TERMS OF INCLUSION: CULTURE, POLITICS AND ‘COMMUNITY COHESION’

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Is a cohesive society always a good one? This paper attempts to explore this question in the context governmental programmes in the United Kingdom relating to ‘community cohesion’, diversity management and social inclusion. It seeks to question how these issues have shifted the cultural politics of race and nation in the 21st Century particularly in the geopolitical context of the ‘war on terror’ and military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The tacit ‘terms of inclusion’ will be explored with regard to the debate social inclusion which conflate inclusiveness with integration of difference and ultimately assimilation. Through drawing on a range of examples of cultural initiatives around music, arts and photography the paper will explore the kinds of cultural politics that are possible now that escape the terms set by government and political discourses. This returns to the question that Clifford Geertz posed, namely what are the ‘uses of diversity’? Perhaps we need to push Geertz’s anthropometry beyond the matrix of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ or in the context of the ‘immigrant’ and ‘host’ towards a much less coherent or sealed set of subject positions. Here the politics of culture has the potential to offer an opportunity to think outside of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ in the direction of a likeness that does not reduce, flatten and bleach. The paper will explore this idea and through a range of examples develop and illustrate a politics of likeness that is common and yet not the same.

EXTENDED FAMILIES: GLOBAL SOCIABILITY IN HIP HOP AND FUNK DANCE STYLES

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The idea of the extended family forms an important theme in thinking about global hip hop culture. A case study of the practices and exchanges that took place between dancers during the late 1980s and 1990s reveals field-specific protocols about hospitality, creativity and community that emerged within the international b-boy/b-girl –“breaking”- culture. These appear to be central to dancers’ engagement with music production, dance and entrepreneurial practices of the period. Dancers from various countries consecrated each other’s positions as international figures through their appearances at events, as well as sharing aesthetic judgments about movement and music.

One of the most contradictory and challenging accounts of the place of the individual in such extended families occurs in Franz Kafka’s short story, Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk. The story begins as a celebration of an accomplished singer, Josephine, in
the endangered and migratory Mouse Folk community. The narrator weaves a tale around Josephine’s peculiar creative predicament, and the expectations, needs and wants of the community, which leads to a gradual unravelling, doubting and questioning as to whether her singing is anything special at all, to be set apart from the piping of the other Mouse Folk.

This story is a starting point from which to examine the tensions between individuals and extended families that get played out in transnational networks within global hip hop culture, which cross boundaries of class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and generation. Global sociability is a term I offer up to describe the freestyled (‘improvised’), mediated, and negotiated exchanges that capture all of the excitement, anxiety, and celebration of the extended family reunion.

TO CREATE A DIGITAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION MODEL IN A RISKY SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY IN AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN TAIWAN

Mine-ping Sun, National ChengChi University

In my talk, I will address a pilot action research project in which we have worked with an aboriginal group in southeastern Taiwan to build up a digital community communication model for voiceless people who were seriously ravaged by a nature disaster in August 2009.

Typhoon Morakot claimed hundreds of lives and caused considerable damage in remote villages in central, southern and eastern Taiwan during the 7th to 9th of August, 2009. Unfortunately, most of the victims were marginalized and powerless people, i.e. the indigenous people. According to the statistics issued by the government, more than 700 people perished in the disaster, including a whole village with more than 400 villagers buried under mudslides within just a few minutes. Premier Liu zhao-xuan resigned due to slow rescue and resettlement missions made by the government.

We have found that the systems of community communication had very serious problems during the rescue and resettlement periods. Furthermore, with community communication systems enhanced by digital technologies it should have been possible to reconstruct homeland and ethnic heritage in the following three to four years. In the age of rapid innovation of information communication technologies, how can we work with local people to enable their voices to be heard and to empower the minorities to enhance the reconstruction of their community?

We had a pilot experiment in the “Big Bird Community,” an indigenous settlement in southeastern Taiwan, since November 2009. It was one of the most devastated villages by the floods, but received very limited attention from the public. The aboriginals had no idea how to make their voices heard by the government officials and media. We want to build up a new framework of community communication system that connects community-based NPOs and other ways include the digital storytelling by ravaged families in the process of reconstruction, the approaches taken to rebuild community and heritage, and self empowerment by access to the media. The content will be produced by the agents (e.g., communication college students, NPOs and volunteers) at the first stage, followed by local people, (e.g., local middle high school and college students, local opinion leaders, teachers of primary and middle schools) through the education of new media literacy we offer. Furthermore, in this paper, I will elaborate on our findings and reflections of the pilot study.