

Geography and Indigeneity II: Critical geographies of indigenous bodily politics

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Abstract: In this, the second of three reports on indigeneity in geography, the focus is on the social differentiation within embodiments, subjectivities and social positionings within and across indigenous groups. Indigeneity is a social-corporeal positioning within socially-differentiated fields of power, history and relations with land and earth. As a consequence, geography focuses on temporally- and spatially-specific processes by which embodiments and epistemic positions are produced, expressed and diversified. Also significant are the ongoing relations of power at multiple scales that entail the production of indigenous bodies as the marked outcomes of colonial-modern distributions of harm. Taken together, these analyses suggest that the embodiment of indigeneity arises from colonial-modern mediations of intersectional social hierarchies, resulting in multifaceted patterns of differentiated agency.

Keywords: embodiment, gender, intersectionality, queer geographies, subjectivity, youth geographies

I Introduction

Indigeneity is not just an ideology, but something that must be lived, embodied, felt and materialized. (Hunt in Hallenbeck et al., 2016: 112)

[The] Native body [is] a site of persistent fascination, colonial oppression and indigenous agency. (Fear-Segal and Tillett, 2013: ix)

Indigenous bodies and social heterogeneity have been in the news. Through 2016, a diverse multigenerational, multiethnic indigenous and non-indigenous group of protestors gathered at Standing Rock in North Dakota to protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Police attacked elders, young people and children with rubber bullets, beat them with sticks and sprayed mace (Wong, 2016). In early December

2016, a Peruvian prosecutor struck down for the seventh time an action brought by 77 indigenous women against a state programme of forced sterilization. Former President Alberto Fujimori had ordered the forced sterilization of indigenous women in the 1990s; at least 272,000 women and 21,000 men were sterilized without informed consent, and at least 18 died due to complications (Quipu Project, 2016). After the latest set-back, women and their advocates vowed to appeal and continue to offer testimony despite harassment. Also in 2016, a Lenca indigenous female leader, Berta Cáceres, was gunned down in Honduras. Protesting against dams and mines that cover one third of national territory and threaten land-poor and landless groups, Berta was co-founder and leader of the grassroots COPINH movement against land dispossession, mining and biofuels. After her murder, organization leaders received ongoing threats against their lives. These examples illustrate how indigeneity is lived simultaneously in colonial-modern power and multilayered social differences. My first report showed how critical geography understands indigeneity as constituted against the field of colonial/modernity and discussed how indigeneity comprises a non-innocent, selective networking of articulations of place, personhood and politics (Radcliffe, 2015). Extending

this approach, the current report examines the dynamics between agency and subalternity in relation to embodiments and subjectivities produced under colonial-modern relations that generate indigeneity as a social corporeal positioning. Indigeneity is historically and geographically located in the cross-hairs of imperial debris, the colonial present and the uneven powers of social differentiation. In all their specificity and diversity, indigenous peoples are to varying degrees situated in the geographies of slow violence and the uneven temporalities of colonial durabilities (Nixon, 2011; Stoler, 2016). In light of these broad frameworks, how can we account for indigeneity's relations of corporeal and social differentiation? Geographers using postcolonial, feminist and critical cultural geography have extensively documented 'the ways in which colonial processes produce, inscribe, and maintain "difference" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples' in relation to bodies and lives as well as lands (De Leeuw et al., 2011: 22). Simultaneously, power relations of gender, class, generation and sexuality, among others, mean that non/indigenous bodies become matrices for distinctions and power that do not map back directly onto indigenous/non-indigenous dualisms, thereby disrupting indigeneity as a self-evident social category. In this, the second of my reports on critical geographies of indigeneity, I focus on the uneven exposure of indigenous bodies to materialized and embodied powers. Specifically, the report attempts to provide preliminary answers to the following questions: what processes of subjectification work to diversify the forms of being indigenous? Within indigenous groups, what social differentiation occurs and how do we frame and explain the micro-practices and broader societal forces that co-produce variability within populations? And by what means can we discuss internally-heterogeneous indigenous corporeality alongside scientific-commercial assemblages, and in relation to other-than-human beings? While indigenous and postcolonial studies have extensively discussed liberal understandings of indigeneity's problematic, non-liberal subjectivity and about-to-die-out corporeality, and also the resultant containment on indigenous agency, recent literature is moving towards nuanced and situated accounts of the differentiated agencies and embodiments of indigenous subjects, as discussed below. The report is structured as follows. Section II focuses on the ways in which indigenous bodies – in all their diversity – are treated in the colonial present and how bodily experiences come to define the boundary between indigeneity and non-indigeneity. Section III turns to examine dynamics of social differentiation within indigenous groups in relation to colonial-modern power. The nature of indigenous agency becomes a strand here, which is extended in Section IV on indigenous embodiment-subjectivity in relation with landscapes and other-than-humans.

II Indigenous subjectivity and embodiment in the colonial present

Evidence has begun to lend considerable credence to the view that indigenous embodiments and subjectivities continue to be produced in the interstices of the colonial present. To contextualize indigeneity in relation to whiteness, for instance, is to suggest an equivalence between multiple types of exploitable bodies whose 'blood and sinew' produced – and in many instances continue to produce – white subjects' un-earned assets (Bonds and Inwood, 2015:8,2). In contexts defined by white supremacy, people of colour, including indigenous peoples, experience premature death. One striking example of this process is the disproportionate number of deaths and disappearances among indigenous nation women in Canada over recent years; it is estimated that around 1200 women have been murdered or disappeared over the past 40 years (Leblanc, 2014). Although distinctive to other racialized groups, indigenous bodies are subordinated as racialized in systems of labour and recognition (Bonds and Inwood, 2015). Geographers have extensively documented how

neoliberalism, entrepreneurial discourses and multiculturalism condition and police expressions of indigeneity, socially and corporeally. Despite transnational activism for indigenous rights, it remains the case that 'global indigeneity' has limited leverage against nation-states that actively deny the presence or indeed naming of indigenous peoples in their territories, as with Negev/Naqab Bedouin Arabs (Yiftachel et al., 2016; Stoler, 2016). By contrast, commodification and the cultural economy offer indigenous subjects a status and visibility as heritage, albeit with ambivalent effects. From the mid-20th century, 'individuals and groups across the globe fashion themselves as Indigenous through performance and performative acts in intercultural spaces' (Graham and Penny, 2014: 1). Deliberate, public oriented performative acts may entail self reflexivity and specific types of agency, yet offer only highly contradictory spaces for sovereignty and political gains (Stoler, 2016), even as they recast colonial-modern fascination with native bodies' dismemberment, display, commodification and disease (Fear-Segal and Tillett, 2013). New axes of subordination and dispossession of indigenous people work not to reduce or destroy indigenous difference, but to 'fracture and multiply' that difference (Bessire and Bond, 2014: 444). Recent work furthers these analyses by discussing how urban infrastructures and public displays of indigenous knowledges come spatially to extend and imaginatively encompass indigenous embodiment (Hirsch, 2016). It pays close attention to how indigeneity is expressed at micro and embodied scales in contexts where the aesthetics, discourses and powers of indigenous dispossession or contained recognition are constantly on the move. In a grounded account of spatial forms of governmentality in British Columbia, Canada, De Leeuw (2016) deliberately shifts scale away from territory to the 'interventions into and the disruption of intimate' geographies in their embodied and visceral expressions. Cumulatively, these practices erase ontologies in a form of hidden and slow violence that underpins settler power. 'Intimate and domestic Indigenous ontologies [comprise] spaces where settler-colonialism remains present, acute and embodied' (De Leeuw, 2014: 60). Analysis linking bodies with broad structures of power likewise illuminates environmental racism, whereby pollution is deposited in ways and places where black and indigenous 'racially devalued bodies can...function as "sinks"' (Pulido, 2016: 6). One striking dimension of ongoing colonial-modernity is 'nuclear colonialism', which refers to the use—and abuse—of indigenous land in the USA, Micronesia and Polynesia for nuclear test sites. Today those still-radiated indigenous bodies and places comprise a type of corporeal colonial debris incarnated in human, other than-human and landscape beings (Stoler, 2016, citing Kuletz's 1998 book *The Tainted Desert*). As well as a direct outcome of Cold War geopolitics for indigenous peoples, the mid-20th century invention of freezing technologies and genetic analysis were to open up indigenous bodies to metropolitan bio-sampling procedures and programmes (Kowal et al., 2015). Hence, paradoxically, while genomics sought to identify isolated 'original' populations in certain locations, in other areas indigenous genetic material coils together DNA and traces of nuclear colonialism. Assemblages of freezers and DNA are justified scientifically to generate 'biological knowledge of populations that would soon vanish, either from disease, assimilation or both' (Kowal and Radin, 2015: 69). Yet, dismembering bodies may generate indigenous resistance and political agency: in 2003, the Havasupai indigenous nation sued a US university over misuse of genetic samples, arguing that research on these samples could threaten the nation's claim to belong to territory at the base of the Grand Canyon (Kowal et al., 2013). While indigenous genetic materials' extraction and storage is termed biocolonialism by some, a number of American First Nations are turning to DNA testing to identify the boundaries of group membership (Tallbear, 2013). In this scenario, global science and indigenous politics converge around narratives of disappearing populations and claims to a common yet differentiated humanity. First Nations'

selective acceptance of DNA tests to confirm blood ties augments validating evidence such as state certificates of marriage, birth and adoption. Despite an ambivalent accommodation with genomics, it remains the case that indigenous peoples' sovereignty status vis-a-vis settler and postcolonial societies remains largely untouched by these assemblages. As several authors make clear, non-indigenous people cannot feign being neutral, but they can centre indigenous agency in their work and recognize indigenous self-determination (Pratt et al., 2016). Paying attention to indigenous embodiments in the colonial present highlights the place-specific processes that expose indigenous subjects to cumulatively damaging outcomes, and also discloses their relative lack of autonomy in containing, controlling or using these processes. Assemblages of indigenous bodies and body parts are always already entangled within fraught politics regarding social reproduction, continuance into the future and judgements about the boundary between indigenous and non-indigenous subjects.

III Indigenous bodies in the colonial present

The category of 'indigenous peoples' has been increasingly questioned over the past decade, as diverse interlocutors ranging from the World Bank through to human rights activists and scholars seek to nuance and open up the category, and to invest it with a sense of internal social dynamics. Geography and cognate disciplines have increasingly demonstrated the multifarious and complex differentiations within and across indigenous populations. Geographers increasingly specify the gender, generation and other social characteristics of indigenous research interlocutors, and also the socially differentiated engagement in indigenous practices and politics (e.g. Daigle, 2016; Larsen and Johnson, 2016; Robertson, 2016). While such accounts often draw upon well established and vibrant subfields in geography, they are characterized too by the integral role that they attribute to colonial-modern relations of power. Three key foci can be sketched out here: namely, gender, sexuality and generation. Gender has been a highly visible dimension of indigeneity's framing over recent years, either as a result of neoliberal governmental fine-tuning or as a response to postcolonial challenges to western feminisms. As is to be expected, the theoretical and epistemological starting-points for gender analyses profoundly shape how indigenous subjects and social positionings are studied, described and placed within wider relations of knowledge and power. Whereas indigenous feminists and post/ de-colonial theorists situate the contemporary dehumanization of indigenous female subjects in colonialism's sexual violence, policy-driven accounts view indigenous women as lacking the human capital to ensure market-led solutions to employment and education deficits. Such markedly different starting points produce an increasing literature, yet little rapprochement appears possible between the postcolonial-decolonial critique and the literature that treats indigenous subjects as a technical challenge. The latest World Bank report on indigenous Latin America identifies statistical variation in indigenous experience across categories of regional, income, digital access, rural-urban and gender differences (World Bank, 2016). By contrast, other literature focuses on intersectional forces and resistances through which bodies become socially situated and relationally defined. In this vein, a handbook on indigenous rights contains a section on women and indigenous feminisms (Lennox, 2015). An indigenous scholar notes how '[t]he hard violence that remains central to the colonial relationship is distributed asymmetrically across indigenous bodies often according to sex and gender' (Coulthard, in Hallenbeck et al., 2016: 118). Close studies in situ build on these insights. Using feminist political ecology, Erikson and Hankins (2015) document the gendered and generational differences in indigenous fire use and fire knowledge in the Western US and Australia. In Mexico, Worthen (2015) discusses how neither customary nor federal law reflect Zapotec indigenous women's views on how best to represent themselves politically. The Zapotec

women queried the unfair labour burdens associated with evolving customary law, and resisted the government's promotion of formal leadership posts in a (colonial-modern) liberal political system. In the Ecuadorian Amazon, male indigenous actors furthered a pro-indigenous resource politics that reproduced patriarchal power, even as it situated indigenous subjects at the forefront of a postneoliberal oil economy (Lyall and Valdivia, 2015).

In recent years, the relations of LGBTQ subjects with indigeneity have come under scrutiny in order to examine dominant (colonial-) modern understandings of sexuality and intersections (or not) with indigeneity and indigenous subjects. One key finding of historical work from gender and sexuality scholars is how indigenous sex-gender systems, including same-sex relations, were erased during colonialism (Rifkin et al., 2010). The contemporary resonances of these dynamics are explored by Di Pietro (2016). In Argentina, imaginative geographies of nation-building demarcate (a de-sexualized) indigeneity in the country's northwest from a 'gay-friendly' Buenos Aires. Yet, migrant indigenous travestis build urban counter-public spaces that seek to blur the colonial-modern certainties of what LGBTQ means and what indigenous sexualities might look like. The invisibility – if not exclusion – of indigenous subjects in LGBTQ spaces and politics is further explored in the Canadian context by Hunt and Holmes (2015). Despite recent re-assertions of indigenous queer terminologies and subject positionings, they argue that queer politics awards a limited arena to indigenous issues, which in turn represents a challenge for a politics of decolonization. Indigenous youth and children are arguably central to questions about the social reproduction – and continuance – of indigenous peoples, but young people are often found at the forefront of colonial-modern measures to recalibrate indigenous positionalities. [Note 1] Processes of education, migration and political persecution all contribute to place indigenous youth and children in the vanguard of ongoing settler colonialism and governmentality. Thus, De Leeuw and Greenwood call for more research into 'the role of Indigenous children and youth, or geographies of childhood' in unsettling conceptual and material hegemony in indigenous marginalization (2015: 6). Neoliberalism has in many ways retained and reworked colonial patterns of making indigenous youth the wards of settler colonial states through boarding schools and child welfare programmes (De Leeuw and Greenwood, 2015; Webb and Radcliffe, 2015). With nationalizing and normalizing pedagogies, educational institutions directly mould young minds and bodies at the corporeal scale. Whereas education often distantiates youth from self-identifying indigenous embodied identities and practices, its effects are not universally nefarious. Youth resistance and reinterpretations of state curricula and rights activism suggest that indigenous agency changes inter-generationally in tone, methods and outlook (Radcliffe and Webb, 2015). In western Amazonia, Virtanen (2012) ethnographically documents young people's participation in global youth cultures, at the same time as charting their pursuit of the objective of being indigenous 'anywhere' in cities in Brazil, or around the world. In the context of high rates of indigenous youth suicide, Eades' study (2015) focuses on intergenerational practices of mapping and landscape-making in northwest Canada, which point to a complex interplay of young people's subjectivity, constrained yet distributed agency, and ambivalent senses about the future. These studies highlight the importance of crosscutting exclusions and endowments of social power that result in indigenous subjectivities being so heterogeneous. Vibrant subfields of feminist, children's and queer geographies have begun to engage with this differentiated nature of indigeneity. Many studies depart from a post/de-colonial perspective that situates these dynamics within an ongoing governmentality of social categorization, and highlight in particular those social

groups who are most likely to find themselves in less empowered positions under colonial-modernity.

IV Indigenous subjectivity and other-than-human materialities

No review of indigeneity in geography today would be complete without discussion of the lively subfield that explores the processes that entangle indigeneity with other-than-human beings. As in anthropology, geographers are particularly interested in exploring indigenous embodiment, knowledge production and politics through relations with land, landscape and earth beings. In my reading, three theoretical starting points tend to inform these analyses. First, Jasanoff's notion of co-production is drawn upon to shed light on closely entangled dynamics of indigeneity within distributed assemblages involving, among others, scientific labs and urban infrastructures. Despite differences in theory, method and conceptualization, the second and third strands document and understand the ways of being that exceed colonial-modern ways of living in and knowing the world. Second, geographers' phenomenological approaches examine how indigenous subjects are embodied in relation to place, in order to integrate indigenous and western understandings of place (e.g. Larsen and Johnson, 2016). Following this line of interpretation, the Māori are characterized as expressing a 'non-individualistic' holism which overcomes the western dichotomy between a thinking self and an outside world (Murton, 2012). A third analytical strand seeks to situate indigeneity's co-constitution with other-than-human agents within a colonial-modern horizon in which careful ethnographic attention is awarded to the complex historical dynamics of resistance, hybridization and reworking. For instance, some years ago Stokes analysed how Māori geographies comprise complex, historically situated dynamics between ontological distinctiveness and centuries of colonial property, military and settlement regimes (Stokes, 1987). These studies work towards challenging geography 'to rethink land as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations' (Coulthard, in Hallenbeck et al., 2016: 112), and – in certain contexts – as integral to indigenous decolonial politics (Simpson, 2014). Each strand raises difficult questions about how to research and understand these dynamics, precisely because of the dynamic between indigeneity and research which, as Tuhiwai Smith (2010) notes, is one of the dirtiest words for indigenous people (on voice, method and coloniality, see Cameron, 2015; Coddington, 2016). Indigenous knowledge-producing relations with place and other-than-human beings continue to be subject to western science's harsh reductionism and epistemological patronizing (on development implications, see Briggs, 2013; Moyo and Moyo, 2014). To understand indigeneity as embodied in reciprocal relation with other-than-human beings raises the immediate question and challenge of how to provincialize colonial-modern forms of thinking and decide what counts as knowledge. One option is for indigenous scholars to write from their own experience: Simpson (2014), for instance, describes how Nishnaabeg resurgent relations with land oppose state-imposed knowledge through knowing the land as spiritual and intimate, as a web of interdependent relations, with human embodiment being enveloped by the land. Land becomes a decolonial pedagogy in which land expresses and articulates with diversity, thereby generating embodied knowledges. A different strategy is selectively to (re-)present components of practice and embodied relations as evidence of an ontological interruption to western presumptions (for careful discussions of the interpretive and policy risks and consequences associated with these approaches, see Bessire and Bond, 2014: 443; Hope, 2017). Sensitively situated in history and grounded theoretical corroboration, these accounts discuss indigenous life-ways and ontologies as hybridized with or deliberately resisting colonial-modern knowledges, thereby repositioning indigenous embodiments and subjectivities in a complex analytical terrain. For

instance, work in Canada and Peru shows that indigenous embodied knowledge and practice is complexly and fluidly situated at the intersection of dominant ways of knowing and Other forms of caring for humans and other-than-humans (De la Cadena, 2015; Blaser, 2016; Nirmal, 2016). Recently geographers have sought to convey the motley, context-specific and situated ways in which indigenous subjects' relations with other-than-human beings are interpenetrated with, and incomprehensible outside of, the colonial modernity in which they live (also Goeman, 2013). Daigle (2016) examines the relational geographies enacted by a Canadian First Nation in order to establish everyday practices of self-determination through a deliberate process of ceremonial acts that refer to and reproduce a place-based indigenous ontology. Rather than a timeless set of rituals, Daigle vividly describes the deliberate and coherent constitution of these everyday acts towards self-determination which are made across human and other-than-human kin. Framing this grounded account is the indigenous groups' deliberate refusal of a state politics of recognition. The geopolitical dimension of this context is reinforced by mention of the 'long-standing treaties with animal and plant nations' (Daigle, 2016: 267). In the Indian Himalaya, Gergan (2016) describes how indigenous engagements with animate landscape features occur in the context of dam building, social movement activism and intergenerational re-positionings. In the fraught relationship with the state, indigenous actors seek to express agency, yet find that mainstream environmentalist activism cannot mesh with their ontologically distinctive sense of loss and temporality. In the Bolivian lowlands, Guaraní indigenous peoples and territories are neither ontologically separate from nor entirely subsumed into capitalist development, despite settler cattle ranching, hydrocarbon extraction and wage labour (Anthias, 2016). The Bolivian context is of interest too because the self-proclaimed 'indigenous' state speaks expansively on behalf of Mother Earth or Pachamama, which popularly refers to collective wellbeing and includes 'symbolically-rich [...] reference to bodies, specifically the human body' (Zimmerer, 2015: 315). However, consistent with colonial-modern framings of indigeneity, the Bolivian state cannot voice these meanings without being challenged over its power-laden attempts to naturalize ties between indigeneity and national territory, as illustrated in the TIPNIS case (Hope, 2016). Recent geographical work highlights the ontological complexity of indigenous subjects' social- and knowledge-producing relations with other-than-humans including landscapes and iconic resources such as oil. Departing from carefully situated studies of contemporary dynamics, the work highlights the ongoing insights gained by considering indigeneity as corporeal-landed relationality, and by approaching these relations as ontologically-challenging to western presumptions and theoretical frameworks, even as they are contained within standard sovereignty and geopolitics.

V Concluding thoughts

In *Duress* (2016), anthropologist Stoler makes a powerful case for uncovering the occlusions occasioned by the colonial present to make visible the visceral, ecological, governmental and moral connections between power today and imperial histories. Attentive to the specificity of place and the social, her description of diverse racialized, marginalized and dominated subjects picks up on indigenous groups' attenuated sovereignties and imperialism's enduring legacies for indigenous bodies and lands. Geography's affective, new materialist and ontological turns inform, yet do not entirely encompass, the work being done currently on indigeneity in terms of embodiment, which remain more influenced by feminist, decolonial, queer and youth geographies. Research attuned to indigenous peoples' historic circumstances documents the lively, contested materiality of bodies, reinforcing the conclusion that there can be no clear-cut universal embodied indigeneity-in-

landscape. Colonial-modern practices of exclusion and ontological interpenetration have resulted in overlapping, blurred and resisting interactions over who indigenous subjects are, how indigeneity is expressed socially and intersectionally, and how it is co-constituted with nature and environment. In sum, indigenous peoples are 'obliged to live in part through our [dominant] models of their being but...still ride buses, make art, take antibiotics, and go to work' (Bessire and Bond, 2014: 443). On the other hand, however, to treat indigenous subjectivities and positionalities as merely reflecting the standard social categories of distributed problems is to frame it in universalizing ways for particular ends. Such representations excise indigenous subjects from traces of imperial power and reify embodiment as if it were universal and 'flat', rather than differentially distributed across colonial geographies of harm and neglect. More research remains to be done on non-state, non-settler vectors of power, so as to pay attention to how indigeneity is constituted as corporeal and subjective through the imperial-colonial action of religions, economies (especially those associated with intellectual property) and diverse territorializing strategies (including anti-colonialism and sedentarization).

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Note 1. However, such processes generated social differentiation within indigenous societies, along intersecting hierarchies of class, gender and generation (e.g. the 'high-born boys' in Māori history, in Murton, 2012).

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