, reflecting a wide range of views of situated experiences. These understandings of globalization correspond to Cox's second set of ideas, namely collective images of social order held by different groups of people (Cox, 1987). Unlike the more stable, broad inter-subjective meanings of the first category, situated collective images are several and may be opposed, reflecting the dialectical quality of globalization as comprising both enabling and constraining conditions. Cox's theory allows us "… to pay attention to multiple and competing forms of collective agency" and understandings that make up the global political economy (Germain, 2007: 129). The formation of these collective subjectivities is the platform for Cox's historical approach:

> The thoughts of individuals living in different times and places are formed against the background of ideas common to others who have been shaped by the historical experience of the group, a body of inter-subjective ideas often called 'common sense' out of which individuals develop their distinctive thinking (Cox, 2012: 5).

This implies that participants in this study identify the grand narrative of globalization shaping their lives while simultaneously developing their situated collective subjectivity of their experiences. Cox's mode of subjectivity, shared ideas of lived material experiences, is key to understanding historical materialism, and presents a way into the inter-subjective consciousness of historical agents as they reconstruct their worlds (Germain, 2007).

Methods

We interviewed families in two different neighbourhoods in each of our three cities. Neighbourhoods were chosen using a deprivation index comprising seven variables from the 2006 Canadian census. In each city, one neighbourhood represented a poorer urban area with a high immigrant population; and a second neighbourhood represented a poorer peri-urban area, again with a high immigrant population. This second geographic setting was chosen to capture

the outflow of new migrants to suburbs where de-industrialization was likely to have been more recent and acute, and public services less developed or accessible. The exception to this geographic sampling was Montreal; as an island, it had no effective peri-urban equivalent.

For Montreal, Côte-des-Neiges (CDN) and Park-Extension (PE) were chosen as the two neighbourhoods. The immigrant population in CDN was more mobile and integrated into the broader Montreal socio-economic context, and more likely to have a university degree, than people interviewed in PE, who tended to stay more within the confines of their neighbourhood and had lower education attainment, with the majority entering Canada as refugees or sponsored family members. For Vancouver, Lower Marpole (LM) and Guildford Town Centre (GTC) were selected as the urban and peri-urban neighbourhoods. LM is one of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods, with a small industrial area along the banks of the Fraser River, and a large recent Asian immigrant population, predominantly with Chinese, Filipino, and Southeast Asian heritage. GTC, the fourth most deprived census tract in all of Metro Vancouver in 2006, is located in the City of Surrey. It had the largest number of Canadian-born interviewees amongst our six neighbourhoods. Toronto's inner city neighbourhood was South Parkdale (SP) and the peri-urban neighbourhood was Black Creek (BC). SP historically has been a receiving area for new immigrants; while BC has a large immigrant population and several high-rise public housing units.

Participants were recruited through posters and notices widely disseminated through local organizations. Eligibility criteria were that the families lived within the selected census tract (or very close to the boundaries of that tract), and had at least one parent and one child 19 years or younger living at home. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Vancouver interviews occurred between April and November 2009 (n = 50), Montreal interviews between November 2009 and November 2010 (n = 47), and Toronto interviews between August 2010 and November 2011 (n = 50). Even though 147 interviews were conducted in total, not all interviewees responded to all questions. One researcher in each of the three cities undertook the interviews and conducted initial data analysis. A later multi-day meeting was convened to compare and contrast findings across the three sites. The study was approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board.

Research Findings

Faster, Smaller, Different

Change. Change in everything. Change in technology. Change in the way everything is operated. (BC)[1]

…but not sure if it is good or bad change. (PE)

Globalization is a ubiquitous, 'common sense' idea that some participants understood very well, and a few had never, or only very recently, heard of before the interview. In some cases, the interviewer introduced this concept to some participants, which permitted a greater clarification of the term through discussion; yet all respondents expressed how their lives were being transformed by changes in opportunities, competition, the growth of communication technology, the environment, increased exposure to other cultures and comparison of how governments operate. Often their comments expressed ambivalence; globalization brought both benefits and costs. One thing was constant: globalization embodied change, and a sense of increasingly rapid change.

Lee (2003) suggests that globalization has three defining qualities affecting how people experience their lives: temporal (everything is moving faster), spatial (the world is getting smaller) and cognitive (one's relationship to the world is altering). When asked what the term 'globalization' meant to them, a few (n=4) mentioned how *"the world is going faster, things move so fast"* (PE) creating anxieties that they *"may lose out and not be able to profit [from globalization]."* Globalization's fast tempo meant that, "*people have become very busy in their lives and do not have time for each other."* (PE)

The more common response about globalization was how it was shrinking the world. Some respondents (n=12) invoked the concept of the *"global village"*, that, *"technology, communication has made the furthest away places closer … We can no longer live in isolation; we are in symbiosis and need to share."* (PE) For some this was cause for optimism, that *"the world is coming together"* (SP) partly because globalization had made *"less difference between peoples, more similarity in way of life around the world"* (LM). These perceptions reflect a more transformational and cosmopolitan sense of global polity, stated explicitly by one African immigrant: "*Globalization has allowed me to be a cosmopolite; a citizen of the world."* (CDN) *O*thers were less sanguine about this shift in global space.

The world has become one place, the distances are reduced and everything has become one. But no one has time to meet. … We are somehow more connected through space and through communication but we are less connected because we don't have time to meet. (PE)

Globalization was also seen as transforming how respondents (n=7) thought about themselves, usually framed as greater awareness of international events and other cultures.

> *Before we knew about things through media, our thought was a small thought, we couldn't think big. We now think only fast thoughts, there are no limits.* (PE)

> *…we are now forever comparing ourselves with others, countries, ways of doing things, politics are all compared. We question everything, models or ways of doing.* (CDN)

Many discussed how globalization had made them more broad-minded and open to new ideas or *"other realities"* (PE). As one mother explained:

> *Because of globalization, we have started becoming ambitious, thinking about higher education. My son thinks that he wants to go as high as he can, be a doctor. It changes how we see ourselves because we see different futures.* (PE)

This mother is able to situate her family's story within this big globalization picture. But this increased global awareness was not always viewed positively (n=5); for one respondent, globalization's accelerated exposure to new spaces, cultures and religions *"brings confusion"* (CDN), which, for another, led to *"less trust, less certainty."* (BC) On the one hand, globalization was making *"making everybody inter-dependent"* leading to *"more reliance on each other and [a] need to cooperate more with other cultures to find common solutions."* (PE) On the other hand, globalization *"is trying to make everyone in the world the same"* (LM), which one respondent argued was about transforming people into:

> *…consuming robots, we have become more materialist, addicted to the useless. We consume without it adding any extra value to our lives.* (CDN)

While there was an embrace of the cultural diversity and exposure brought by globalization, there was also fear that this was threatening one's identity *"because powerful countries dominate globally; they have capital, control the communication networks and can force their culture upon us"* (CDN), a commonly expressed view embodying the critiques of globalization's sceptics. *"Through the mix of other peoples' cultures,"* in this instance a reference to American symbols and products swamping those of Mexico's, *"people do not know their own culture."* (CDN)

A Matter of More Economic Opportunities

> *Globalization is economic, it relates to trade and economics.* (CDN)

Globalization's engendering of a materialist ethos speaks to its economic underpinnings, that *"economies are becoming much more interlinked".* (LM) The economic impacts of globalization,

such as opportunities for work and shifts in the global sites of production, were foremost in respondents' remarks. The majority of our interviewees, especially new immigrants, viewed globalization's economic changes as beneficial, providing them with more employment and business opportunities:

> *Of course! [We] come from poor countries … to improve [our] position and have a good job. There is opportunity through migration.* (CDN)

Amongst other drivers, the dream of improving one's life and living in greater security has long been a key driver of outward migration. For some respondents it represented the totality of globalization, *"Globalization? I was able to immigrate and get a better life and future."* (PE) The prospect of a better, and especially safer, future was particularly felt by those who came from a war or disaster zone such as Sri Lanka: *"I only want to live in peace, without the war, and there is fear that the tsunami comes back."* (PE) While many respondents saw being part of the global movement of people as an opportunity itself, for one respondent it was something that had to be worked upon to exist:

> *Immigration to Canada came with trying* [to get to here]. *Globalization + trying = opportunities.* (PE)

She was not alone in stressing the importance of working hard to actualize new opportunities. A number of respondents (n=10) appeared to accept the dominant narrative of competitive individualism and effort that is strongly associated with contemporary globalization:

> *It depends on each person's determination and will to change. People can improve their lives, their living conditions…it is important to have determination.* (CDN)

> *There are more opportunities but you also have to make more effort. Other people who have the same qualifications and capacities and the same goal also want these opportunities.* (CDN)

Many participants (N=10) thought globalization was creating such opportunities for people worldwide, citing examples such as the industrial boom in China, and the growth of mining in Africa, or in the service sector in countries such as India. Several also thought that globalization's economic opportunities were *"more so for people in developing countries than in Canada"* (LM), partly through the circular flow of opportunities where *"companies opening up in different countries, and people getting work experience in different countries, and being able to take it back to own country."* (LM) Two impressions of opportunity thus can be seen, based on scale: for most of the immigrant respondents who had migrated to Canada, and from their own accounts, there was greater opportunity; but when applied to the world's population more

generally, the greatest benefits were seen as going to those in developing countries. Yet overall these sentiments clearly aligned with the globalist view of contemporary globalization.

This positive view, however, was also nuanced:

> *Yes, [globalization] offers more opportunities for people except that the opportunities are not the same for each country … Industrialised countries need to be aware of the impacts of their actions on vulnerable people. There is abuse between countries.* (CDN)

The abuse to which this respondent was referring was the exploitation by companies based in the rich countries (such as Canada) of low-wage labour in poor countries, and how these companies were capturing most of the value generated through out-sourced manufacturing. Another respondent, reflecting a view heard from almost a quarter of our families, agreed that globalization was bringing about economic benefits, but primarily *"for big companies and for business people,"* (LM) and not for most workers for whom the *"opportunities were only for low paid work"* (GTC). Although in the context of interviews they were often referring to their own experiences, respondents also regarded the skewing of globalization's benefits as a worldwide phenomenon.

These qualifying ideas speak to how economic globalization was commonly seen in binary terms, simultaneously creating *"more opportunities … more job chances"* but only for *"some people [while] others lose opportunities."* (CDN) Participants who came from places experiencing rapid economic growth, such as in China, also cast doubt on economic globalization's benefits even for those in developing countries:

> *China, yes sells everything. Everybody buys that because it's cheaper, but then what happens? … The labours charge was so low, you know, they give job to so many people but at the same time they are paid so little and people are suffering so much, you know.* (SP)

This impression of the anti-globalization narrative of an economic 'race to the bottom' was echoed by a parent in Vancouver, who saw globalization as transforming the market into a global *"auction…where it's like [the] lowest bid [for labour costs] wins."* (GTC) The result, as explained by a Toronto participant, was that globalization *"will benefit both the rich and the poor, but not those in between."* (SP) This concern for a shrinking middle class arose from the belief that globalization was deepening a division of wealth that was already part of the global political economy, a sceptical veneer over an otherwise globalist portrait.

But a Question of Fairness and a Healthy Environment

> *Globalization results in some people live (sic) well and others live bad, why? Because the poor people have to do the things, make the products, for the rich people.* (GTC)

Many respondents' comments on globalization's potential to create opportunities were often immediately tempered by their reflection on globalization's fairness. Fifty-five of the 90 interviewees who considered this question were clear: globalization was making life less fair for most. The dominant complaint amongst these respondents was a variation of the aphorism that *"the rich get richer and the poor get poorer"* (LM), somewhat at odds with their often more optimistic presentation of the opportunities globalization was creating, especially for the world's poor. An underlying concern was over the scale of inequalities that globalization was creating. Several (n=7) specifically referred to outsourcing as the cause of unfairness, at least for those in Canada:

> *Here it is not fair because we lose the jobs to other countries that have cheaper labour. More people for the same salary that they pay Canadians.* (CDN)

> *Disadvantages that shift all of our jobs to those people, China and other country, India, yeah, which make Canadians suffer here.* (BC)

One offered a specific instance of a friend who had just lost a job when her whole department was outsourced, but seemed willing to accept that globalization meant that more workers should be prepared to accept less: "*Maybe you could bargain with the people who are working here, because people would rather know that they get a pay freeze than they are totally out of a job.*" (BC) Most of our respondents, however, complained about the increasing precariousness of their work, the stress it was creating for them and the need for governments to create more secure jobs.

One interviewee located globalization's unfairness in *"trans-national economic exploitation and a focus on who can make profits,"* distinguishing between *"people who globalize and people who are globalized."* (CDN) The globalizers were those *"with the money and the knowledge [who] are most able to exploit the benefits of globalization"* (LM). The globalized were those who lacked the requisite knowledge and education. This observation by a participant offers a privileged look at the inside of globalization – the self-understandings of her particular position within the greater narrative.

Inadequate access to education was one of the reasons cited by many for globalization's unfairness, just as its presence was regarded as one of the important opportunities that globalization afforded. This emphasis on education fits well with the discourse on individual effort, and also for the disappointment or anger several immigrants expressed when Canadian employers would not accept their educational credentials. Not all were convinced of

education's importance, however, with a few arguing that it was no longer providing the opportunity premium it once did: *"[Globalization] is less fair, because what do you do when you finish college, where do you go?"* (SP)

Four respondents thought globalization unfair largely because of the power differences between countries and thus which nations would benefit most. One saw globalization as US economic hegemony, protecting its own markets while prying open those of other countries. Another expressed this as a function of country size and international elite power:

> *Globalization does not benefit small countries … Governments … accept the conditions offered by companies and this is often not to the advantage of the citizens. Why do they do this? … It is a question of elite solidarity.* (CDN)

Yet another pointed her finger squarely at the power of multinational companies that *"pay poor wages,"* and at the complicity of governments that give such companies *"very good tax benefits but having to cut social benefits to their citizens."* (LM) This speaks to the emergence of a political economy analysis of globalization amongst our respondents, and with it a critique of its negative effects on distributive and redistributive policies.

Not all respondents considered globalization to be unfair. A small group of interviewees (n=18) believed that globalization's opportunities outweighed any of its limitations. This positive assessment rested on *"more people [being able to] access more information and opportunity worldwide"* (LM); that *"definitely it's more fair because, you know, you have a lot of chance."* (LM) Part of this enhanced chance existed simply in the ability to migrate to another country. Others saw fairness in the greater competition created by globalization that was leading to *"more development and innovation, we can share benefits and exchange ... improve people's situations."* (PE) A few acknowledged that globalization was becoming less fair for some (those displaced through outsourcing or lacking in the educational prerequisites demanded by the new economy) but overall considered it to be creating more fairness through access to knowledge, *"because those who didn't have access … before now do."* (SP) They agreed with those who saw globalization tipping more towards the unfair side of the scale that *"you have to have education … higher education offers more opportunities,"* (PE) but they differed in the emphasis they placed on individual effort to obtain or use that education, arguing that *"everyone gets opportunity so long as you work hard."* (LM)

> *Sometimes globalization maybe you can't benefit from it … but it depends, if you're not good enough, why not? If you have that impression, improve yourself.* (SP)

Another group of respondents (n=17) spoke to globalization's dual outcomes, of how it was simultaneously creating greater fairness for some but not for others. Agreeing with the unfair

cluster that the low wages for people working in developing countries were exploitative, *"it is better for them now than before."* (LM) This was true even for people in developed countries when *"foreign companies close their offices and so [they] lose their jobs, or company taken over by a foreign company and wages reduced,"* (LM) in part a comparison to how such workers are still better off than those in most of the world, and that they also have access to government support programs. This duality extended beyond individuals to countries and their relative power in the global economy:

> *There are more choices [now] but not every country has the same chance because they produce different things and have to negotiate on the international market. So, it depends on their power to negotiate.* (CDN)

These country differences, in turn, constrain individual choices, as this respondent continued: *"[So] not everyone has the same possibilities; someone in Africa does not have the same chance as someone in Europe."* (CDN)

The environmental externalities of globalization's contributions to economic growth were also regarded dualistically, generating opportunities and creating health benefits while also increasing disease risks:

> *Where the factory's been built, it creates a lot of jobs for many people, you know, whether you are educated or uneducated, you get some job. But because of these factories, the progress that they make and things that they throw out of the factory, spoils the environment. This gives diseases to the community, people living around, you know, so it has positive and negative parts.* (SP)

These concerns were present in interviews across all three cities where participants made links between environmental degradation and health. One interviewee regarded *"unfettered globalization"* as *"a form of colonization of Earth"* (GTC), an association identified by many other participants (n=12). A recent immigrant from China, noting how her home country's severe pollution problems were leading to more people getting sick *"due to so many factories,"* commented that despite *"lots of people getting rich in China – my friends – … I … would rather be here and poor."* (SP) While many respondents blamed globalization for the pace of environmental despoliation, several others also saw globalization's positive potential for being *"responsible for countries acting together to put environmental controls in place, which is good"* (BC); once more capturing globalization's binary features.

Living Across Oceans through Global Social Spaces

> *Through my eyes, my mother sees Canada. I am bringing Canada to my mother through my words.* (PE)

There was a real sense amongst our respondents of lives straddling countries and cultures, with family responsibilities and caring stretching around the world. These global networks, collective subjectivities constructed across space, played a central role in immigrant families' coping strategies. When asked to whom they turned when they had a problem, many respondents named support systems in their countries of origin. A little over one-third of the immigrant families in Vancouver reported being well supported through family networks in Canada. The remaining two-thirds of immigrant families were in long distance support maintained through regular phone and Internet communication.

Moral support and coping strategies for many families came from regular contact back home. Another participant explained that when she needed mental support or advice, she spoke to her family in Pakistan by telephone. She did not think of asking for outside help in her Montreal neighbourhood. An immigrant from Morocco said although the support was different because her larger family was no longer present, she spoke to her mother every day on Skype. Her mother is illiterate but knew how to operate the computer and was able to offer her moral support when, in comparison, *"here, the isolation is total."* (PE) Another recent immigrant commented on the importance of such connection in the absence of local ones: "*My husband calls his brother in Indonesia every day. He hasn't made many friends here because of the very long hours he is working".* (LM) Many families sought daily contact with their extended networks. As one woman remarked:

> *When we moved here from India there were a few households that had phones there [in India]. Now everyone has phones, cell phones. Before you had to go to a city to make the call for abroad.* (PE)

Another interviewee noted that the cost of long distance calls had changed dramatically:

> *The main difference in my life is communication. When I arrived it cost $3 for 1 minute conversation to my mother in Bangladesh. Now I can speak for 1 hour and 40 minutes with a calling card of $2.50.* (PE)

A Sri Lankan family, with members living in Europe, demonstrated how this caring and support was being transformed by the globalization of information technology:

> *When I was 11 years old my father died. In that period we did not know about the telephone, we did not know that other countries existed – Canada and France. Things moved on and we saw the telephone, computer, television and got to know more about what was going on elsewhere because of globalization and more communication. Nowadays, in Sri Lanka we talk on Skype and see each other. Every day we talk to family in France and every weekend we talk on Skype.* (PE)

Many immigrant interviewees were frequently in virtual contact with their distant family members, creating 'glocalities' that were both intimate and affirming. As one woman remarked:

> *The world is very close [now] through technology. You can easily find everything. My husband worked in the Middle East during the 1990s and I could not talk to him by phone and was very isolated.* (PE)

But this has since completely changed: *"My sister's husband is now also working in the Middle East, in Saudi Arabia, and it is she who calls him on his cellular from Sri Lanka to wake him up in the mornings."*

For a Chinese family that was facing employment difficulties in Canada (a friend had recently returned to China because he thought it more likely to find work there), the long-distance relationship was carefully managed, *"we don't talk to family about problems, because they are far away and cannot help and only worry."* Other interviewees were similarly reticent to share their post-migrations travails with their distant family members. Even those not wanting to burden their family with post-migration troubles, partly a matter of fearing that they may have failed family expectations for their success, regular communication allowed them to feel a continuing part of the lives they left behind. One woman told of being able to participate in important family events: *"I watched my cousin's wedding in Bangladesh on Skype."* (CDN)

These worldwide networks of care, support and continuity play a key role in the mental health of the families left behind and those in Canada. Members of communities are transported from one locality to another; experiencing the global *en route* and using communication technologies to link up. This geographical reorganization of families between countries and across the globe conceptually overlaps with that of hopes for the future, for themselves and for their children. These hopes lay open the chasms that exist between lives that were, lives that are and the lives yet to be. For some, this can produce an impression of a sense of life suspended, for others the suspension becomes intergenerational as hopes and dreams are passed to the next generation.

The connections created by technologies that have prompted more people to move (*"we see the images of the West and think, why not?"*) while allowing them to retain their links to families left behind is not without tension. For many young families who recently migrated, there is an obligation for the men to send money back home to their parents and siblings. This caused stress and anger for the women who were trying to make ends meet in Canada, particularly given less-than-expected employment opportunities encountered on their arrival (Ref art.1). These wives also felt worried about their own families who did not receive remittances from Canada, which appeared to follow patriarchal ties in the family. One woman

made a direct link between immigrant women's mental health and this obligation to care for the husband's family back home.

> *The causes of depression are when men folk, they come here, they work and send the money back home to their own relatives. The women want to sponsor their own families...there are some men who are good, there are other husbands who continue to listen to their families back home*. (PE)

Families back home that, one respondent complained, "[They] *think that money grows on trees here and that the money we earn here is for them back home, they don't see the costs we have to cover here."* (PE) The dialectic of this technologically mediated straddling across countries was captured by an older immigrant, who spoke of how, after frequent communication with her extended family in the Philippines, there was now less contact, partly "*because of distance"* (gradually losing touch) but increasingly *"different lifestyles."* (GTC) At some point the discontinuities created by globalization's spatial, temporal and cognitive transformations start to become unbridgeable.

Governments in a Globalizing World: More or Less?

Many participants commented on globalization's effects on how governments operate. Interviewees who had immigrated, in particular, were able to compare how governments functioned in Canada to elsewhere, and the ways in which the different national systems supported or undermined health. A teacher from Senegal saw globalization as having a positive impact on governance issues in Africa.

> *Yes, a good side to globalization is the pressure put on African leaders to improve their governance records. International financial help is conditional on good governance and bringing African government in line with international norms such as democratic elections. So, democracy is the good side of globalization. Our governments realize that with globalization comes greater awareness of what is going on and that they cannot hide.* (CDN)

Just over a third of our study participants addressed this issue, and many who did were more concerned with expressing their own (positive or negative) experiences with the Canadian government than with shifts in state behaviour more generally. As one interviewee complained, *"the Canadian government will let in criminals and terrorists but won't let in my aging mum from the Philippines"*. (LM)

Of those who commented on globalization's impacts on government more generally, half considered it positive. This assessment rested on how *"greater competition…less government regulation creates cheaper things"* (BC) as countries adopted *"best practices from around the*

world" (LM) and *"do trade for the benefit of each other."* (LM) These perceptions reflect globalization's liberalization discourse and its emphasis on consumer empowerment through greater choice and cheap products, and speak to the globalist argument for globalization.

An equal number of interviewees adopted the opposite position, arguing a *"need for greater government regulation"* (BC) of the global economy, not less; and that governments increasingly are *being "influenced in their decision making by outside forces, and not just by what would seem to make sense for the community".* (LM) These outside forces were identified as *"businesses that can now threaten governments that if they don't do what they want, like relax regulations, then they will go elsewhere"* (LM) and *"international treaties and conventions"* in which *"governments are not all equal".* (CDN) This was seen as particularly acute for *"small countries [where] the governments are losing power. They do not have the power to influence big corporations and business."* (CDN) One interviewee saw a strong connection between these two phenomena:

> *A very, very key element of globalization is that brands and multi-nationals are starting to take on a role that appears to be caring and community minded and I think governments step back and let them step in, which results in our public space being more corporatized and branded.* (SP)

These views embody the sceptic stance on globalization: interviewees agreed with the proponents on what was happening, but not on what it meant. There were no obvious demographic features that defined these two groups, apart from recent immigrants being slightly more positive about globalization's effects on government. The dialectical feature of globalization's impacts was also present, creating conditions where *"governments do not command the same kind of confidence that they used to"* (CDN) but also where *"peoples' lives are improved through their influence on government human rights and civil society pressure on government."* (CDN)

A major concern for many was the inability of governments to create more or better jobs, which some attributed to globalization's negative impacts on government. Several were also worried over what they saw as the slow erosion in government social protection programs, or biases in how such programs are delivered. A Canadian-born parent thought that globalization was causing *"government to hand more money out to the immigrants than to the people that live here."* (GTC) Some of the francophone respondents in Montreal added an additional concern with a cultural, as well as economic, threat. This was not a surprising finding; anti-immigrant sentiments are more common when economic insecurities are greater (Cochrane and Nevitte, 2014); and many of our respondents reported increased insecurities which they attributed, at least in part, to globalization. What was more surprising was that very few interviewees stated a concern about being culturally threatened. While some immigrants felt

reassured by the social safety net that existed in Canada, especially when contrasting it to that in the USA, other families, and especially Canadian-born respondents, thought that globalization's negative impact on governments was the retrenchment of social programs. As one respondent noted, summing up the perspective of many:

> *I don't think government is making any big changes … They're just putting more and more on the back burner and cutting services and like moving people, senior citizens out of their care homes and the health care and cuts to everything, cuts to school programs, the social programs. So I don't think the globalization has helped them any at all, right? It helped them in the wrong direction by cutting a lot of things, yeah.* (GTC)

Discussion

The following section puts our empirical findings into conversation with findings in the existing literature on lay perceptions of globalization, some of it dating back to the mid-1990s. Much of it is based on survey responses, including multinational studies conducted by Pew Research on Global Attitudes (e.g. Feasel and Muzumder 2012; Kohut and Wike, 2008; PEW 2003) and Gallup and similar opinion polls (e.g. Hoffmann, 2010; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006), as well as smaller sample surveys and individual national studies (e.g. Woodward et al, 2008; Wolfe and Mendelsohn, 2005; Mendelsohn, Wolfe, and Parkin, 2002; Scheve and Slaughter 2001 and 2007). To contextualize our discussion we reviewed findings from 18 such English-language studies published between 2000 and 2012, as well as a small number of social psychology studies that explored lay understandings of globalization. Themes from these studies cluster under three broad categories.

1.   Trade, economic growth and rising inequalities

Consistent with the emphasis our respondents gave to the economic dimensions of globalization, most of the survey research defined globalization in economic terms, such as trade openness, free markets or increased international economic integration (e.g. Cook and Underwood, 2012; Mendelsohn, Wolfe and Parkin, 2002; Hoffmann, 2010; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001 and 2007; Kohut and Wike, 2008; Heinmueller and Hiscox, 2006). Most studies found broad support for international trade, although this varied by respondents' education, country, gender and wealth. A higher level of education was associated with greater support for liberalized international trade, explained by an assumption in some of the studies that more knowledge about trade's economic benefits should lead to more support for economic globalization. But findings were not consistent, with support for economic globalization higher for educated/skilled in rich countries, but the reverse in poorer countries (Mayda, O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2007; Feasel and Muzumder, 2012). This finding was interpreted as a reflection of

economic interests, similar to how some of our respondents noted that globalization's benefits were greater for people in developing countries. An international study measuring changes over time in Gallup polls (1992-2009), however, found that a shift was occurring in high-income countries as well. Better-educated respondents increasingly favoured trade interventionism while still supportive of free trade (Hoffmann, 2010), apparently distinguishing between the economic growth value of free trade (which they favoured) and the form that trade took through outsourcing and employment uncertainty (which they did not). This could also reflect the decline in the educational premium in high-income countries (Hoffmann, 2010; Scheve and Slaughter 2007), a concern raised by a few of our interviewees.

For most of our respondents, education was still perceived as the means through which individuals could seize globalization's opportunities, and most strongly represented globalization's potential fairness. But like those reporting in the later Gallup polls, our respondents also saw the need for governments to create better employment conditions in Canada, and to be wary of allowing an exploitation of labour in developing countries despite the opportunities such outsourced production afforded. This corresponds well with survey findings that respondents' support for trade and economic growth was muted by worry over rising social inequalities (e.g. Hoffmann 2010; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001 and 2007; Kohut and Wike, 2008; Lübker 2004). These concerns cut across all countries (Kohut and Wike, 2008; PEW Research Centre, 2003) but were more pronounced in high-income nations. A finding not captured by survey research was the minority but emphatic voice amongst our interviewees on the importance of individual effort in making globalization work for them, an embrace of globalization's neoliberal individualism in the midst of their strong critiques of globalization's general unfairness. There was also a discontinuity between how our study participants saw globalization's opportunities (mixed but generally positive) alongside fairness (where the benefits go mostly to the already well-off, well-educated and transnational companies). This ambivalence could reflect the preponderance of immigrants in our sample, and the personal striving and optimism that comes with migration (almost of necessity), on the one hand, and the more critical appraisal globally, where economic integration is seen as accelerating a 'race to the bottom', on the other.

Strong reservations related to the environment were also found in several surveys, with the 2007 Pew Research study noting that with each repeated survey concern over the environment increased. In 46 of its 47 countries surveyed in 2007 the majority indicated a willingness to forego economic growth to protect the environment (Kohut and Wike, 2008). Where our respondents differed was how they saw this deterioration. Whereas Pew (2003) found that in most instances environmental damage was not seen to be a result of globalization *per se*, but of governments' failures to address these damages, many of our respondents saw it as a direct feature of globalization, counterbalancing the economic benefits or opportunities it offered.

There was also tentative hope that globalization would encourage countries to cooperate in managing these environmental problems.

2.   Culture and cosmopolitanism

Several surveys cited exposure to cultural diversity as a positive outcome of globalization (e.g. Woodward et al 2008; Schild and Hessel, 2012). A 2004 survey of Australians was designed to probe globalization attitudes consonant with cosmopolitanism, conceptualized as support for building supra-national governance institutions, legitimating cultural diversities and inclusion, and embracing different forms of cultural knowledge or expression (Woodward et al, 2008). The survey found that a majority agreed that globalization exposed them to more commodity and cultural goods, and almost all thought that was a good thing. Most also believed that globalization was good for democracy and human rights and was increasing new cultural knowledge. At the same time, almost a third of respondents were troubled by globalization's negative impacts on jobs and the economy, as well as by a perceived loss of Australian culture. This is similar to previous findings in Canada, albeit based on a less detailed survey instrument (Bascu, 2007), in which a large majority opposed globalization's cultural diffusion and loss of Canadian identity.

Some literature suggests that culture only becomes an issue when globalization increases the number of different cultural objects and images within the same space (inevitable with global commodities and migration), creating an integrative or exclusionary reaction (Chiu and Cheng 2007)[2]. Evidence of both was found with our respondents, with many embracing the vitality of diversity but others expressing "contamination anxiety" (Chiu et al 2011, p. 668), though this anxiety was less about a global culture overwhelming the local than about the scale and rapidity of migration displacing what had been a more local and homogenous ethnicity. Many of the exclusionary comments on culture were linked to employment opportunities (or rather their lack) and increased labour market competition. A major point of cultural criticism was levelled against how powerful actors (corporations, rich countries) have been diffusing a harmful culture of consumerism.

A small number of international studies (Yang et al, 2011; Kashima et al, 2011) have advanced a 'folk theory' of globalization, finding that people view societies as transforming from ones with high levels of morality (traditionalism) and low levels of competence (education/individualism/economic capacity) to ones with the reverse qualities. There were glimmers of this amongst our respondents, with comments about less trust accompanying the acquisition of greater knowledge. For women from poorer and more patriarchal societies who

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[2] This argument, however, ignores colonization, the forced acculturation of colonized peoples and their reactions (past, present and ongoing) to this process.

immigrated to Canada, however, their enhanced competence did not reduce their morality so much as transform it, a transformation that technology allowed them to share with women back home. There was also voice given to the dialectic of globalization simultaneously creating more individual independence, but also more population interdependence; and technology enhancing communication and knowledge but leading to more isolation and anxiety.

3.   Role of the state

Several of the studies we reviewed noted the importance respondents gave to governments in managing globalization. Trust in governments was associated with greater support of free trade, economic integration and cultural diffusion (e.g. Mendelsohn, Wolfe, and Parkin, 2002; PEW Research Centre, 2003; Hsiao, Wan and Wong, 2010; Mayda, O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2007). A 2000 Gallup poll of nine South East Asian and nine Western European countries found that support for trade amongst the lesser skilled labour force (generally opposed to free trade due to employment threats) rose when there were generous social protection policies in place, in turn corresponding to countries where governments taxed a larger share of GDP (Hsiao, Wan and Wong, 2010). A study drawing on 2008 data of globalization opinions in Australia and the USA (considered to be highly globalized), and China, India, Japan and Russia (moderately globalized) found that countries where respondents were most favourable towards globalization also expressed the most satisfaction with their governments' performance on measures that included economic management, unemployment, human rights and public service (Woodward et al, 2008). At the same time, they were also more demanding of even greater public attention. The open-ended nature of our interview questions precluded such rank-ordered analyses of respondents' opinions; instead we found a dichotomous set of responses. A few interviewees accepted the globalist position that market integration and competitiveness was helpfully reducing government regulation, although most who believed globalization to be a positive force for government change considered it in how it compelled nations to collaborate more closely with each other: more of a transformational than a strictly globalist view. Respondents who embraced a sceptical position were more outspoken about the failure of governments under globalization to regulate labor markets (providing for good jobs) or confront the power of large multinationals. There was some concern over the erosion of social protection programs, more commonly expressed by our non-immigrant families or those that had been in the country for a longer period, with most finding that Canada's health and social welfare benefits remained comparatively generous to those in countries from which they had migrated.

Conclusion

Globalization and public perceptions regarding its social impacts continue to command academic interest and spark intense debates. However, while many studies have focused on

more specific and directly policy-relevant aspects of globalization, such as attitudes towards trade liberalization and migration, few studies have qualitatively assessed peoples' perceptions regarding the larger (and conceptually harder to grasp) subject of globalization. Our own findings speak to the complex and contradictory nature of globalization processes, and align well with the theoretical perspective of critical political economy. For most of our respondents, globalization is experienced in a multi-faceted manner, with both positive and negative impacts associated with it. For them, globalization represents a dialectic of conditioning and constraining conditions, creating capabilities in some domains (knowledge, awareness, migration mobility – at least for now –) but constraints in others (employment, social protection, environment), captured well through the prominent race to the bottom narrative' used by some of our respondents.

As a Coxian reading of globalizations suggests, social structures (such as globalization) do not exist independently from the inter-subjective understandings and meanings about these phenomena. This implies that perceptions do matter as they represent the ideational glue that holds the world together, an insight sometimes neglected in more materialistic accounts of globalization. As Craig Berry (2008) notes, globalization only acquires reality when it becomes part of the 'assumptive worlds' of policy actors and private agents. Uncovering the inter-subjective basis of globalization reveals how respondents perceive the possibilities of agency within a structured world. Such an understanding of globalization reflects Cox's view that in order to fully account for agency we need to appreciate the inter-subjective understandings of which it is constitutive.

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