

## **Producing the Record**

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### **Abstract**

The ability for archivists and curators to decide *what* has enduring value to *whom* is what makes archives political. *How* such materials are collected or made accessible are what make archives ethically contentious. What happens, then, when marginalized communities get to create and curate their own archives? ACAM 350 (formerly FIPR 469a) “Asian Canadian Community-Based Media” focuses on both documentary and narrative film production. My research questions as I took this course were the following: How might the films made through ACAM 350 be read as an archive? Why is the experience of building this archive pedagogically important, and how does centering the process of narrative production factor into this? In this essay, I explore how the process of producing materials in a community archive helps students to engage archives more critically. I do this by comparing my own layered autoethnographic narrative and account of the experience with the impacts of other community projects. Using an archival framework, I interpret the growth I’ve experienced in producing a film for ACAM 350 as it relates to how students and academia can grow from community-based projects rooted in collaborative knowledge production.

## **Producing the Record**

The archival space is a political and ethically contentious one. They are spaces of preservation, storytelling, and identity construction. Archives contain materials that are “preserved because of [their] enduring value” (Society of American Archivists, as cited in McKee & Porter, 2012, p. 60). Archives are both political and ethically contentious spaces because it is up to archivists and curators to decide *how* materials are collected, as well as *what* has enduring value to *whom*. What happens, then, when marginalized communities get to create and curate their own archives? That is to say, what happens when marginalized communities can choose *what* can be seen as having enduring value to *them*? How might they choose to “shape collective memory of their own pasts and control the means through which stories about their past are constructed” (Caswell et al., 2017, p. 7)? In this essay, I explore how the process of producing materials in a community archive helps students to engage with archives more critically. I do this by using my own autoethnographic narrative of the experience and comparing it to the impacts of other community projects on their participants. Through this paper I interpret the academic growth I’ve experienced in the process of film production through an archival framework. I also examine how the documentary format and its intersections with oral history might model how archivists can read archives ethnographically.

## **Research Context**

The Asian Canadian and Asian Migration (ACAM) studies minor program is a multidisciplinary program that “contributes to the building of a dynamic and sustainable Asian Canadian community initiative at UBC [the University of British Columbia] by emphasizing collaborative linkages between researchers and providing mentoring and training for students” (Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies, n.d.). As an ACAM

student, I have had the honour of participating in a variety of community-based projects and initiatives including working with community activist Jim Wong-Chu's *fonds* housed at UBC's Rare Books and Special Collections; interviewing a local restaurateur; and working as an intern at the Burnaby Village Museum as part of efforts to diversify the programming held there. I have found the ACAM program unique in that it provides the space for projects that are not standard in academia. For example, projects that I have submitted for ACAM-approved courses include: designing a tabletop game that recreates the 1907 Anti-Asian Race Riots in Vancouver; redesigning a textbook entry to examine the rhetorical elements of that genre; and, most commonly, creating video projects that represent different people, organizations, or ideas. Many ACAM course projects have been distinctly creative while still maintaining academic rigour, and I wanted to explore how that was the case.

In this paper, I will be examining ACAM 350 (formerly FIPR 469a): “Asian Canadian Community-Based Media” for the archive it and its projects create. ACAM 350—which is almost as old as the minor program itself—focuses on both documentary and narrative film production. The course covers more than just practical film production skills. The course examines what it means to define a film as being Asian Canadian; the ethics of documentary filmmaking; and uses oral history as a theoretical basis. In its design, the course is centered on a final 6-10 minute film project and culminates in a public screening of these films.<sup>1</sup> My research questions as I took this course were the following: How might the films made through ACAM 350 be read as an archive? Why is the experience of building this archive pedagogically important, and how does centering the process of narrative production factor into this? By drawing on my unique position as a participant in this course, I will conduct an autoethnography to illustrate and investigate the student experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the global coronavirus pandemic in 2020, this was not fully realized and an alternative individual assignment based on course themes was assigned to those who were unable to film their planned projects.

I have participated in a number of archival projects through ACAM, and through those experiences found that exploring the processes and frameworks of narrative and knowledge production in archives has been more enlightening than the standard “extractive enterprise” that archives tend to be (Stoler, 2002, p. 90). Following Ann Laura Stoler’s (2002) approach of looking at an archive ethnographically (i.e. how and who has produced the particular archive) gave me a lense to examine the process and products of ACAM 350 more critically. I argue, then, that the self-reflective process of creating something that will go into an archive helps students understand how to interpret other archival materials critically and ethnographically.

### **Community Archives and Archival Production**

Borrowing from Michel Foucault (1972), Stoler suggests that “the archive is not an institution, but ‘the law of what can be said’” (2002, p. 94). As such, expanding the archive should allow us to expand what can be said, and therefore whose stories are told. However, Stoler also reminds scholars that archives must be understood within the context of “the institutions that it served” (2002, p. 107). In most cases, archives exist through support from institutions “which have agendas, and [...] mandates” (Bergis Jules, as cited in Caswell et al., 2017, p. 14). Archives are not typically built, then, to fully represent or build on marginalized communities. Indeed, “official” archival records often exclude marginalized peoples or “inserts them in archives not as subjects but as objects” (McKee & Porter, 2012, p. 60). For example, much of the archival materials I found in the past regarding the 1907 Anti-Asian Race Riots in Vancouver were records written by governmental organizations where Asians were framed as the objects of attack rather than historical actors of their own. These institutional archives typically “either do not collect materials created by marginalized communities [or] do not involve the communities themselves in a decision-making capacity” (Caswell et al., 2017, p. 11). If scholars are to read archives ethnographically, we must also

recognize, as ethnographers have, the “increasing need to resist colonialist, sterile research impulses of authoritatively entering a culture, exploiting culture for monetary and/or professional gain, while disregarding relational ties to cultural members” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 274). Michelle Caswell et al. suggest that we can approach this topic and include in our definition of community archives those that are housed in institutions if they “[retain] close ties to the target community and [enable] community members to exercise some degree of autonomy over the collection” (2017, p. 11).

### **Autoethnography as a Method**

Carolyn Ellis et al. (2011) describe autoethnography as a method that blends characteristics of autobiography and ethnography; it involves a scholar “retrospectively and selectively [writing] about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or possessing a particular cultural identity” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 276).<sup>2</sup> Like ethnography, the goal of autoethnography is to study one’s own positionality, or one’s own “culture’s relational practices, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences for the purposes of helping insiders (cultural members) and outsiders (cultural strangers) better understand the culture” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 275-276). In this essay, I will be expressing my autobiographical accounts through italicized paragraphs. What sets autoethnography apart from autobiography is scholarly analysis; this can be done by “comparing and contrasting personal experience against existing research” (Ellis et al, 2011, p. 276). This approach to autoethnography is referred to by Ellis et al. (2011) as a layered account. Ellis et al. (2011) outline a variety of ways to conduct an autoethnography, including reflexive ethnography, which “[documents] ways a researcher changes as a result of doing fieldwork” (p. 278). In

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<sup>2</sup> Epiphanies, as Ellis et al. describe, are transformative and intense events. In the context of autobiographies, they are “remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person’s life” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 275).

this paper, I have attempted to approach my autoethnography as a reflexive, layered account of my experiences.

### **Production in Layers**

With ACAM 350, production can be read in several ways: historical production (the creation of stories and realities to be told); film production (the creation of the final film product); archival production (the creation of a community repository and a process of cultural production); and knowledge production (the creation of new pathways for academic research). Each of these forms of production uniquely add to the skills and knowledge that students can potentially learn, and that academia can use to innovate from.

### **Processes of Historical Production: Voices and Silences**

*The opening sequence of All Our Father's Relations plays, and Howard Grant's voice narrates the history of the Musqueam people on this land now known as Vancouver. Shots of nature in and around the present-day reserve are shown, with ambient noise and music playing in the background. A pause, and the raw footage of nature from before appears on the projector screen. The ambient sounds of nature are different this time: windier, and in some ways more disruptive. The recording of Howard Grant's voiceover is played again, but this time there are more pauses and hesitations; more words overall. As a screenshot of an editing timeline in Adobe Premiere appears on the screen, Alejandro Yoshizawa explains how the audio and visuals were edited to become what we initially saw.*

When we edit documentary films, we become subjects of history; we become “voices aware of their vocality” (Trouillot, 2015, p. 23). As students and as filmmakers, we become aware of our ability to describe the realities around us and of our capacity to express our own subjectivities to future viewers. In becoming aware of our role *in* history and in *communicating* history, we engage with the processes of history making and its narrative constructions (Trouillot 2015). While the films made in ACAM 350 could simply be

considered “cultural artifacts of fact production” (Stoler, 2002, p. 91), with this awareness we see them not as things, but as processes (Stoler 2002). Through an ethnographic perspective, the films are “active experiments in meaning-making and sites for knowledge creation” (Douglas, 2017, p. 33). ACAM 350 thus provides a space for the “cumulative [process] of cultural [and knowledge] production” (Stoler, 2002, p. 88).

This awareness allows the films created in ACAM 350 to reflect an understanding of how filmmakers have a voice and give voice to their subjects; it also comes with an understanding of how this process must also produce silences. In the curation, production, and publishing of these films, ACAM 350 goes through each of the moments that Michel-Rolph Trouillot suggests silences enter during historical production (2015, p. 26). The decision to choose one narrator or story over another coincides with the moment of “fact creation” as a source is chosen. The decisions involved with choosing certain cuts over another and rearranging them according to a plot decided by the editor coincides with the moments of “fact assembly” and “fact retrieval.” Finally, the decision to publish and mark the story as culturally important to the community coincides with the moment of “retrospective significance.” In each of these moments of the editing process, whether in collaboration with communities or not, the student editor decides what and how community stories are told. This experience allows students to learn to recognize the voices and silences in archives and archival materials that are not of their own creation.

Another part of learning to understand archives ethnographically is to be aware of how archives are collected. Compared to the standard archive, the ACAM 350 archive poses fewer ethical quandaries in the realms of representation and publishing because their process of collection involves the consent of the subjects. As a consensually created archive, ACAM allows scholars to “create new knowledge and representations of that knowledge *alongside* community members” (Douglas, 2017, p. 33). This process of film production and archival creation in ACAM 350 gives marginalized communities agency to decide which



stories are told or are considered significant. Working in this way, ACAM teaches students to “enter the archives thinking of them as an expansive site for invention that considers multiple potential collaborators” (Douglas, 2017, p. 35). The collaborators in this effort are inclusive of not only the communities these archives serve, but also the living and dead “whose voices and lived experiences are now housed in collections we recover” (Douglas, 2017, p. 35). In the following section, I explore filmmaking as a meaningful collaborative process of knowledge production by looking at its strengths both as a genre and in its interactions with communities.

### **Strengths of the Documentary Form: Credibility, Orality, and Audience**

*The lights turned off, and the projector glowed. A Chinese-Australian girl sings in a home studio, and narrates what it was like to grow up with her mother and music. The short film features shaky camera work, an argument between mother and child is laid bare, and dramatized scenes of a daughter denouncing her mother as if she were in the historical Chinese Red Guard are shown. Mother and daughter reconcile, a song is sung, and the credits roll: “Written by Lucas Li.” Our first written assignment asks: “What is the ‘documentary aesthetic’ and its significance?”*

While the production of these films expand our archives and give voice to the marginalized, our ability to describe the realities around us as subjects of history and the curatorial properties of video editing might call into question the credibility of what we say. Borrowing from Arjun Appadurai, Trouillot (2015) notes that formal constraints are what enforce the credibility of a narrative (p. 8). If “credibility sets the historical narrative apart from fiction” (Trouillot, 2015, p. 8), how do we interpret films like *My Red Guard*? *My Red Guard* borrows elements of the “documentary aesthetic”—of genre conventions—to give the impression of a documentary and a sense of credibility, but it also features dramatic enactments of imaginary scenarios. If the “interview is a valid documentary source because it is recorded” as Viktor Chagas writes (2012, p. 66), then does *My Red Guard*’s interview

elements give the film credibility as a documentary? In-class analyses of complex films such as this made us more conscious of directorial choices as we produced our own films. Just like Stoler's ethnographic work in the archives, we were “no longer studying things” but studying and participating in “the making of them” (2002, p. 89).

Through ACAM 350 I have learned that the skills used in oral history interviews are transferable to documentary ones. They share many of the same ethical concerns, critical explorations, and storytelling elements, and specifically for the ACAM archive, the line between oral history interviews and documentaries is very thin. This is because materials in ACAM 350 are created through collaboration, and according to Alessandro Portelli, the distinction between story-telling and history-telling is that history is a “cooperative effort between several narrators or between them and the interviewer” (1997, p. 25 as cited in Chagas, 2012, p. 62). Chagas also defines the interview as both a “record [and a] performance” (2012, p. 66). Based on these definitions, I would argue that the documentary succeeds as a means of history-telling by being a record of both the story and the performance in ways that more traditional archival materials (such as transcripts) fail.

The ACAM 350 films are helpful tools in analyzing historical production as they allow historians to understand the implicit meanings in narratives through subjects's use of tone, volume, perspective, and even velocity of speech (Portelli 2015). The unwritten social cues that are experienced in an interview lose their nuance because they cannot be objectively transcribed (only subjectively described). For Portelli, the importance of oral testimony is “in its departure from [fact], as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge” (2015, p. 53). Oral history is thus credible in what it tells about the person telling the story, rather than the contents of that story. By focusing on textual histories “we flatten the emotional content of speech” (Portelli, 2015, p. 51). In contrast, a speaker's subjectivity is able to be held and analyzed when it is captured in video. As Chagas writes: “if not for the analysis of performance, the work of the historian would be restricted to speech” (2012, p. 66). Chagas

(2012) also asserts that in the absence of a “record of the performance,” oral histories “[do] not make any sense” (p. 66). For Chagas and Portelli, the value of the oral source is lost without a record of how the narrator told their story. The credibility of an oral source diminishes when historical context and the desires of humans are not accounted for, and when it is not put into the record. By preserving the context of the storyteller, the documentary form allows us to not only analyze *what* is being said, but also *how*. Significantly, documentary's strength is also in the accessibility of the medium for even laypersons to watch and analyze its contents.

The documentary form does, however, have its limitations. Film production schedules and genre conventions can limit the authenticity of the story or ethical relationships that are formed. In class, for example, we discussed the feasibility of frequently checking in with subjects by showing them rough cuts of our films. More importantly, however, it limits the viewer's capacity to enter into the perspective of the narrator. The camera “breaks down the distance between the technology and its users, but it also confirms the technology in its place as the creator of the experience of viewing” (Burnett, 1990, p. 13 as cited in Stille, 2011, p. 105). In breaking down the distance between the viewer and the contents of the film, the camera also frames the experience that the viewer has. Portelli (2015) contends that part of oral history's uniqueness is in its ability to represent the plot that a narrator chooses. In framing the camera and editing the footage, the uniqueness of “the way in which the story materials are arranged by narrators in order to tell the story” is erased (Portelli, 2015, p. 52).

The editing of *Radicalizing Intimacy* (one of the early films created for this archive) shows us how important it is that these films are contextualized by the presence of the filmmaker as they are shown filming the interviews and heard asking the questions. The removal of the filmmakers and their questions from the final product causes a “subtle distortion [to take] place” as an impression that a subject's answers will always be consistent

and fixed arises as a result (Portelli, 2015, p. 55). Saskia Stille points out in her work with elementary school students that subjects of the camera accept and resist “the ways in which the camera constructs a narrative” (2011, p. 104). Parents and teachers, in this case, were focused on getting their answers “right” (Stille, 2011). Although it is a given that oral histories may be limited to those who are willing to speak up about their experiences, these films are unique in that there is the added limitation of those who are willing to have their stories publicly published. The act of recording changes the history that is being told in both form and content. This act of recording is not limited to film; Chagas notes: “the simple act of taking notes during the conversation impedes the spontaneity of the story” (2012, p. 66). Ultimately, the limitations of these projects come with the understanding that the knowledge produced is “tied to research relationships, [sic] and power, context, and histories of participation among the people involved in its production” (Stille, 2011, p. 104).

### ***The Role of the Audience and Public***

The scholars, archivists, community-based researchers, ethnographers, and oral historians that I have consulted all seem to agree that research is a series of negotiations between the researcher and various stakeholders. These stakeholders might include interview and archival subjects; the descendants of those subjects; communities; institutional or organizational guidelines (e.g. Ethics Review Boards, course requirements, etc); colleagues and classmates; and curators (McKee & Porter, 2012). ACAM 350 is a course that builds up to a public screening of its films, and in this context, the audience is also a stakeholder. According to Heidi A. McKee and James E. Porter (2012), dialogue with stakeholders is a means of addressing ethical issues. These negotiations (especially in the context of ethical practice and marginalized communities) are seen as chances to “talk *with* and listen *to* Others, whether they are speaking to us in person or in archival materials” (Glenn & Enoch p. 24, as cited in McKee & Porter, 2012, p. 74). The archive produced in ACAM 350 is thus not a collection of static artifacts, but a “dynamic interaction” between

student filmmakers and their communities (McKee & Porter, 2012, p. 78). The public screening element of these ACAM projects shows that the films are about the people watching as much as the people in them. As Trouillot highlights, this enriches the history-writing process, as “the public is quite likely to contribute to history if only by adding its own readings” (2015, p. 25). Through the screening, the public is consulted with regards to questions of representation and interpretation (McKee & Porter 2012). Here, we return to Caswell et al.’s (2017) idea that institutional archives can be considered community archives if they “[retain] close ties to the target community and [enable] community members to exercise some degree of autonomy over the collection” (p. 11).

### **Archival Production and the Impacts on Community**

*We sat around the table, nearly 45 minutes after the end of our evening class. The draft proposal for our film idea was due soon, and we were discussing what we could put together. Maybe a narrative short based on Philip Oreopoulos’s research on ethnic names and interview call-backs? A documentary on a local Chinese car club? How about something on a senior Asian powerlifting group? Should we have a back-up in case either of those groups don’t want to be filmed? Oh, but we really want that last one... Please let us know as soon as they reply!*

*When we were writing the draft proposal, we were tasked to answer: “Why the topic is critical and why is such a film needed?” We were supposed to connect it back to a social issue. I’m not sure we had much beyond showcasing an underrepresented demographic, but wide grins surrounded the table. We were excited. I was excited.*

Understanding how archives can dictate what stories are worth telling through processes of cultural production might reveal how “archives produced as much as they recorded the realities they ostensibly only described” (Stoler, 2002, p. 103). In creating our film, we were in a way enacting a form of “memory justice for those who would otherwise be

forgotten” (Caswell et al., 2017, p. 15). We were producing a memory and a record that might not have existed otherwise. Speaking to the responsibility scholars have to the people and communities represented in archives, Elisabeth Kaplan suggests that representation is a fundamental archival concern (as cited in Caswell et al., 2017, p. 8). Aside from the group member who was a part of the strength sports world and introduced us to our subject, none of us had even considered that a Chinese woman in her mid-60s might be competing at a national level. Caswell et al. (2017) argue that the “development of community archives [is] in opposition to the silences, misrepresentations and marginalization of mainstream repositories” (p. 6). In searching for why our film was “needed,” we wrote that “By challenging sexism, racism, and ageism in strength sports culture, our documentary will ask its viewers to redefine what strength looks like.” We found a topic that was in opposition to the silences based on sex, race, and age in mainstream repositories of films about strength sport culture. Understanding that “there’s a lot that can be lost when [collections] don’t exist [in archives] and when we don’t make an effort to bring them in” (Bergis Jules as cited in Caswell et al., 2017, p. 14), we could see the film as a means for the preservation and accessibility of community knowledge and perspectives.

### **Knowledge Production: Redefining Academia**

*As the last week of classes came upon us, I scrolled through the class tweets under #ACAM350. A classmate writes, “I took #acam350 to use the tools for my own community.”*

*<sup>3</sup> I wonder to myself how I can use what I’ve learned for my own communities. With this analysis in mind, I think also of how this course has and will affect my scholarly work.*

As the project helped me to embody the work of historians, it also helped to redefine and expand my “ideas of what can be done in the school” (Stille, 2011, p. 107). I have found that academia’s “awe of writing has distorted our perception of language and communication

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<sup>3</sup> Twitter user ACAM Bot (@acam350student)

to the point where we no longer understand either orality or the nature of writing itself” (Portelli, 2015, p. 49). Most course assignments do not allow creative works to speak for themselves, and instead require a written accompanying piece. Through ACAM 350, I have found that learning in university is not necessarily restricted to traditional writing and research, but in fact can be creative and oral in its knowledge production.

The projects surrounding local communities have also been an impetus for me to critically reconsider who my scholarship is for and what I want it to accomplish. In “productively complicating” my understanding of what can be done in school (Douglas, 2017, p. 31), I began to see research as a tool to address community concerns. Following Whitney Douglas and her own work with communities, I have found that collaborative community work has changed the dynamic of “university-community relationships” from ones where “academics can deliver an already theorized or historically contextualized interpretation of archival research to the public” into something that can build “relationships and create new knowledge in collaboration” (Douglas, 2017, p. 39).

Abigail Perkiss (2016) describes oral history work as having the potential for being transformative not only for the narrators and subjects involved, but also for the interviewers themselves. In both Stille (2011) and Perkiss’s (2016) work, they found that community-based student work is a “powerful tool that [enables] students to develop identities of competence” (Stille, 2011, p. 103). This identity of competence can be read in several ways: as filmmakers, as historians, as scholars, etc. Like Perkiss’s students, my project allowed me to see myself as a “[scholar] and expand [my] own professional aspirations” (2016, p. 393). For myself, these film projects have given me confidence to speak with community members to do oral history work, and to explore different possibilities for working in the education industry beyond classroom work. It has led me to consider work in public history, for example, where I can use my experience with filmmaking to make oral history accessible. As the instructor’s role in ACAM 350 was more of a guiding one, I found

that we “experienced a level of agency, autonomy, and affirmation that undergraduates ... rarely get to experience” while creating our films (Perkiss, 2016, p. 406).

Trouillot criticized academia for “[underestimating] the size, the relevance, and the complexity of the overlapping sites where history is produced, notably outside of academia” (2015, p. 19). In critically viewing the ACAM 350 productions, I am reminded that the “purpose of [an] interview is not just to collect information but to generate a source for research” (Chagas 2012, p. 66). These projects based in university-community relationships are a means of acknowledging and gathering the history and knowledge that is produced outside of academia. Douglas calls on scholars to “cultivate habits of mind that enable us to locate ourselves within our communities” (2017, p. 38). By working with communities and recognizing that history is a discourse both within and outside of academia, scholars can also critically explore the ways in which they participate in cycles of silence (Trouillot 2015). Just as scholars are situated in communities, their stories are situated within pre-established frameworks. In creating new knowledge, community projects and community archives also help to “[re/create] meanings that [challenge] existing norms for what counts as powerful and appropriate” (Stille, 2011, p. 107). New frameworks are built when we are not limited to research “with an eye toward academic audiences” (Douglas, 2017, p. 33), and we are then able to “[envision] something beyond academic genres” (Douglas, 2017, p. 30).

### **Limitations of Producing Archives**

As stated at the outset, archives are political in that they allow someone (a curator, or in this case, the filmmaker) to decide whose stories are worth telling and preserving. As such, it is crucial to define “Asian Canadian.” This is addressed in course readings such as Elaine Chang's *Reel Asian: Asian Canada on Screen* (2007). The reality, however, is that the ACAM program was created in response to anti-Asian legacies in Vancouver, a city with a large emphasis on its East Asian population (read: Chinese and Japanese). As Caswell et al. warn,



“community archives can also symbolically annihilate those perceived to be on the margins of their communities” (2017, p. 16). Symbolic annihilation refers to “the ways in which members of marginalized communities are absent, underrepresented or misrepresented in mainstream media and archives” (Caswell et al., 2017, p. 6). Although ACAM courses (including ACAM 350) do feature other groups that might be included in the “Asian Canadian” umbrella, a lot must still be done to diversify the Asian Canadians that are represented in ACAM's archive.

The year in which I have participated in ACAM 350 has been extraordinary and atypical because of the coronavirus outbreak and pandemic. I was thankfully among one of the groups to be able to finish their film and experience the course as intended, but this situation brought to the forefront another limitation in producing an archive of our own using oral history and documentary: oral history (and especially ethical oral history practice) is physical. In Trouillot's words, history “begins with bodies and artifacts” (2015, p. 29). Only two of the five groups in my cohort were able to complete their films this year. One of the groups, which had intended on making a film on reconciliation between Indigenous people and non-white settlers, captured the issue well when they said that reconciliation can't happen over text or video chat. The delicate relationship that is created between narrators and historians (or subjects and filmmakers) fails to be meaningfully created in an online setting. It certainly can still be done, but as producers of history we must be aware of what is lost when key elements of oral histories are lost through imperfect, alternative methods.

### **Intersecting Roles and Concluding Thoughts**

In the process of writing this autoethnography, I experienced the intersections of my roles as researcher, subject, and filmmaker. Ellis et al. (2011) describe the ways in which the autoethnographer “tries to make personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging” (p. 277). Going through the process of creating these films, I found that

community filmmaking has similar aspirations. One of Perkiss's students, Mary Piasecki, said something that resonated with me: "I had the power to make their voices heard" (as cited in Perkiss, 2016, p. 399). While this spoke specifically to the experience of an oral history project that gave voice to the victims of Hurricane Sandy, I found that it was also applicable to marginalized communities that are under- or misrepresented in mainstream media and archives. During the topic selection process at the outset of the course, I found myself choosing topics about little-known groups or culturally-specific experiences: our group landed on a community of Asian seniors that do powerlifting. As a researcher, I wanted to show the importance of the ACAM projects and programs as they related to student growth and engagement. In these intersecting roles, I've found that my goal has largely stayed the same: to build on and boost the ACAM archive in ways that makes Asian Canadian stories and knowledge accessible; to have them seen as worthwhile; and for them to "reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 277). It is in my experience that ACAM projects uniquely situate students to be conscious and capable of applying their learning beyond academia. ACAM 350 in particular equips students with practical skills in oral history interviews and film production. The skills that are learnt and the insight gained through ACAM 350 allowed me to gain an appreciation for ethnographic approaches to both archives and archival production. I believe coursework like that of ACAM 350 is deserving of a greater presence at UBC and in academia as a whole.

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