Place, Community and Memory in Postindustrial Pointe-Saint-Charles

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Abstract

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St. Gabriel Elementary School in Pointe-Saint-Charles became a flashpoint for intense community mobilization when it was slated for closure in 2004, 2006 and 2011. Its survival speaks to Pointe-Saint-Charles' long history of grassroots activism dating back to its nineteenth century Irish roots and industrial heritage but also recognizes that for many saving the last English school in the Point meant saving the community itself. Through the personal narratives of four lunch ladies at St. Gabe's – each of whom have a four-decade long association with the school – this thesis explores how amidst decades of deindustrialization St. Gabe's has endured as a place of intergenerational memory and connection in the Point and which continues to symbolize community life long gone from sidewalks and balconies in the neighbourhood.

This thesis also explores the meaning of community in disenfranchised neighbourhoods like the Point struggling with the long term effects of industrial decline, community abandonment and the persistent disappearance of meaningful sites of memory and collective history. I address this question first, through narratives of those who have spent most of their lives in the Point and second, through others who live outside the neighbourhood but work in local community based organizations. This study also addresses the existence of an enduring "urban underclass," left behind and relegated to the economic and social margins during postindustrial transitions. Four institutional interviews provide an avenue to explore more deeply embedded subjective attitudes toward the community at St. Gabe's and longstanding Anglophone community in the Point, particularly the extent to which subjective notions of class are implicated in community organizations turning away from the most in need.

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There are so many people who were there behind the scenes all along and without whom I could not have pulled this off – family and friends who checked in with me regularly to see how things were going and who listened to my excited stories of the lunch ladies, what I was learning about Pointe-Saint-Charles and the next task at hand. You know who you are and how much your support has meant. Finally and most importantly, I dedicate this thesis to my sons, Daniel and Jeremy, who have been alongside me throughout. Thank you doesn't nearly go far enough.

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Preface

This study began with a fairly straightforward idea – how and why St. Gabe's became a flashpoint for grassroots organizing when it was up for closure three times in six years. Although I had long been drawn to the history of industrialism along the Lachine Canal – from personal interest and as a cyclist – I knew little about the Point or why St. Gabe's was so important to the community. In the beginning, this research was all about the struggle to save the school but as always our initial research questions turn out to be a much more complex. This thesis thus evolved in several main directions – first, how amidst decades of deindustrialization in the Point, St. Gabe's has endured a place of intergenerational memory and connection and which continues to symbolize vibrant community life long gone from the Point as it once was. This led me to explore the meaning of community in marginalized neighbourhoods struggling not only with the long term effects of economic decline and sustained community abandonment but also the continual loss of meaningful anchors to memory and collective culture. Although much of their historical landscape is still intact, so many physical structures either stand empty or have been repurposed to condos and other venues catering to a new class. They exist as physical reminders yet remain void of sensory experiences associated with their former lives and which embody their past. Yet still, St. Gabe's continues to stand as an important marker of community attachment and continuity and remains one of few historical places of social interaction in the Point. The lunch ladies' stories and fierce commitment to saving the school attest to this.

Finally, this work also became an exploration into what it means for an enduring "urban underclass," to be left behind during postindustrial transitions. Particularly in Chapter Two, I became interested in what causes community organizations to turn their back on the disenfranchised communities they are meant to serve – thus creating yet another form of

displacement and further relegation to the margins. More broadly I asked how community institutions adapt to postindustrial transitions while continuing to meet the needs of increasingly disenfranchised populations. In the end, the story of St. Gabe's became my avenue to explore the very personal and long-term consequences of industrial and community decline – both through personal narratives of those who have lived through it, and second, through the eyes of "outsiders" who live outside the neighbourhood but work in locally based community organizations. Each gave me a completely different perspective on the meaning of community in the Point – one rooted in history and place attachment – the other "looking in from the outside," at times with a highly subjective gaze.

This research brought together a set of intersecting personal interests as well as threads of my own life – but I wouldn't learn the extent until I was well into this project. I'd spent many years as a community advocate and teacher – with inner city youth and in arts based community education – and I had long been interested in processes of industrial change. Yet my interest in St. Gabe's really began in 2011 a few years before I came to Concordia. At the time I was a science teacher at St. John Bosco Elementary in Ville Emard. In essence, I was on the "other side" in 2011 when both of our schools – St. John Bosco and St. Gabe's – were up for closure at the same time. Our communities were fighting the same battle – to save our own school – a disturbing situation as both neighbourhoods had long been dealing with a protracted period of economic decline. In all of this, the broader implication becomes "Which community is more worthy?" Ville Emard and Pointe-Saint-Charles were both fighting to save their local school not only as a community anchor to a collective past but also I would find, as a continuing focal point for intergenerational connection and local place identity.

Given that St. John Bosco closed in 2012, when I had the opportunity to learn about a

"site of struggle" in my Public History course in the Point I turned to the question of St. Gabe's with no idea of what I'd find. I just wanted to know what had happened and I that I would use oral history methodology to do so. The closure of St. John Bosco and St. Gabe's success had left our community in Ville Emard quite puzzled given that the narratives about St. Gabe's and Pointe-Saint-Charles were so negative and at the time, something that I didn't understand. There were a few things that stood out from my experience in 2011. First, I learned that the Point was both a stigmatized and disenfranchised community but also had a reputation of being tough, vocal and incredibly well organized. Second, looking in "from the outside," St. Gabe's had its own stigma as a second rate school – yet it had already been saved twice in a short time. We just didn't get it. Finally, I knew that the lunch ladies would tell me everything I needed to know about mobilization in the community. This turned out to be true.

What started as a simple question, or so I thought – how the community managed to save the school three times in six years – became a much broader study focusing on: The legacy and trauma of deindustrialization – especially the lived experience of successive generations long removed from the Point's industrial heritage or Irish immigrant history; Community resilience and the strength of local agency during periods of postindustrial transition and also throughout processes of gentrification and urban revitalization; The importance of personal narratives in locating individual lived experience within broader social and collective histories – particularly with regard to the meaning of place attachment and cultural continuity; and finally, what it means for an "underclass" to be left behind amidst landscapes of decline and with this, how stigmatization and subjective notions of cultural dysfunction lead to the continued abandonment of marginalized communities.

What I found most unexpected was that the lunch ladies' stories became my window to understanding not only the history of St. Gabe's and importance of local schools to intergenerational memory and community identity – especially in places like the Point – but also the long term cultural impacts of industrial decline and community responses to them. These were not questions I had initially set out to ask. Similarly, my motivation for engaging in the institutional interviews turned out to be quite different than where I ended up. Again, I was interested in the role of community groups in supporting efforts to save the school, yet that also moved into the background. I actually thought I was going to learn about community organizing from two different perspectives but this ultimately wasn't the case.

When I reflect on questions I was asking early on, this work evolved in ways that were quite surprising given the preconceived notions I went into the project with framed largely by my early experience with St. John Bosco. I think back on some of the language that was used about St. Gabe's at the time the two schools were up for closure – most notably – "It's time those kids got out of the Point!" as if closing the school would be good for them. During the institutional interviews I would become incredibly critical of this same language – a process that caused me to question not only my own early subjective attitudes towards St. Gabe's and the Point – but that would also guide a more critical analysis of community abandonment, subjective notions of class and the roots territorial of stigmatization.

One of my greatest challenges with this work was placing the lunch ladies' life stories and the institutional interviews in historiographical context. Yet what began as a methodological challenge became an important contribution to scholarship on deindustrialization and its aftermath, and also questions of class – specifically, what it means to have a "moral gaze" towards communities "left behind," class based opinions of cultural dysfunction which hold

communities like the Point responsible for their own misfortune. In the end the two sets of interviews became my avenue to understanding the changing definition of place and the foundation of place attachment in postindustrial transitions.

However, in the process of writing, I also accomplished something I had never done – to effectively weave oral history narratives, other types of interviews and established scholarship with my own interpretive voice – in essence creating an ongoing critical dialogue throughout the work. This has more to do with developing a new style of writing than anything – but it worked well. Nonetheless, it wasn't clear to me at first how to locate the lunch ladies' stories in historical context or what to do with highly subjective "outsider" attitudes toward the community at St. Gabe's and more broadly, the community in the Point. I started the community interviews with Isabel Morgan (pseudonym) and in essence, her narrative became a point of reference for the others, essentially setting a tone that I would become increasingly uncomfortable with as I moved forward. Her opinions caused me to look for the same kind of subjective narratives in the other interviews that – although critical – were not as disapproving as I had expected.

Yet, the most unexpected part of this process occurred at the juncture where stories of collective culture and local agency intersected with more subjective attitudes toward an underclass "left behind." In many ways, this became the richest part of the story. Importantly, my research links historical narratives with what we are actually seeing in the present. Through exploring such processes, we might come to better understand what is ahead for communities like the Point. In all honesty, I struggled with Chapter Two not only looking for historiographical context but in tempering my own judgments of their community based narratives. Yet, as often the case, I believe that it became the stronger of the two chapters and the place where my research makes the most significant impact. Coming from "the other side," the institutional

interviews highlighted broader forces of class inequality in a way that was very different from the lunch ladies' narratives. Although their lived experience embodied the structural realities of economic decline – as Massey would say, "the local experience of the global," they still remained anchored in a strong attachment to community, shared history and in their sense of collective agency.

There is no doubt I was more personally attached to the lunch ladies' life stories – in part a function of the oral history process – telling personal stories framed within an atmosphere of shared agreement and trust. I cared about them individually and as a group. Within the practice of oral history, their narratives gave me the opportunity to understand how life stories are as much about collective memory and shared cultural history as they are about individual lived experience. This became especially clear during the group interviews – where the act of collective remembering spoke directly to their continuing sense of place attachment and historical sense of place. In comparison, with the exception of my conversation with Emily Cole (pseudonym), the institutional interviews were not in any way, life stories. While there was little to get attached to in a personal sense, they gave me the opportunity to critically explore issues of class relegation and the uncertain future of community support for the most in need – both of which have long term consequences for the health of increasingly marginalized communities in formerly industrialized places.

In conclusion, at this point I don't know enough to say if other community groups in the Point or in deindustrialized neighbourhoods like it are following the cue of organizations like the one addressed in this thesis. I expect that their case isn't unique. The next phase of this research will be to explore whether we are seeing a more universal trend where community groups are adopting more structured or exclusionary policies that effectively result in turning their back on

the most in need. In our interview, Emily made a comment about the YMCA not being as widely open to the community as it once was for holiday celebrations and community events. I would like to follow up on this and the experience of other community groups in the Point, keeping in mind that both the Principal of St. Gabe's and the former director of the local YMCA showed us that – even coming in from the "outside" – it is still possible to find new and positive ways to engage the local community. Yet I still have to wonder about the future. There are many long established community groups in Pointe-Saint-Charles that were involved in efforts to save St. Gabe's. I would be interested to know whether their mandate has changed since.

Introduction

Figure 1.1: St. Gabriel School at the corner of Dublin and Wellington Streets. (2015) Photograph taken by Tanya Steinberg.

"When you lose your schools, you lose the soul of the community." – Joe Mell[1]

Pointe Saint-Charles has lost many of its schools over the years and longtime residents like Joe Mell would agree that the loss of a local school may very well mean the loss of community itself. This is why St. Gabriel Elementary School (St. Gabe's) has time and again become a flashpoint for intense community mobilization when the school was slated for closure in 2004, 2006 and 2011 – a process that repeatedly brought former "Pointers" home in solidarity while reaffirming their attachment to the neighbourhood's collective history. That St. Gabe's has so-far survived is a testament to Pointe-Saint Charles' long history of grassroots activism dating back to its nineteenth century Irish roots and working class industrial heritage – a tribute not only to strong community spirit but for some, a recognition that saving the last English school in the neighbourhood was tantamount to saving the very centre of community life in the Point. As so

[1] Joe Mell, From Balconville to Condoville? The Politics of Urban Change in Post-Industrial Montreal, interview by Steven High, Video, November 8, 2013.

clearly stated by St. Gabe's Governing Board, "St. Gabriel's School has a long history deeply entrenched in the life of our community. The solid links St. Gabriel's School has forged with a wide range of community groups and institutions attest to this,"[2] as does its strong, intergenerational support network. As one letter of support to the Governing Board by two brothers so aptly put about their time at St. Gabe's, "It was not only classroom education but it was also an education about community."[3] Another letter written by Victor Boyle, National President of the Ancient Order of Hibernians had an even stronger message of support:

> … I feel I need to add my name, and the names of our members, to the growing list of supporters for the survival and prosperity of St. Gabriel School in Point St. Charles … Our forefathers suffered and died by the thousands in coffin ships and fever sheds hastily thrown together on the shore of the St. Lawrence in Point St. Charles – their only crime a search for a better life. We, their descendants, cannot stand by and allow that sacrifice to be wiped from memory by the same imposter that forced them from their homes – economics.[4]

These two letters were among ninety-two written for the 2006 mobilization to save the school, most of which echoed similar sentiments.

For over a century, Pointe-Saint-Charles grew as an integral part of Canada's original industrial heartland along the Lachine Canal in Montreal's Southwest Borough, a collection of industrial neighbourhoods that developed around the 1850s and which included Saint Henri, Little Burgundy and Griffintown to the north of the canal and Ville-Emard, Côte-Saint-Paul, and Pointe-Saint Charles to the south.[5] Once a thriving industrial centre, the entire region has

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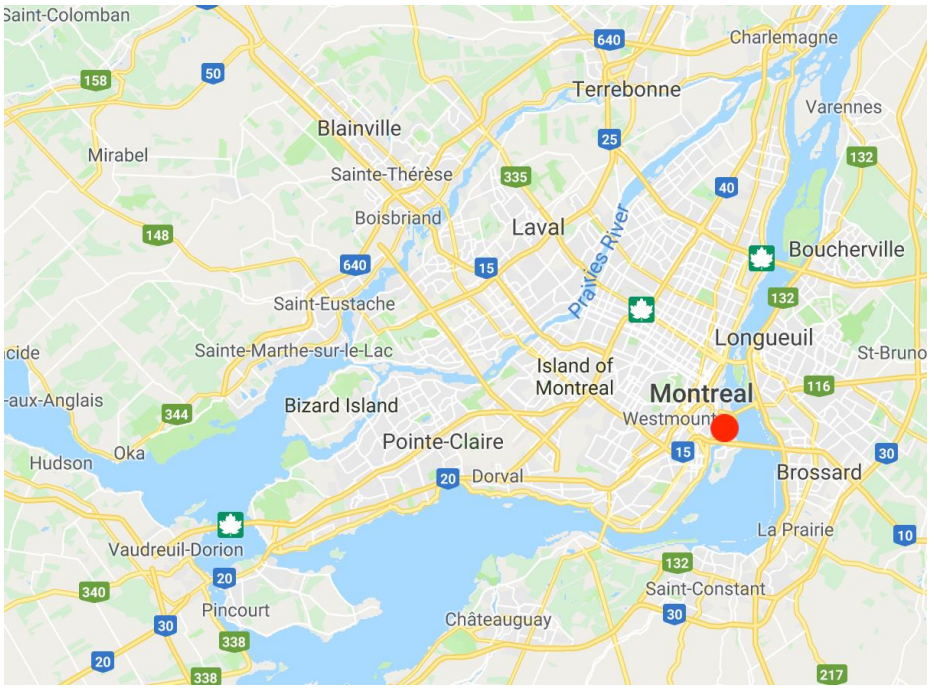
[2] The Governing Board of St. Gabriel's School, "Mémoire Presented to the English Montreal School Board," December 1, 2004.
[3] The Governing Board of St. Gabriel's School, "St. Gabriel Elementary School Brief: Presented to the English Montreal School Board, 2006," November 30, 2006, 23.
[4] The Governing Board of St. Gabriel's School, "St. Gabriel Elementary School Brief," 21.
[5] An excellent overview of the industrial history of the Montreal's Southwest can be found in Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "Understanding the Built Form of the Industrialization along the Lachine Canal in Montreal," *Urban History Review* XXXV, no. 1 (2006): 3–17.



Map 1.1: Pointe-Saint-Charles within the City of Montreal.
The red dot marks the location of Pointe-Saint-Charles. (2019) Source: Google Maps.[6]

supplanted the Lachine Canal as Montreal's main industrial corridor and shipping route in 1959, and later continued when the canal closed for good to all shipping traffic in 1970. Both events stimulated a protracted period of industrial decline all too familiar in industrial rust belt communities around the world. The Point was by no means a "single-industry" town, nor can its decline be attributed to the closure of one single plant. However, the Canal's closing led to en masse closure of all but a few factories, a process which had a similar impact on the entire region. Without the Lachine Canal as a local conduit for industrial traffic upon which the regional economy depended, most industrial sectors in the area eventually ceased to exist.

By the early 1970s the Point and the entire Southwest Borough had become shadows of what they once were, experiencing a mass exodus of manufacturing as one factory after another closed its doors – the Grand Trunk and CN Railway yards, Belding Corticelli, (producers of silk thread, ribbon and later, parachutes during WWII), Redpath Sugar, Northern Electric, Dominion

[6] *Montreal, Quebec* (Google Maps, 2019), https://www.google.com/maps/place/Montreal,+QC.

Textile, and Stelco Steel – and with that, the massive outmigration that followed. Having lost the stability of its local economic base – factory, railway and warehousing jobs – the population fell not only in the Point but also throughout the entire region. Between 1971-1991, the Southwest Borough experienced major job losses while losing fifty percent of its population during the same time period.[7] To this day the Point remains one of Montreal's poorest neighbourhoods.[8] With a population of 14,000 in 2014, thirty-seven percent live below the poverty line (compared with twenty-five percent in Montreal). A total of forty-nine percent of families are single parent households, well above the thirty-three percent Montreal average and forty-five percent of the neighbourhood's senior population is considered low income. In a neighbourhood where renting has always been the norm, in 2015 social housing accounted for about one quarter of all housing units in the Point and in the end, may be the ultimate obstacle to total redevelopment and gentrification pressures.

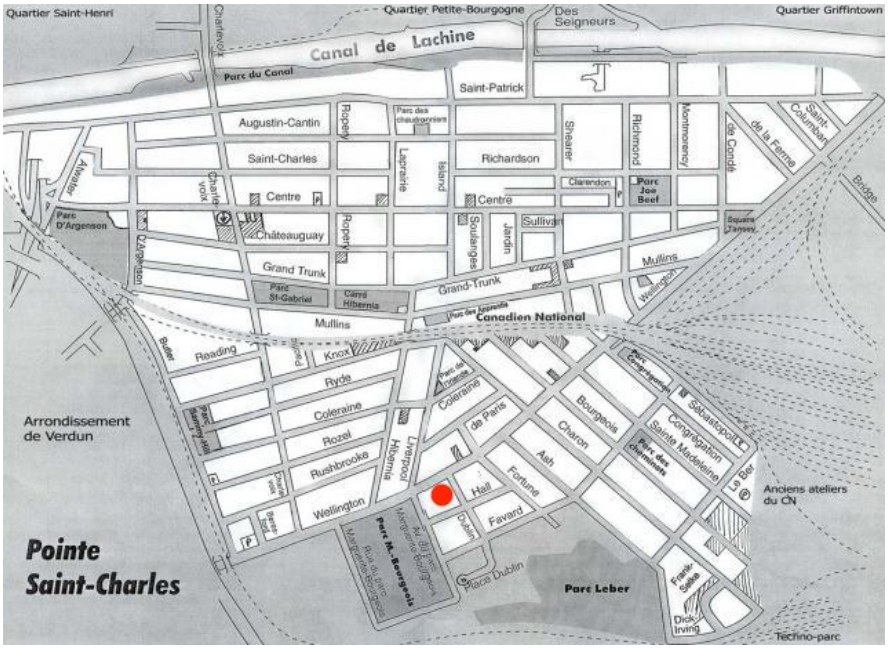
Following decades of deindustrialization, decline and more recently, a reconfiguration of the neighbourhood through gentrification and urban revitalization, St. Gabe's remains an enduring symbol of collective memory and a continuing link to the community's history. That community schools stand as markers of intergenerational history, community memory and place identity is clear.[9] Yet, in disenfranchised neighbourhoods like the Point local schools take on even greater importance in maintaining social cohesion and in providing a focal point for community contact – especially in periods of transition. Citing earlier unsuccessful efforts to

[7] Geoffrey Deverteuil, "The Changing Landscapes of Southwest Montreal: A Visual Account," *The Canadian Geographer* 48, no. 1 (2004): 76–82.
[8] All the data in this section was taken from the report: Centraide of Greater Montreal, "*Territorial Analysis: Sud-Ouest Borough*," Fall 2014.
[9] Robin A. Kearns et al., "'The Status Quo Is Not an Option': Community Impacts of School Closure in South Taranaki, New Zealand," *Journal of Rural Studies* 25, no. 1 (2009): 131–40; Karen Witten et al., "Educational Restructuring from a Community Viewpoint: A Case Study of School Closure from Invercargill, New Zealand," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 21 (2003): 203–23.

save Lorne Elementary from closure in 1986, Patricia Murphy, then director of Saint Columba House, voiced these concerns on the impact of losing yet another community school:

> Unfortunately we lost in our efforts to keep Lorne School open, which was a great detriment to the community. Its loss resulted in the breakdown of community cohesion, particularly as regards the active volunteer involvement in the school on the part of parents…. This is particularly important in a community with high drop-out levels and where children are most at risk in the educational system.[10]

Although Lorne closed in the end, at the time it was a focus for intense community mobilization and a validation of the neighbourhood's collective voice.



Map 1.2: St. Gabriel School in Pointe-Sainte-Charles.
The red dot marks the location of the school.
Source: Right to the City – Working Class Public History Basecamp.[11]

Amidst successive waves of change, St. Gabe's remains not only a vestige of former times but a point of departure from which to understand processes of neighbourhood transformation – what Massey sees as an ongoing dynamism of places embedded within broader

[10] The Governing Board of St. Gabriel's School, "Mémoire Presented to the English Montreal School Board," 4.
[11] Source: PSC generic map.jpeg: Right to the City – Working Class Public History Basecamp https://curaproject.basecamphq.com/projects/12346018/file/210553488/PSC%20generic%20map.jpg

global processes linked to "elsewhere … the geographical beyond."[12] Central to this thesis is Massey's idea that places are forever in the process of becoming and are forever unachieved – ultimately representing ever changing articulations of wider social relations. I accept and build on the notion of community not as a fixed construction with clear boundaries, familial or institutional ties, but as a dynamic spatial and historical process, an idea in agreement with John Walsh and Steven High, Lucy Taksa and Anthony Cohen.[13] I am particularly interested in the questions of what makes a community in an urban context and how communities persist in the face of profound economic and social restructuring. In the end, all of my interviews focus in some way on questions of community transformation, particularly with regard to the narrator's positionality in the process.

This thesis thus explores the meaning of community in a postindustrial era, specifically, how a formerly industrial community maintains its historical identity and sense of collective culture following decades of deindustrialization and with that, the persistent disappearance of meaningful sites of memory and collective history. I address this question from two interrelated but quite different perspectives – first, those who have spent most of their lives in the Point and second, others who live outside the neighbourhood but who work in local community based organizations. Both chapters involve oral history methodology as a framework for understanding the lasting cultural significance of deindustrialization and the resilience of communities in its aftermath.

Chapter One explores the continuing significance of St. Gabriel School as a site of place-based attachment, collective memory and community through the life stories of four lunch ladies

[12] Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* 39 (1995): 183.
[13] John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," *Social History* 32, no. 64 (1999): 255–74; Lucy Taksa, "Like a Bicycle, Forever Teetering Between Individualism and Collectivism: Considering Community in Relation to Labour History," *Labour History* 78 (2000): 7–30; Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London; New York: Routledge, 1985).

at the school – Debbie Fox, Carol Clifton, Mona Kircoff and Natalie Sztych. Each of the lunch ladies has a four-decade long intergenerational history within the school as students themselves, volunteers, lunch ladies, mothers, aunts or grandmothers of current students and all were involved in the three mobilization efforts to save St. Gabe's. They gave me a uniquely insider's perspective not only into what it means to live through a protracted period of neighbourhood decline but also their incredible resilience in fighting to save St. Gabe's as a lasting symbol of community within the school and within the neighbourhood. Through their personal narratives I examine how St. Gabe's has come to represent the persistence of a neighbourhood long gone from sidewalks and balconies – their "Balconville" of the past – and which has endured as a strong place of intergenerational memory and connection. Here Strangleman et al. remind us of the "… continuing influence of deindustrialization as it affects not only those who are displaced from manufacturing jobs but also their children,"[14] and in Pointe-Saint-Charles, this no doubt, includes their grandchildren.

All but Mona had lived in the Point since early childhood and each had an equally fierce desire to protect their sense of community in the school – a continuing and strong anchor to their collective history. Through our conversations, I discovered how saving St. Gabe's had become synonymous not only with saving the community of the Point, it meant saving their personal sense of home and family. As Natalie expressed so plainly, "It's our home away from home. I guess you could say, for all of us, it's our school family."[15] As I got to know Carol, Mona, Debbie and Natalie I learned they had many names for themselves – lunch supervisors, lunch ladies, lunch mums, lunch monitors or student supervisors – using the more familiar terms, lunch ladies or lunch mums, when telling funny stories like the time they had t-shirts printed with the

[14] Tim Strangleman, James Rhodes, and Sherry Linkon, "Introduction to Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Class and Memory," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84, no. Fall (2013): 20.
[15] Natalie Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, Audio, October 27, 2015, 2:40.

words, “Lunch Ladies.” I liked the term lunch ladies as it signifies a community in itself and I use it throughout this work. In the end, I came to appreciate that for the lunch ladies, closing St. Gabe’s would have been tantamount to closing the “last mill in town,” an event that would have been personally traumatic but also for them would spell the end of community and their historical sense of belonging. Such imagery is reminiscent of Steven High’s work on life on the factory floor in Sturgeon Falls where the workplace itself was imbued with symbolism of home, family and community.[16] There, High found that factories also symbolized important community institutions – places that linked spaces of familial social interaction and workplace solidarity – both the underlying basis for community cohesion. I can say the same about the lunch ladies and St. Gabe’s where the school as a community institution had long been central to maintaining a sense of family, intergenerational history and collective culture within the neighbourhood.

In musing about the importance of St. Gabriel School to community survival, Carol envisions a “Rubik’s Cube”[17] where school, church and local organizations are each vital parts of an integrated whole. Lose one and the rest eventually follow, a sentiment that resonated through all of the lunch ladies’ interviews. In a brief submitted to the English School Board contesting the school’s possible closure in 2004, St. Gabe’s Governing Board articulated this rather well:

> A neighbourhood is more than a conglomeration of housing units. It is an organic plethora of relationships between people, institutions, self-help structures and political forces that are formed over time and by means of a variety of initiatives and struggles. Although Point St. Charles continues to be one of Canada’s most economically disadvantaged communities, its strength resides in this intricate network of relationships that support and empower people. A neighbourhood school is integral to this community model, providing unique opportunities for collaboration with other groups and institutions to meet specific needs and enhance collective well-being, particularly of its

[16] Steven High, “Transplanted Identities,” in *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America’s Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 41–73.
[17] Carol Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, interview by Tanya Steinberg, Audio, October 27, 2015.

children.[18]

In the end what is so incredible about St. Gabe's is the idea of the school surviving as a place of intergenerational community attachment and a focal point for a continuing and rich collective narrative.

Chapter Two also focuses on the far-reaching effects of deindustrialization and its aftermath but from a very different perspective. Through the personal narratives of four community workers – three of whom live outside the Point but have no historical connection to the neighbourhood, I explore what it means to be the on the "outside looking in." While they participate in processes of neighbourhood change yet may have little or no sense of place based attachment or connection to living memory, I am most interested in what it means for community workers, particularly from outside the Point, to bridge this "postindustrial divide." To this end, I interviewed Isabel Morgan, senior administrator and Emily Cole, former youth program worker at a community organization serving Pointe-Saint-Charles and other nearby neighbourhoods;[19] Jim Daskalakis, Principal of St. Gabe's Elementary; and Sharon Parry, former Director of the Pointe-Saint-Charles YMCA. Emily was the only one of the four interviewees raised in the Point from early childhood and in that, she bridged many divides – most of all as one who had lived through decline and who felt a strong sense of attachment to the Point. Although Emily wasn't openly critical about her experience within her own community institution, I felt she had a particular kind of "insider's" perspective, especially in her role working with neighbourhood youth. One of the questions I address in these interviews is the extent to which outsiders develop

[18] The Governing Board of St. Gabriel's School, "Mémoire Presented to the English Montreal School Board," 2004, 2.

[19] Isabel Morgan and Emily Cole are pseudonyms for two interviewees that I have chosen to anonymize in this work. My goal in this thesis is to understand the extent to which community institutions continue to serve the needs of the most marginalized groups in Pointe-Saint-Charles, not to attribute opinions to any one person or organization.

a sense of place attachment as they work within the community or even if this is necessary for them to effectively serve the local population. As Taljia Blokland notes, outsiders lack the social identification tied to community spaces of interaction and belonging,[20] and thus, remain on the outside looking in. In some cases I found this to be true. Yet in others, I discovered that "outsider status" stimulated a greater commitment to finding a "way in," essentially a positive and open approach to participating in local community process.

For Chapter Two I initially set out to learn about the role of institutional partners in mobilization efforts to save St. Gabe's and also their thoughts on St. Gabe's as a community anchor. However in the end, the outsider narratives invited me to consider something deeper – the long term consequences of economic decline, not only from the viewpoint of local agency but within the context of broader structural forces. Specifically, I am interested in the existence of an enduring "urban underclass," left behind and relegated to the economic and social margins during periods of postindustrial change. In contrast to the lunch ladies' narratives of community resilience and historical continuity, the institutional interviews provided an avenue to explore the presence of more deeply embedded subjective attitudes towards the most disenfranchised population in the Point – in particular, the community at St. Gabe's and I would learn, the longstanding Anglophone community.

Here, I wanted to understand the extent to which outsiders express class based perceptions that deem the community responsible for its own marginalization, what Andrew Sayer refers to as "the moral significance of class,"[21] the belief that social inequality and community dysfunction are rooted in culturally shared and subjective characteristics. In this, James Rhodes importantly points out that when cultural sensibilities are viewed as the basis for

[20] Taljia Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories: Neighbourhood and Networks in Collective Acts of Remembering," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25, no. 2 (2001): 268–83.
[21] Andrew Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

social marginalization and social inequality, these subjective judgments not only further marginalize disenfranchised populations but also become the basis for continued stigmatization and relegation to the periphery.[22] I considered the institutional interviews through this lens and in the end they allowed me to highlight an unresolved and deep tension – what happens to a working class community in the wake of deindustrialization, particularly if the community can be seen as responsible for its own marginalization. In this, the creation of symbolic boundaries represents a particular form of "othering" ultimately leading to increasing solidification of stratified social boundaries. I came to understand that for most this wasn't necessarily the case. But still, one of their greatest challenges was placing themselves in the context of collective culture in the absence of their own historical attachment.

This thesis research unfolded in two phases over a period of eight months, the first of which involved oral history interviews with Debbie, Carol, Mona and Natalie at St. Gabriel School and then a second set of institutional interviews some months later with Isabel, Emily, Jim and Sharon at their places of work. My interest in St. Gabe's grew out of a final project for one of my first MA seminars at Concordia with Steven High, "Working Class Public History: Visibility and Invisibility in Pointe-Saint-Charles. " This interdisciplinary "Right to the City" initiative focused on postindustrial transformation in the Point – a place based and participatory approach to teaching and learning in which students "worked with" as opposed to just "learning about" the community of Pointe-Saint-Charles.[23] This methodology fully embedded students within the local community as class meetings were also held within the Point near St. Gabriel School. Our final research reports focused on different aspects of the same theme, "History

[22] James Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries in de-Industrial Burnley," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35, no. 4 (2012): 684–713.
[23] Kathleen Vaughan, Emanuelle Dufour, and Cynthia Hammond, "The 'Art' of Right to the City: Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning in Pointe-St-Charles," *LEARNing Landscapes* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 2016): 387–418.

happened here," projects in which we each collaborated with community groups or individuals attached to local places in all phases of our research. Given my own background in community organizing I was most interested in "sites of struggle," flashpoints for community mobilization around issues of urban change and urban conflict. I knew that St. Gabe's had been saved from closure several times and had often wondered why, given its low numbers and its location in the Point, a neighbourhood with a widely held reputation of being one of the most difficult and disenfranchised in Montreal.[24]

I met with Carol, Mona and Natalie twice together before our individual interviews, once to talk about the project and get familiar with each other and a second time to fill out ethics forms. I only met Debbie on my second visit with the others and at the time she felt strongly she would have little to offer in an individual interview. She declined my request. I still knew I wanted to hear her story given how animatedly she expressed herself in these unstructured conversations and how passionate she was about what the school meant to the community. These initial meetings with Debbie, Carol, Mona and Natalie were essential to establishing an atmosphere of trust, partnership and shared authority at the foundation of oral history practice, and which respected their sense of agency in the process. They led these discussions and mostly, I listened. On several occasions, I asked the lunch ladies if I might photograph them. All declined. However, Debbie was willing to be "in" the senior cafeteria photo as long as her back was turned to the camera. I never asked why they said no to photographs but understood that they were uncomfortable with the idea. Instead I was invited to photograph the spaces that defined their day-to-day and that meant so much – the kitchen, cafeterias and common areas within the school.

[24] Centraide of Greater Montreal, "Neighbourhood Overview: Pointe-Saint-Charles," Fall 2014, http://www.centraide-mtl.org/en/communities-served/pointe-saint-charles/.

Debbie's reluctance to grant an interview became one of those surprising methodological gifts, an opportunity to explore a new interpretive direction that I might not have otherwise – in this case, the oral history practice of both individual and collective remembering. Graham Smith calls this transactional remembering, which he notes, "… affords unique opportunities for understanding remembering as organized social action."[25] Interactive group dynamics thus create a setting for individual stories and the unfolding of communal memory – in their case, spirited group exchanges as the lunch ladies' memories shuttled back and forth in time, meandering through streets and places of shared memory. In considering the meaning of time in oral history, Portelli captures this idea so well in noting the importance of telling stories to shaping identity:

> In order for the teller to recover himself or herself from time and to move ahead into time, the tale must be preserved. This applies to individual as well as collective tales: to the myths which shape the identity of a group, as well as the personal recollections which shape the identity of an individual.[26]

While the lunch ladies each told their life stories from very different perspectives, for me they also represented a collective voice and a collective identity.

Given the lunch ladies' long history and unique position within St. Gabe's – currently involved in everything from setting up for holiday celebrations to tutoring, mentoring and serving lunches – I chose to interview them for a specific reason. They possessed unbelievable long-term institutional and community memory and with that, longstanding intergenerational knowledge of and personal connection to local family history. Both became my windows to understanding how much the Point had changed as well as their responses to it. But equally important, while I did find a popular TED Talk and series of children's books on "Why lunch

[25] Graham Smith, "Remembering in Groups: Negotiating Between 'Individual' and 'Collective' Memories.," in *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2015), 195.
[26] Alessandro Portelli, "The Time of My Life: Functions of Time in Oral History," in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 59.

ladies are heroes,"[27] based on the personal experience of one former elementary student and now author, I found no reference in the oral history literature to lunch ladies as a rich source of intergenerational stories or collective memory. This research aims to fill this gap, if nothing else, than to open a conversation. In the end, that I happened upon the lunch ladies' life stories was quite by accident. In looking for narratives of community mobilization I just knew that if you wanted to learn anything about what goes on in an elementary school, just ask the lunch ladies. They know everything.

My experience organizing the second round of institutional interviews seemed so much simpler and shorter. With the exception of Jim Daskalakis who was instrumental in establishing my relationship with the lunch ladies and St. Gabe's, there were no repeated meetings with Isabel, Emily or Sharon to "set the tone," or establish a shared way of doing things – just a few emails to confirm a schedule. For these I showed up with recording device in hand and ethics forms to sign. I did get to know Jim fairly well though, especially as he always welcomed me so warmly into the school community. Each time I entered the school, he introduced me to students, gave me news of school events and ushered me in with no hesitation in expressing how far his school had come in the five years that he had been Principal. Even in our introductory phone call, I learned quickly that his enthusiasm for my project mirrored his own commitment to the school and that any interest I had in St. Gabe's would be supported completely. I left our first meeting with approval to interview the lunch ladies (with whom he had already spoken on my behalf) and with copies of all documents the St. Gabriel School Governing Board submitted to EMSB during the three periods of mobilization in 2004, 2006 and 2011. I also left with an agreement to interview him at some point in the future.

[27] Jarrett J. Krosoczka, *Why Lunch Ladies Are Heroes*, TED Talks, 2014, https://www.ted.com/talks/jarrett_krosoczka_why_lunch_ladies_are_heroes/transcript?language=en.

One of the most important things about the institutional interviews was that they forced me to consider my own self-reflexive process more deeply, especially as we talked about personal opinions they had about the community. I had no history in the Point and wasn't I as a researcher also on the "outside looking in?" This exercise weighed heavily in my effort to listen across difference while at the same time remaining true to the lunch ladies' life stories for which I had a greater personal attachment. I asked myself throughout all of these interviews how my own subjective opinions might influence my interpretations as I explored their "outsider" narratives. If my aim was to understand subjectively held attitudes towards an "underclass left behind" in the Point, I was bound to hear perspectives that differed from my own and in some cases I certainly did. Yet I still felt I had to navigate my emotional commitment to the lunch ladies and the stories they had shared so generously.

In addressing this type of question of subjectivity in oral history, Portelli holds that it is the researcher who must "'accept' the informant, and give priority to what she or he wishes to tell, rather than what the researcher wants to hear."[28] I'm not sure I was very good that this at first but it did demand that I broaden my interpretation and be open to hearing subjective opinions I might disagree with. In her early work on subjectivity in the oral history process, Valerie Yow asks a similar question, "Do I Like them Too Much?"[29] or otherwise, in what way do feelings toward a narrator affect an interviewer's interpretation? I could relate to this. Yow warns us that in establishing a shared space within an oral history interview, to be cognizant of our "motives for the doing the project, feelings about the narrator, interviewer's reaction to the narrator's testimony, and intrusion of the interviewer's assumptions and of the interviewer's self-

[28]Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 70.
[29] Valerie Yow, "'Do I Like Them Too Much?'. Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa," *Oral History Review* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 55–79.

schema into the interviewing and interpretive process."[30] This resonated. I must also add that as I began the process of writing about my all of my interviews, I encountered a recurring and somewhat troubling problem about the questions we don't ask because we don't know they're important but that later become a key part of the story we aim to tell. This is a methodological question and a personal interest more than anything – how in the course of doing oral history so many things remain unanswered in the writing process. No doubt, there is much to be gained from developing long-term oral history partnerships. I turn here to a brief history of St. Gabriel School – a necessary context for placing the interviews that follow.

As one of the Point's oldest community institutions, the original St. Gabriel School opened in the late 1800s by the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame with a mandate to educate primarily Irish immigrant children whose families came to work on the construction of the Victoria Bridge and excavating the Lachine Canal.[31] Until the 1998 dissolution of Protestant and Catholic denominational school boards in Quebec,[32] St. Gabe's belonged to the Montreal Catholic School Commission (CECM), a predominantly French language school board with few English Schools throughout the city of Montreal. With the split of school boards along linguistic lines, St. Gabe's became part of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB), the province's largest Anglophone school board of nine in Quebec.[33] St. Gabe's would ultimately become the westernmost elementary school within the EMSB. From its previous location at the corner of La Prairie and Centre Street, built in 1909, a building that is now is subsidized housing, St. Gabe's

[30] Yow, "'Do I Like Them Too Much?'" 56.
[31] The Governing Board of St. Gabriel's School, "Mémoire Presented to the English Montreal School Board."
[32] For an extensive history of the Quebec Protestant education system, consult Roderick MacLeod and Marie Anne Poutanen, *Meeting of the People: School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801-1998* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2004). Similarly, in his book, *The Forgotten Quebecers: A History of English-Speaking Quebec 1759-1980*. Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1985, Ronald Rudin focuses on the history of the Quebec Anglophone population, concentrating also on Quebec's provincial English education system.
[33] Wikipedia, "English Montreal School Board," March 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Montreal_School_Board.

moved to its current home in 1973 at the corner of Dublin and Wellington, a more modern and larger building that housed the school's first and growing coed community. There is no high school in the Point, an enduring problem as children hit adolescence with no real local community anchors – a continuing challenge that I address in Chapter Two. Over time, the neighbourhood has lost all its English schools but St. Gabe's. Lorne Elementary (now Coop du Canal de Pointe-Saint-Charles), Riverside School (demolished in 1982 and is now Parc des Cheminots), Kanamara and Startchfield Schools, all closed due to declining population numbers and declining family size. There are still two French elementary schools in the Point – École Charles-Lemoyne and École Jeanne-Leber – both in need of space at the same time that St. Gabe's remains under capacity.[34]

In 2011 Pointe-Saint-Charles was not the only place to be hit with possible school closures but was one of two Southwest Borough neighbourhoods facing the loss of its only English elementary school. However, in 2011, the region's only high school – James Lyng in nearby St. Henri – was also saved from closure. It continues to serve not only some of the most at-risk students in the Montreal but also remains the only remaining English High School in the Borough.[35] The other elementary school up for possible closure in 2011 was St. John Bosco in Ville Emard, historically an Italian immigrant neighbourhood also hit with the fallout of deindustrialization and in recent years, gentrification. St. John Bosco had its own intergenerational Italian heritage and like the families at St. Gabe's, their community also fought to save its school. In an extraordinarily divisive move on the part of the EMSB, the two neighbouring communities at St. John Bosco and St. Gabe's were pitted against one another in a fight to save their own school. It became an "us" or "them" scenario, a state imposed conflict

[34] Jim Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, Principal of St. Gabriel Elementary School, Audio, October 16, 2015.
[35] CTV News, "Parents Fight in Third Round of EMSB Closure Discussions," December 7, 2011.

around community institutions essential to the health of two local working class neighbourhoods already profoundly affected by deindustrialization and urban redevelopment. In the end, St. Gabe's survived while for seven years St. John Bosco has stood empty. In September, 2019, St. John Bosco will become the temporary home to 300+ Westmount Park Elementary students while their school in another neighbourhood closes for a two-year renovation project.[36] Although the building will not stand empty for a while, it will still not be a local community school as it once was.

The possible closure of St. Gabriel School made headlines time and again over the years. "Parents Fight St. Gabriel Elementary Closure: 2nd Time in Two Years." "How Much Longer Can Montreal School Evade Chopping Block?"[37] "EMSB Hearing Wednesday: Three Closures Contested."[38] These were just a few articles to hit the press but each announcement that the school was on an EMSB closure list came as a shock. Mona said of 2004, "Everyone was scared. They were really, really scared, shocked. We knew our numbers were dwindling. We'd been fighting for a long time to get our boundaries changed,"[39] since the loss of Little Burgundy students in a school boundary shift two years prior had severely reduced St. Gabe's population. Natalie remembers what it felt like the first time the school was up for closure and how the school turned to the community for help:

> '04 was the biggie because that was the first time we were on the chopping block because our numbers had declined quite a bit and that. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know where to start. We didn't know how to make a brief. None of us knew what to do. Thank god, we got in touch with St. Columba House. St. Columba House was our saviour. Also, our commissioner, he was a big help too.

[36] CTV News, "Westmount Park Parents Get Details about Two-Year School Closure," 2018, https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/westmount-park-parents-get-details-about-two-year-school-closure-1.4212996.
[37] Les Perreaux, "How Much Longer Can Montreal School Evade Chopping Block?," *The Globe and Mail*, September 1, 2008.
[38] Brenda Branswell, "EMSB Hearing Wednesday: Three Closures Contested," Global News, December 8, 2011, http://globalnews.ca/news/187086/emsb-hearing-wednesday-three-closures-contested/.
[39] Mona Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, interview by Tanya Steinberg, Audio, November 3, 2015, 9:48.

> If we didn't have all of them, I don't know where we would have been that year. They worked hard for us with the whole community. Even the Community Clinic got involved, Action-Guardien. They all get together and they have their meetings. They try to do different things for the community. They did photocopies of pamphlets …. and they'd do it free of charge. You don't get that very often, right?[40]

Carol shared her thoughts on community mobilization, "… maybe they thought we were joking, but in my point of view, I was sure, like with all the parents and other lunch mums, we weren't going to let this fight go down."[41] In the end, mobilization efforts were supported by many local community organizations including Clinique Communautaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Action-Guardien, the YMCA, St. Gabriel's Church and Carrefour d'éducation populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Bibliotèque St. Charles.[42] It was only much later in the research process that I realized Isabel and Emily's organization had not been included in this list of strong community supporters.

Nonetheless, given declining numbers both within the school and in the English system province-wide, saving St. Gabe's has been a real testament to community solidarity and unity in the Point. To place all of this in context, since its creation in 1998 the English Montreal School Board closed seventeen schools while Montreal's westernmost school board, Lester B. Pearson, closed seven facilities in the same time period.[43] Citing a declining English population in Quebec, Language Bill 101's restrictive English eligibility requirements[44] and increasing

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[40] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 15:29.
[41] Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 8:34.
[42] The Governing Board of St. Gabriel's School, "Mémoire Presented to the English Montreal School Board."
[43] This overview can be found in Amy Luft, "The Enrolment Drop in Quebec's English Schools" (CTV Montreal, 2015), http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/the-enrolment-drop-in-quebec-s-english-schools-1.1999020.
[44] Bill 101 is one of Quebec's language laws that hugely impacted the English school system province-wide. Bill 101 mandates that newcomers to Quebec must send their children to French public schools unless they opt to enter the private English system. Children can only be granted eligibility to attend the English public system under very limited circumstances – for example, if they, a sibling or one parent had done the majority of their education in English in Canada. In 2002, the Quebec government closed a loophole (Bill 104) allowing students to switch to the English system after attending English private school for one year. The requirement that newcomers attend French school, the closure of the Bill 104 loophole coupled with a wider demographic shift to smaller families have resulted in dramatically declining numbers in Quebec's English public school system.

numbers of families that have been granted English eligibility but choose French over English public education, Quebec's total English school population dropped from a high of 256,251 in 1971 to a low of 102,000 by 2013. Numbers fell more than 12,000 students or 10.9 percent just in the five year span between 2008-2013.[45] What is so incredible about St. Gabe's is that in 2006 the school was only at thirty-four percent capacity and in 2011, at twenty-eight percent. Yet, even at its lowest capacity of ninety-seven students in 2011 (in a building that can house 345) the community mobilized so successfully to save St. Gabe's. The school population continues to grow today. At over 170, it is a real testament to St. Gabe's as an enduring site of collective memory and community anchor in a postindustrial world where memories continue to express their voice, their place in history and where community continues to thrive.

In the 2013 special issue of *International Labor and Working-Class History,*[46] Strangleman et al. and others called upon us to take a long term and interdisciplinary approach to understanding deindustrialization not only through the perspective of memory but also through cultural representations including oral history, photography or literature – illustrations that reveal valuable insights into the consequences of deindustrialization over time. It is ultimately within this context that I frame my thesis research. My exploration of the lunch ladies' life stories and institutional narratives from the "outside looking in" together offered a unique opportunity to look at this question from two different and potentially conflicting viewpoints. I engaged each set of interviews differently – one from the perspective of collective and historical attachment to place and the other, interpreting the meaning of community and class from an outsider's viewpoint. In essence these two sets of narratives represent two sides of a critically engaged

[45] Luft, "The Enrolment Drop in Quebec's English Schools."
[46] "Special Issue, Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Class and Memory," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84, no. Fall (2013).

dialogue – on the one hand about community resilience and on the other, the multilayered long term effects of deindustrialization on individuals and communities.

Chapter One

The Lunch Ladies and St. Gabriel School in Postindustrial Context

> Telling personal stories means not only looking inward but also turning the self outward and tracing the links and relationships that shape and define not only who we are as individuals but also the broader social worlds of which we are a part.[47]

Debbie Fox, Carol Clifton, Mona Kirkoff and Natalie Sztych's narratives are truly "postindustrial stories" whose cultural inheritance lies as much at the intersection of current economic conditions as it does in their working class industrial heritage. Displaced from so many markers of shared collective history in Pointe-Saint-Charles the lunch ladies' life stories embody not only the long term consequences of deindustrialization but also the resilience of community and the strength of local agency in its aftermath. As Steven High so aptly put, "In effect, deindustrialization and the subsequent postindustrial transformation deliver a one-two punch against working-class neighbourhoods and the old culture of industrialism."[48] The Point is one such place, caught between its historical working class identity while at the same time reimagining a new future – a juncture where competing identities coexist on shifting ground. High continues that, "… the sense of cultural continuity, or working class persistence … is found in places where not much has filled the economic and cultural vacuum."[49] However, what is now filling the "vacuum" in Pointe-Saint-Charles has been marked by a period of gentrification and urban revitalization, significantly challenging the very foundation of historical collective culture in the neighbourhood. Thus, following decades of deindustrialization, the Point and other working class communities along the Lachine Canal have become centres of postindustrial transformation and of high-end redevelopment, a condition that has framed the lunch ladies' life

[47] Christine J. Walley, *Exit 0: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 5.
[48] Steven High, "Beyond Aesthetics: Visibility and Invisibility in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84, no. Fall (2013).
[49] High, "Beyond Aesthetics," 140.

stories and their life experience.

The lunch ladies' narratives demonstrate that not only has their community experienced that "one-two" punch, or "double erasure," as High and others would say elsewhere[50] but also that their personal and collective agency has been unshaken in the process. Ultimately, I tell the story of these four lunch ladies at St. Gabe's who found a place of belonging, of friendship and solidarity and who lived through all three periods that the school was up for closure. Their stories weaved a common thread attesting to the school as a lasting site of local place attachment amidst postindustrial transition – St. Gabe's as home and St. Gabe's as family. Carol would say of her work as a lunch lady, "So to me it's like this job. I don't even think of it as a job. I mean, on my days off, I need to find something to do ... and ... on Monday morning … Woo hoo! You know so I think it's important that I call this my second home."[51] Natalie sees St. Gabe's as a "lucky charm," saved from closure three times and like the other lunch ladies, is extremely protective of the school and its place in the community.[52] In our interview I asked Natalie what it would mean to lose the school and what the school means to the neighbourhood. I had the sense that her answer was every bit about her own life as it was about the neighbourhood. She said:

> I think it means everything to the neighbourhood. I think it's the center of the neighbourhood. I think if we lost the school then there wouldn't be a neighbourhood. There wouldn't be a community because what would really be here? Once you lose your school what else do you lose? There's nobody showing up at church. Little things. The YMCA would suffer. Columba House would suffer, I'm sure, in some way. Maybe they'd have other schools but they wouldn't have our school and I think our children would miss the school. I know I would because it's a part of us, I think, you know.[53]

The aftermath of deindustrialization is reshaping Pointe-Saint-Charles and what it means

[50] Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard, eds., *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).
[51] Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 39:25.
[52] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, interview by Tanya Steinberg, Audio, November 10, 2015, 24:28.
[53] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 19:37.

to be "Pointers" amidst the influx of a new population and shifting class dynamics – processes defining the lunch ladies' narratives of history, community and neighbourhood change. Bridging what anthropologist Christine Walley calls the "before" and "after" of deindustrialization,[54] changes in the Point call into question who gets to define community, its value and what it means to live in a rapidly changing postindustrial world. This also raises the question of whose narrative of community and place will come to dominate. In this research, I am especially interested in the idea of dominant narratives – both shared and personal and what this means for places in transition like the Point – a process resonating with Raymond Williams' structures of feeling marked by "… a particular quality of social experience …. historically distinct from [others] which gives the sense of a generation or of a period,"[55] also defined simply by John Kirk as "the dominant world view of a period."[56] As I explore the question of community, place and memory in postindustrial Pointe-Saint-Charles through their personal narratives and life stories, I ask whether we are witnessing a temporal and spatial coincidence, a newly dominant world-view expressed not only by shifting residual but also emergent structures of feeling in a postindustrial world. I am particularly interested in how deindustrialization is playing out in places like the Point, working class neighbourhoods dislocated from markers of their industrial past yet simultaneously redefining community identity in the postindustrial present. This chapter contributes to this discourse on two fronts – first, through the lunch ladies' life stories attesting to the possibility of safeguarding a sense of community amidst changes wrought by deindustrialization and secondly, how their experience demonstrates their individual and collective resilience in the process.

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[54] Christine J. Walley, *Exit 0: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*.
[55] Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling," in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 131).
[56] John Kirk, *Class, Culture and Social Change: On the Trail of the Working Class* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 9.

Steven High acknowledges the importance of voices and cultural systems that remain in deindustrialized places and regions long after plants have closed, and even in the midst of revitalization processes – all of which casts a shadow on a lasting sense of community and place identity.[57] He warns us not to accept that complete cultural erasure occurs in formerly working class places where displaced workers lose their working class identity and where historical connection to an industrial past is disrupted. High and others call upon us to examine "what it means and how it feels to live in a deindustrializing society," while acknowledging the continuing "cultural agency, resilience and flux in formerly industrial towns and regions."[58] He also asks us to focus not only on losses experienced by industrial workers but also their capacity for redefining personal and community identity. The lunch ladies were my window into just this. Here I acknowledge that only in taking a long-term approach to deindustrialization as an ongoing process, perhaps over decades, will we be better able to understand community-based resilience and narratives of collective memory. The story of successive mobilizations to save the last English school in the Point has been an opportunity not only to explore the nature of community resilience and agency amidst change but also to question the changing definition of community itself.

One can find pages of dictionary definitions for "community," many of which point to common places or characteristics, most notably the Oxford Dictionary which defines community as "a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common."[59] Such traditional definitions miss a fundamental point that community is not a static idea with set boundaries and social groupings but is a fluid and changing process – a definition I accept in

[57] High, "Beyond Aesthetics," 142.
[58] High, "Beyond Aesthetics," 142.
[59] "Community," in *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, 2019, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/community.

agreement with Walsh and High who envision community as an ongoing sociohistoric process, changing throughout history and also in place.[60] Similarly, Lucy Taksa's work has also been instrumental my understanding of community as a "dynamic social process," that not only changes over time and in place but also which overlaps with other communities within and external to a locality.[61] Taksa sees community as a social formation – a type of web that is continually transformed by individual choices and collective demands. Postindustrial Pointe-Saint-Charles is an example of just this. What's important is that communities are never fixed either in time or space but ultimately grounded in processes of sociospatial differentiation that define the boundaries of membership – who is in and who is out. This is what makes the lunch ladies' stories so compelling, that in the midst of overwhelming community transition they maintained such an incredible sense of community belonging and historical attachment to place.

The idea of community is often equated with "locality" and early on in my own research I recall thinking that "community" in the Point was gone, a naïve gesture at best. I just might have been looking for my own historical vision of community, embedded in working class culture and local in context. What I had not considered then was the inevitability of change and of blurring community boundaries. Or perhaps I had romanticized a former time and place, something that Massey warns us against in maintaining that "Localities … are always provisional, always in the process of being made, always contested,"[62] and thus, existing at the intersection of local agency and broader structural forces. That the lunch ladies have inherited the legacy of deindustrialization is clear with all its trauma and loss. However, we have much to learn about the power of community resistance in this context not only through their fierce attachment to St.

[60] John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," *Social History* 32, no. 64 (1999): 255–74.
[61] Taksa, "Like a Bicycle, Forever Teetering Between Individualism and Collectivism: Considering Community in Relation to Labour History."
[62] Doreen Massey, "Questions of Locality," *Geography* 78 (1993): 149.

Gabe's as a symbol of collective history but also in representing a long established culture of grassroots organizing within the Point itself.

School Closures

With the exception of a small body of New Zealand based research on the impact of school closures on rural communities and lesser so on inner-city areas, there is little scholarship focused on the importance of community schools to social unity and local identity in working class or disenfranchised neighbourhoods like Pointe-Saint-Charles.[63] None has specifically examined the significance of local schools as sites of community cohesion and intergenerational memory in deindustrialized communities. In part, my research aims to fill this gap, contributing to our knowledge of the significance of neighbourhood schools as sites of social cohesion and collective memory and more broadly, the importance of local institutions as historical anchors to community identity. The work of Witten, Kearns, McCreanor and others address the issue of contested inner-city school closures in Invercargill, New Zealand, in particular, the devastating impacts of school closure on low income communities. They highlight the essential role of community schools in collective memory, history and intergenerational familial linkages.

In their critique of neoliberal education policies promoting individual choice in competitive education markets – options largely unattainable for low-income families who lack the economic and social mobility to choose – Witten et al. focus on the spatial fixity of local schools as community institutions and with that, how schools symbolize a strong attachment to place even in declining neighbourhoods like the Point. They hold that "… the closure of schools disconnects communities from their past, shuts down a crucial focal point and meeting place for

[63] Kearns et al., "'The Status Quo Is Not an Option': Community Impacts of School Closure in South Taranaki, New Zealand"; Karen Witten et al., "Educational Restructuring from a Community Viewpoint: A Case Study of School Closure from Invercargill, New Zealand," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 21 (2003): 203–23.

community, and blocks paths to other resources,"[64] all of which contribute to increased social isolation for local low income families. In a fight to save one rural elementary school from closure in New Zealand, Kearns et al. draw attention to the insecurity of "place-bound" populations where for many the school is their only place for social interaction and networking[65] while at the same, the "mobile middle classes" enjoy broad choice and flexibility.[66] Both patterns resonate with Massey's assertion that in a world of perpetual capital mobility the most affected on a local level are ultimately the least mobile.[67]

In the case of St. Gabe's I am especially interested in the significance of community solidarity among people who have left the Point even years ago but who return "home" to celebrate milestones and support community causes – collective rituals that Blokland argues, solidify social identifications while at the same time symbolizing a return to "the good old days."[68] These rituals present opportunities to relive the past while reinforcing a historical attachment to physical spaces of collective culture. St. Gabe's is one such place in providing the possibility to reminisce about the past while reengaging with community process in the present. About Pointe-Saint-Charles, Emily, a former community youth program worker had this to say:

> When the community needs to come together, it will. That's what it is. People might not be involved in the daily to-dos but if you put it out there saying 'we need you, we need our community,' you'll have droves of people. ... I think it's just the heart of the Point. Like I said, we have an event once a year. You really see the community come together – like the Hall of Recognition. If you attended last year, the atmosphere is totally unreal. It's amazing and that's what people do though. There are people who I don't necessarily

[64] Witten et al., "Educational Restructuring from a Community Viewpoint: A Case Study of School Closure from Invercargill, New Zealand," 221.
[65] Kearns et al., "'The Status Quo Is Not an Option': Community Impacts of School Closure in South Taranaki, New Zealand."
[66] Witten et al, "Educational Restructuring from a Community Viewpoint."
[67] Doreen Massey, "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change* (London: Routledge, 1993), 60–70.
[68] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."

> agree with their lifestyle but if I went to them and said, 'I need you to sign this petition. Come to a meeting with me,' they would.[69]

When I asked why they give so much Emily responded simply, "I think they love the Point."[70]

Of community support the first time the school was up for closure in 2004, Natalie told me:

> People who lived here, grew up here, and then moved out and had their own families – some of them became, like, big whigs and they didn't hesitate to give us their support, especially the Irish community. They were phenomenal – parents and the rest of us going to the metros trying to get people to sign our petitions.[71]

The unbelievable support from former "Pointers" has been key to the success of each period of mobilization to save St. Gabe's, a process reminiscent of other community struggles. I refer here to two in particular, first, the successful fight in 2005 against a plan by Loto-Quebec to move the Montreal Casino from Ile Notre Dame to a site adjacent to the Point[72] and second, intense community mobilization resisting the closure of Services juridiques communautaires, a not for profit legal aid clinic serving low income clients in the Point.[73] The latter's success resulted in a cooperative neighbourhood enterprise between Pointe-Saint-Charles and nearby Little Burgundy. Together they formed Services Juridiques Communautaires de Pointe-Saint-Charles et Petite-Bourgogne which continues to provide legal aid services for the two neighbourhoods – plainly a community battle fought and won. I now turn to the story of St. Gabe's and the lunch ladies.

Debbie, Carol, Mona and Natalie: Community Resilience

> Despite socioeconomic deprivation and material devastation in areas of industrial decline, houses and neighbourhood spaces can be invested with notions of family and community unity, nostalgia for a shared industrial past, and stability amidst socioeconomic change.

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[69] Emily Cole, (pseudonym). Anonymized Intervew with Tanya Steinberg. Interview is in the possession of the author. Audio, May 30, 2016, 11:34.
[70] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 11:52.
[71] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 19:37.
[72] Donna Sinclair, "New Casino, Bad Idea," UCOBSERVER, December 2005, https://www.ucobserver.org/ethics/2005/12/new_casino_bad_idea/.
[73] Michael Orsini, "From 'Community Run' to 'Community Based" Exploring the Dynamics of Civil Society-State Transformation in Urban Montreal," *Transdisciplinary Studies in Population Health Series*, Forgotten Families: Globalization and the Health of Canadians, 2, no. 2 (2010): 169–84.

> Place attachment to "home" is particularly painful during times of post-industrial transition.[74]

> … the past may be present in the unembodied memories of people, and in the conscious and unconscious constructions of the histories of the place.[75]

None of the lunch ladies had been factory workers themselves yet their life stories provide incredible insight into what it means to live in the aftermath of deindustrialization and in particular, through the devastating long-term effects on successive generations. Their narratives highlight the resilience of community in retaining a sense of belonging amidst the loss of so many physical anchors to memory, those which either no longer exist or are now monuments to a new era – condos, restaurants, specialty shops, parks and other communal spaces catering to a new class while signaling a newly emergent dominant narrative. In my early interpretations of the lunch ladies' life stories I hadn't fully explored what their losses and stories could tell us about what Strangleman et al. see as the "…ruptures and continuities in industrial communities and working-class life"[76] associated with processes of deindustrialization, particularly for those left behind in its wake. They speak to this issue quite well:

> … deindustrialization affects not only those who were immediately displaced, also those who have no direct experience with industrial work, those who were not physically or psychologically present during the era of the closings. For the children and grandchildren of displaced workers … deindustrialization is not based in their own memories, but in response to the conditions of the present. [There is an] ongoing contestation between past ideas about work, class, identity, and place and a present in which those things have been destabilized not only by deindustrialization but also by current economic conditions.[77]

Strangleman et al. call upon us to examine the cultural impacts of deindustrialization as places seek to protect a sense of belonging that bridges historical legacies of an industrial past with present meanings of community and of place. An emerging body of deindustrialization

[74] Alice Mah, "Devastation but Also Home: Place Attachment in Areas of Industrial Decline," *Home Cultures* 8, no. 3 (2009): 287.
[75] Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," 87.
[76] Strangleman, Rhodes, and Linkon, "Introduction to Crumbling Cultures," 8.
[77] Strangleman, Rhodes, and Linkon, "Introduction to Crumbling Cultures," 9.

research has thus turned to the long-term effects of deindustrialization through new forms of cultural representations – oral history, photography, art, literature and other forms of media that can only be explored through the passage of time and through the lens of memory.[78] This is where the lunch ladies' oral history interviews fit in. Listening to the lunch ladies' stories has been an opportunity to reflect on how one defines community identity in the postindustrial present and in particular, for those "left behind" in the wake of deindustrialization. Beginning with an early call to understand the more enduring impacts of plant closures on workers, families and communities, Cowie and Heathcott asked that we go "beyond the ruins,"[79] to examine how deindustrialization marked not only another epoch in the history of capitalism but "a fundamental change in the social fabric on a par with industrialization itself."[80] Since then, scholarship has increasingly focused on deindustrialization as an ongoing process, best understood by exploring the longue durée. This is where I situate my research.

Debbie, Carol, Natalie and Mona all related memories of the past, recollections of closures not only in the Point but also in nearby Little Burgundy and Griffintown and had much to say about the effects such losses had on community cohesion in the Point. They shared experiences of dislocation and rupture from the world they knew – a neighbourhood culture where once large families, vibrant community rhythms and strong intergenerational ties defined daily life in the Point. Their stories revealed intensely personal expressions of broader structural change – as Massey would say, global processes linked far beyond their reach but nonetheless, deeply felt at the local level. This was illustrated so well in the interchange below that took place

[78] Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard, eds., *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places* (UBC Press, 2018); Strangleman, Rhodes, and Linkon, "Introduction to Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Class and Memory"; High, "Beyond Aesthetics: Visibility and Invisibility in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization," 2013.
[79] Jefferson Cowie and joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Cornell, New York: Cornell University Press, (2003): 1.
[80] Cowie and Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins,* 6.

during our second group interview when Debbie, Carol, Mona and Natalie reflected on a time when industrial activity and vibrant community life still existed for them in the Point. When I asked them to describe a time when industry was active in the Point they had this to say:

Carol: Yes, [there were] still people at Northern Electric. We had Reader's Digest, the book, on St. Patrick Street. There was a lot. So, looking at me, there was a lot of candy stores on my street where I lived.… To look at it now, being on that street … you look back and I tell my children 'Well this was a depanneur and this was a depanneur and down the street was a restaurant and when we go by St. Patrick … there's a big CONDO [her emphasis] there.' Thomas Keefers, that's the street that connects to the Atwater Market. I was like, 'Guys, when mummy was a kid, that was a book company!' It bothers me to see and I know it's just going to keep happening, just to see how it's changed. I'm just saying that maybe soon a lot of the school buildings will be gone. We're hoping not – like Magnon's Tavern. I overheard that it's being sold for condos. I was like, 'Are you crazy?' It's the restaurant at the corner of Charlevoix and St. Patrick.[81]

Mona: I only moved here when I was nineteen [in the mid-70's]. Small businesses were closing. When I first moved here, along Wellington Street it was full – grocery stores, shoe stores, clothing stores. Back when I was nineteen when I first moved here, there was a bakery. There was a video store but they've all closed.

Natalie: Like with Panache. It was a variety store. It had cards, clothes, toys, everything. Remember Montreal Department Store on Centre Street?[82]

Carol: It's funny, when you say, I've got to go out and get, say, a birthday card, and it was like, we don't have to run out to the shopping mall, we could just run over there. You'd be close to the school. Now you're starting to see it lively again like Notre Dame Street. It was like we had everything and then it was like, oh my god, it's a ghost town. But now, you walk on Notre Dame, you can't even walk because you're being surrounded by people because of it. Corona [Theatre], right now it reopened so it's the new place to be. [Things are] different cause I would say that there are a lot of little bars, like restaurants … Centre Street too. There's all kinds of stuff opening now. At one time you'd walk down and there was nothing. All these buildings were closed.[83]

Carol's description of changes along Notre Dame Street effectively navigated three historical periods – industrialization, deindustrialization and finally, the emerging postindustrial landscape. In the same tone, Natalie's description of postindustrial Pointe-Saint-Charles in her individual

[81] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, interview by Tanya Steinberg, Audio, March 15, 2016, 31:00.
[82] Group Interview, 36:03.
[83] Group Interview, 36:20.

interview would have fit well here as she also showed a deep social awareness of community need:

> I'm not crazy about all these condos that are going up. Like, we've become an extension of downtown Montreal. There are a few here on this side but a lot where I used to live. Like, across the street from me, they built there. All along St. Patrick that's all you see. The old Northern building, that's what they're doing there. For this community to be able to survive, I think really, like, for generations to come, I think they need to start thinking more about low income housing and stuff like doing more for that because all these condos, I see that people buy them and the next thing you know it's already up for sale. They decide, well, this isn't what they want. This isn't really the area they want to be in – different things – and I just think that there's not enough low income housing for people who – not everyone can afford to live in a condo. And some of these rents here are starting to be quite steep. With condos coming in, you know, sometimes you'll look and see this beautiful condo over here and the next building you've got this run down building, right [laughing]. It just doesn't really go, I think, with the community.[84]

In the end, I felt the final group exchange was the lunch ladies' way of situating collective memories not only in time but also in physical space as their way to make sense of an increasingly unfamiliar urban landscape. In her book, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline,* Alice Mah invites us to consider the idea of landscape as "… an ensemble of material and social practices … symbolic representations of these practices … inhabited places in which people live through processes of change."[85] In this context, the lunch ladies' recollections were every bit about lost spaces of social interaction as they were about the physical remnants of a former time – as Mah would say, living memories of a collective history. I am also drawn here to Tim Edensor's image of "temporal collage," or "intersecting temporalities" in which successive histories of memory become embedded in physical spaces,[86] a notion similar to Blokland's idea that the built environment continues to

[84] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 37:48.
[85] Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013): 12-13.
[86] Tim Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space," *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 23 (2005): 829–49.

hold traces and physical markers of history.[87] These images were so clear as the lunch ladies meandered up and down streets of the Point recalling where they had shopped, gathered, lived their lives and where they could no longer go. Urban redevelopment has transformed so much of the Point and many sites throughout the neighbourhood still sit abandoned. However, parts of the physical landscape they knew so well are still intact – buildings, streets, parks and corners where they met. Yet, so many of these structures stand empty – void of sensory experiences associated with their former lives or past history and haunted by what Edensor calls, ghosts of urban and industrial ruins.

My conceptual understanding of the lunch ladies' narratives and of place in historical context has been heavily influenced by the work of Doreen Massey who sees a certain inevitability to change in places over time and especially in deindustrialized neighbourhoods. Debbie, Carol, Mona and Natalie all communicated what deindustrialization looked like on the ground level while absolutely recognizing the power of their own agency in the process. Massey would argue here that their personal experience remains embedded in processes of capital mobility on a global scale, what she terms, "…the history of the global construction of the local."[88] She also calls upon us to explore place based identity not only within the bounds of individual localities, but also to understand their histories in relation to external processes.[89] Although personal in nature, the interchange above is very much about the local experience of the global. Massey holds that places are forever in the process of becoming and Pointe-Saint-Charles indeed fits this model. The lunch ladies' life stories thus bridge two conceptual issues – the personal and traumatic impacts of deindustrialization imposed from afar – with stories of community resilience and local agency. Their life experiences prompted me to ask what this all

[87] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."
[88] Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," 183.
[89] Massey, "Questions of Locality."

means for the future of the Point as longstanding traditions collide with new interpretations of place and thus, community identity. For Massey, the identity of place "is always, and always has been, in process of formation, … is very much bound up with the *histories* that are told of them, *how* those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant," a situation in which competing political, economic and cultural histories lead to very different readings of the present. The dynamism of places thus remains embedded at the intersection of local tradition and new imports from the outside. However, as places are forever changing, Massey argues that "The identity of a place is thus not to be seen as inevitably destroyed by new importations," and in the Point this is exactly what we are seeing. Moreover, in taking a cue from Massey not to become overly romantic or parochial in exploring the nature of locality or place, something I did early on in this work, the lunch ladies gave me an opportunity to examine not only the juncture of local agency and external process but also incredible resilience in times of change.

Life Stories

The lunch ladies witnessed decades of decline, job loss and outmigration, all accompanied by the loss of physical and cultural markers of community identity – factories, schools, stores, English Protestant churches along Wellington, bingo halls and swimming pools (the YMCA pool and Hogan's which has been converted to condos). Natalie was strong in saying, "I just don't think it goes with our heritage, all these condos, you know. It's becoming more, they're trying to change it into, I always say, Yuppyville."[90] Carol agreed in saying, "First the condos, my goodness, it's like everywhere. That's a big change. Hopefully there will be families in there that will bring their children [to St. Gabe's] but like I said, I've seen new faces, maybe parents that have bought housing or condos, maybe ... they are coming to the school."

[90] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 39:44.

She has yet to see this but hopes for the future in this regard. In the end, memories of displacement and loss that surfaced during the lunch ladies' interviews became testimonials to the personal cost of deindustrialization and the potential for local agency far too often overlooked in the process. I begin with Debbie's story.

Debbie Fox

Like the others, Debbie is all too familiar with the meaning of loss and has an extraordinary memory for detail for absent physical and social anchors in the neighbourhood:

> Look at churches. … [one] on Liverpool and Wellington became a Sikh temple. Burgess and Wellington – St. Matthew. Charon and Wellington was United – all churches that no longer exist – tiny one on St. Madeleine … another at Hibernia and Wellington – and pools. There was Hogan's. There was St. Charles, the YMCA. Now we only have St. Charles and it's been closed for the past two years for renovation. [Hogan's], it's gone to CONDOS [her emphasis].[91]

Since our interview, St. Charles Pool did reopen along with a new gym in 2017. Still, for Debbie one of the biggest losses was the closure of the neighbourhood's last bingo halls – some of the area's most popular sites for socializing and entertainment:

> Bingo halls. We don't have any bingos here in the Point now do we? … It used to be in St. Gabriel's basement. It used to be in St. Charles' basement, the Polish Hall … What else? We have none now. The last one just closed which was St. Gabriel's because not enough people going to it cause the population's going down. So many things. Too many condos going up and they can't afford to live here so they're moving out. So now we lost our last bingo, which was in the church.[92]

Natalie added:

> Even the Polish church… The Polish Church used to have bingo. It was popular. But once no smoking came into effect, it just killed it. Now they have signs outside for renting their hall and everything. It's a beautiful hall and it's got a workable kitchen and everything. So if you have a kind of affair going on, you have a whole kitchen to work with. Do your stuff right there. It's really nice but it's quite expensive.[93]

[91] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, interview by Tanya Steinberg, Audio, November 10, 2015, 0:58.
[92] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, November 10, 2015, Part 4, 0:05.
[93] Group Interview, Part 4, 1:18.

Although there are still bingo halls in nearby Verdun and Lasalle, Debbie now travels "across the bridge," this time the Mercier Bridge, to play bingo outside the Point in Kahnawake.

Of the lunch ladies I would learn the least about Debbie's family history but what she had to say about the history of the Southwest Borough was pivotal to my appreciation of neighbourhood transformation and what local schools mean to community survival. Debbie contributed immensely to our group discussions, an environment where she felt at ease sharing stories with her close community of friends, and especially when she talked about the importance of St. Gabe's to collective history of the Point. Graham Smith's work on transactive memory was instrumental to my understanding of how significant Debbie's participation in the group interviews was, particularly as group interaction prompts cues to remembering through a common pool of knowledge and experience.[94] In this case, Debbie's reluctance to grant an interview led me to a place I wouldn't otherwise have gone – the group interviews. For Smith, group activity engages the process of "re-membering" in that "each individual memory prompts further remembering producing common, consensual memories."[95] Group interaction thus becomes a free, non-linear from of storytelling in which individual stories both establish and are framed within broader historical narratives and a shared collective understanding – an inherently social process and the foundation of group membership. As Blokland also notes, the act of group remembering works to recreate shared identities and reconstructs their attachment to a collective sense of place,[96] as it did in the group narrative above.

Debbie was born in Griffintown and although she attended Kanamara Elementary in the Point for a time, she also attended the all-girls St. Gabe's in its old location on Laprairie and

[94] Graham Smith, "Beyond Individual / Collective Memory: Women's Transactive Memories of Food, Family and Conflict," *Oral History*, Autumn (2007), 77–90.
[95] Smith, "Beyond Individual / Collective Memory," 82.
[96] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories: Neighbourhood and Networks in Collective Acts of Remembering."

Centre, a (building constructed in 1909 and which closed in 1973). She has a forty-two year connection with St. Gabe's as a student, mother, volunteer and eight years as a lunch lady. Her twenty-two year old daughter who went to St. Gabe's as a child and who is now a Concordia student, has been a lunch lady for two years, attesting to the continuing intergenerational links at St. Gabe's within her own family. Debbie has lived in the Point from the age of six, much of that time directly across the street from the school while her children all attended St. Gabe's. When we talked about why she lived so close to the school, like other lunch ladies, she wanted to be within walking distance to maintain close links to her children and to the community:

> If you don't have a school in the community you don't have too many families because there are some families that really prefer not to put their children on bus. I was always like that. I lived across the street when my children were small so I just walked right across the street. To me if the school closes, I would probably have moved to another area to get closer to the school. It's just the way I was.[97]

Debbie had an incredible way of linking historical events and articulating memory, not so much through sharing personal life stories but by contextualizing her experience of the present through the history of the school and that of the Southwest Borough. She talked passionately about the fight to save St. Gabe's from closure:

> We're here about the school closure. … That's why the fight was so important because it is happening everywhere. That's why you have to fight so much to keep what you've got in your community or your community's gone like all the other communities. That's what it's all about.[98]

Upon reflection, her memories mirrored major patterns in the region's deindustrialization history, beginning with the loss of Griffintown, Goose Village and Victoriatown and continuing with the incremental disappearance of physical sites of place attachment and social life in the Point. Debbie didn't live in either Griffintown or Goose Village for very long but as she talked about these early losses – especially Griffintown and Goose Village – I came to understand that

[97] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, November 10, 2015, Part One, 12:45.
[98] Group Interview, Part Four, 4:45.

these embedded childhood memories were the very things that fueled both her frustration and her resolve to save St. Gabe's:

> It was about the community too, the family, keeping people here, keeping people here, keeping friends, keeping family. To me that's what it is. I was born in Griffintown and to me there's no Griffintown. It's a new Griffintown of CONDOS [emphasis on condos]. It's gone. From Griffintown I moved to Goose Village. It's gone. So then I moved here. I've been here for fifty-five years or whatever. I don't want it to go.[99]

> If I looked back on Griffintown and Victoriatown, you know, you lose schools, you lose churches, you lose boys and girls clubs. You lose everything.[100]

Debbie carried these childhood memories throughout her life in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Like Carol and the other lunch ladies she well understood not only the meaning of loss but also why saving St. Gabe's meant so much. When I asked Debbie why she and her daughter chose to stay in the Point, she had a very simple answer, "We like it here. Yes, we like it here."[101]

Group discussions with the lunch ladies were like social events, places they returned to in the past while reaffirming a sense of attachment in the present. These were spirited interactions where the lunch ladies reconfirmed their sense of individual and collective agency as they reminisced about their role in community mobilization to save St. Gabe's and also where Debbie located her personal voice. Smith holds that collective remembering ultimately achieves something that an individual interview cannot. That is, the capacity of the group to stimulate buried memories through sharing common experience, local knowledge and in the telling, solidifying a sense of community identity. As he puts it, "what makes memory 'social' is talk."[102] The group narratives so clearly illustrate a shared sense of place, teased out in physical spaces that Blokland simply calls the "bricks and mortar" of a community, carrying fragments of

[99] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, interview by Tanya Steinberg, Audio, November 10, 2015, Part Four, 8:21.
[100] Group Interview, Part Two, 3:44.
[101] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, March 15, 2016, 1:10:40.
[102] Smith, "Beyond Individual / Collective Memory," 79.

the past within a physical environment for remembering.[103] In asking how place-making becomes a shared endeavour, Blokland looks at collective remembering not only through the lens of physical spaces of memory but also as containers for a shared social identification. St. Gabe's is one such place. What does it mean, then, to remember collectively, especially in public spaces of shared experience – in this case, St. Gabe's kitchen areas and cafeterias?

Figure 2.1: Interview Space, Senior Cafeteria at St. Gabe's – Debbie at Work. (2015) Photograph taken by Tanya Steinberg.

As they called up memories of how the Point had changed, the lunch ladies' experience resonated deeply with Blokland's work in the Hillesluis neighbourhood of Rotterdam, an area known historically for its shipbuilding and harbour-based industries. Like the Point it is now in the throes of redevelopment and postindustrial transition. Her interviews with long time Hillesluis residents revealed something very similar regarding the construction of community to the stories the lunch ladies told about in Pointe-Saint-Charles. When Blokland asked about the past, older respondents in particular had detailed memories of neighbourhood unity, a nostalgic past in which "the collectively constructed image of their neighbourhood, the power of bonding

[103] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."

was stronger than the power of differentiation."[104] About present changes, their attitudes were quite the opposite, where "the power of differentiation was stronger than the potential for bonding," something that I found as the lunch ladies reminisced about the past and especially in relation to the next generation. Debbie mused about the current lack of community commitment when it comes to local events and organizations that had long defined community Point:

> Years ago we had sports here but the generation coming up, I don't find they have the heart as older people that did run the organizations anymore. You don't have those people anymore. I don't find that the generation coming up has that for them anymore. A lot of them move out, you know, cause Northern Electric, different factories closed, whatever, so they moved. … The generation coming, it's not the same as the old generation. They're not as physical and the organizations that did run things – Leo's Boys and this and that, you don't have those people to run them and the generation of parents today don't have, maybe, the interest, don't have the time to do it.[105]

Although the lunch ladies remained strongly connected to the community, they now saw themselves as much more "in relation to," or "differentiated from," newcomers to the Point.

Like Blokland, Smith points out that not only are common identities formed in the process of sharing personal memories but also that the "collective" is strengthened in the telling. This became apparent as the lunch ladies shared memories in their communal spaces at the school. These group discussions revealed something very interesting. Even though the one-on-one interviews were often much more personal, when they were together, the lunch ladies implicitly understood that they all shared a similar story and a common past. The group setting encouraged the retelling of some their most meaningful personal stories they had shared in our individual interviews, revealing a communal level of trust, friendship and solidarity amongst themselves. Emotional support and sympathetic gestures were always offered to those relating more difficult memories. However, stories "retold" in the group often lacked their original emotional quality, something that Portelli draws our attention to – that the first telling of a story

[104] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories," 274.
[105] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, March 15, 2016, 7:06.

is the always the most authentic while no story is told the same way twice.[106] Portelli offers another insight into group interviews, that sharing memories can help place more vague individual recollections in historical time, especially when dates and events may be important to establishing a collective social context. He continues that memory is ultimately not just a sharing of facts, "but an active process of creation of meaning" while setting "the interview and the narrative in their historical context."[107] At St. Gabe's, the familiarity of friendship in the group interviews revealed a collective consciousness, in essence a recreation of communal patterns and community life they fought so boldly to protect. In the end, the exercises in collective remembering would ultimately shed light on the very different ways in which each rooted their own experience of deindustrialization and also and how they defined their postindustrial present. I turn now to Carol's story below.

Carol Clifton

Like her own mother, Carol was born in Griffintown and as a very young child, moved with her family to her father's birthplace in Little Burgundy. By the age of six in 1967 Carol's family had settled in the Point where she and her four siblings were raised, and where she has lived since. Her children still live in the Point, drawn by a sense of historical attachment to community that Carol has cultivated through the generations and has been sustained by close family proximity reminiscent of her past. She'd say, "Cause like with my mom too, I would always be the busy one, to find out, to sit down and my siblings would say 'oh here we go with stories again,' you know, I'm big on history. So I would listen to all the little things that

[106] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).
[107] Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader* (London; New York: Routledge, (1998): 69.

happened in Griffintown …"[108] Carol related many rich memories of growing up in the Point with a real sense of community life – large families, close contact with friends and extended family and especially, strong historical links to St. Gabriel School. Carol's relationship to St. Gabe's spans four generations and forty-two years. She attended the old St. Gabriel Academy from Pre-K to grade five when it was an all girls' school, completing grade six at St. Gabe's current location at Wellington and Dublin the year it opened in 1973. Throughout the decades, she has had many roles at St. Gabe's – helping her mother who was a lunch lady many years ago, as a volunteer mother of four children who attended the school, as a grandmother of a current student and as a lunch lady herself for the past twenty-eight years.

When Carol talks about the Point where she grew up, she would say, "… I don't think I will ever, even if I had a million bucks, I don't think I would ever leave here."[109] She reminisced of a time when she was young in the Point and how things had changed:

> … when myself and my siblings were younger, we used to joke, you would walk say, and you were on your way, at the time it was the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, summer months, not winter … the neighbours would be on their gallery. As an expression you'd say that mum would pick up the phone and say, "Have you seen so-and-so?" So you know you made sure you were always watched, no matter where you went … I personally, walking now, I don't see much of that anymore. You know, you see people sitting outside but not [like] when I was a kid.[110]

Still, she feels such a strong sense of belonging and attachment to the Point:

> Yes, and like I said, I'm from the community. I've been here since I was six years old. My mum was brought up in Griffintown. My dad was brought up in Little Burgundy. So they married and from Griffintown we went to Little Burgundy and then we came to Pointe-Saint-Charles. So I know a lot of people. It touches me when I walk down the street and kids are calling me from like, ten years ago, 'There's Miss Carol!'[111]

Carol is fiercely protective of St. Gabe's and of her neighbourhood. When she talks about life

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[108] Carol Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, interview by Tanya Steinberg, Audio, October 27, 2015, 27:22.
[109] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, March 15, 2016, 1:03:36.
[110] Carol Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 27:40.
[111] Carol Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 21:47.

and changes in the Point, she says, "You go from Griffintown to Little Burgundy, for me, and then to the Point. Like I said, it's devastating. Personally, I would not want to move anywhere else cause to me this is home. It's like going to visit my brothers. I can't wait to get back home and they're like, why?"[112] Carol's story of place attachment within landscapes of decline resonated with Mah's work in Walker, UK where the meaning of "home" in postindustrial transitions was still based on familial proximity and communities of mutual support.[113] When I asked about Carol's childhood home in Griffintown, she said, "… it's very fancy now…. I haven't been down there in a while but it's so amazing to see all the condos. They drive me nuts." She muses that so many families that she knew from her early days in the Point have moved over the years to Ontario or Chateauguay, a suburban Montreal neighborhood that has earned the nickname, "Little Pointe-Saint-Charles," signaling an enduring sense of community beyond the margins of the Point.

Carol situates herself in history through her own family stories and those she tells her children. She talked about taking them back to meaningful sites from her past in Griffintown, sharing sensory experiences of her youth:

[112] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, Part Four, November 10, 2015, 8:40.
[113] Mah, "Devastation but Also Home."

Figure 2.2: Griffintown Horse Palace in the Shadow of a Condominium. (2016) Photograph taken by Tanya Steinberg.

> When we went back [to Griffintown] we took a stroll one afternoon and I brought them to where I lived right beside the stable. One of my daughters' comments was, 'Oooh, mom, how could you?' Because it was strong. I said well, you just adapt to it, I guess, everyday life. I was showing her different places …[114]

I was fortunate to visit the stable myself in 2016 and to take this photograph when I did. After 155 years, Griffintown's Horse Palace was demolished in June, 2017, with a promise to build a heritage site on its former foundation.[115] It was Montreal's oldest stable.

Boym imagines sensual experiences as stimulants to nostalgic recollection.[116] In a similar vein, Edensor talks about "The ghostly reappearance of involuntary memories,"[117] spontaneous sensory experiences left behind in industrial ruins and like the stables, inescapable and powerful nonvisual cues to history. For Carol the stables smelled like her childhood, wrapped in nostalgic memory that took her home, if only for a bit. Having spent close to fifty years in the Point, she is as fiercely attached to the neighbourhood as she is to St. Gabriel School. Her children live in the

[114] Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 27:22.
[115] CBC News, "City's Oldest Stable Torn down in Griffintown," CBC News, June 16, 2017, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/montreal-horse-palace-torn-down-1.4163523.
[116] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 2001, xiii.
[117] Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space."

Point and she never questions whether this will be where she'll spend the rest of her days. Her granddaughter is still at St. Gabe's and Carol also says that none of her family has any intention of moving anywhere.

When we talked about Carol's childhood language came up as an important issue. She told me that French and English kids didn't often mix in her early days. Yet, she still had many French friends having learned French on the street, "I had joined that community with the French but my siblings wanted no part of speaking French. They were like, 'no way.' I was like, come on guys…"[118] Carol contemplates how things between the French and English communities are becoming more united in the Point – out of necessity more than anything – particularly as the population has declined and so many churches have closed over the years. In a group interview, Debbie reminded us, "There's only St. Gabriel's and St. Charles – next door to each other … and a Polish church on Centre near Montmorency and a Ukrainian church on Grand Trunk."[119] Carol added, "It's funny. Back when we were kids it would be Protestant and Catholic. Now the two churches once-a-month-unite. It'll be French mass one month and English mass at our church the next month and then they'll go back and forth."[120] She also says that church is a place that continues to welcome old Pointers back home, "… you go back to how do you reunite? You know, you go to church for Christmas Mass, Easter Mass and 'Oh my god! I haven't seen you in twenty years!' So that's how people come back too."[121]

As with the others, the theme of the daily walk to school came up in my interview with Carol as the most important thing that defines a community school – the ability to walk your child morning back and forth at lunch and after school. In this she was happy relating lunchtime

[118] Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 46:50.
[119] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, November 10, 2015, Part Two, 12:22.
[120] Group Interview, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, Part Two, 13:17.
[121] Group Interview, 13:54.

stories as a kid:

> I remember when I went to school most of the children would walk home. I can remember the stories I would tell my kids that even at St. Gabriel Academy, the all girls school, walking home and during lunch we'd watch the Flintstones … Back in my time, my mum [was] a lunch mum here. As we got older, say, grade six, Mum would give me the key, you know, be careful. Go through all that. Follow the rules. … She would allow us sometimes to bring a friend home for lunch and we were able to go to our friend's house or sometimes we would go to St. Columba House. I wasn't a big child back then to really stay for lunch in the school. I guess I preferred to go home because of the Flintstones (she says with a laugh). [122]

Like the others, she felt so strongly about this to say that if the school had closed, she would even have moved to be near their child's school in a new neighbourhood. On occasion the mention of the school closure brought Carol's anger and disbelief to the surface. About the first time in 2004, Carol felt, "To me personally, it was very devastating because [in] a community school, children walk to school … I was damned if I was going to let this school fall apart."[123] When I asked Carol about what St. Gabe's meant to her, she related a story of when her mother passed away and how her community at school helped her through:

> It's so funny because going back to a special moment in my life when my mum passed away, I couldn't stay home. I was by myself. Kids were off to school, you know, and I was, like, 'Oh my god!' I have to go to my second home and that's where I came. What are you doing here? And I said no, I have to be with my St. Gabriel friends, cause that's what I call them. And they bought me a little angel pin that says "You're St. Gabriel's Friend.[124]

I visited the lunch ladies around Christmastime, 2018, having learned from one of the teachers that Carol's husband of more than thirty years had suddenly passed away a few months before. I was incredibly moved but not surprised when Carol told me that the day after his funeral she was back at St. Gabe's. Carol's image of a "St. Gabe's family" was a recurring theme throughout all the interviews as the lunch ladies meandered through memories of home and of the school as a

[122] Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 4:16.
[123] Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 6:09.
[124] Clifton, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 29:25.

collective site of historical attachment and community identity. I turn now to Mona's story which was particularly insightful in what it was like to be a young newcomer to the Point. Community building wasn't so easy for her since she only moved to Pointe-Saint-Charles as a teenager.

Figure 2.3: Interview Space, Junior Cafeteria at St. Gabe's. (2015)
Photograph taken by Tanya Steinberg.

Mona Kirkoff

Like the other lunch ladies, Mona's history in the school spans a period of thirty-six years as a mother, sibling, volunteer, lunch lady and more recently, a tutor. Yet of the four lunch ladies, Mona story differed from their early place attachment to Pointe-Saint-Charles, not being a "Pointer" from a very young age. What sets her story apart from the others is that her life straddled two place-based identities – Little Burgundy and the Point – and in so many ways she remained somewhat of an outsider in both as she navigated her early years. First as a child and later when she got married, Mona became all too familiar with the difficulty of separation both from family and from the place of her childhood. As the second oldest of eleven children born in Nova Scotia but raised in Little Burgundy just across the Charlevoix Bridge from the Point, her

childhood years traversed from one place to another within her family and from one province to another as a young girl. Mona's grandfather was a Canadian National (CN) Railway worker in Halifax and was transferred in 1960 to Montreal's CN Yards, at the time one of Pointe-Saint-Charles' largest employers. Mona's grandmother moved with him to Montreal from Nova Scotia and later took Mona and her brother Stan, ages five and seven, to live with them in Little Burgundy, leaving Mona's mother, Lena, behind in Nova Scotia with her younger siblings. Mona remembered of her grandmother:

> She went down to visit my mother one time after she had just had a baby and my grandmother said, 'Let me take Mona and Stan back to Montreal with me – give you a break. You've got the other little ones at home. … Let me take them off your hands for a bit,' and she never took us back. I was five. … Stan's two years older. [125]

At that time in the 1970s, Mona's father was a navy man based in Halifax, where he remained with her mother and the rest of her siblings. Mona hasn't been back to Nova Scotia since she was fifteen and while her mother eventually moved in next door to Mona's grandmother in Little Burgundy, Mona and her brother continued to live with her grandmother while growing up:

> I think the next year, [my mother] moved up here and they lived right next door to each other – right next door. So, our back alley joined so you were in and out. My mother had a little four-room house. Stan and I stayed with my grandmother and grandfather. So we stayed there, you know. Every once in a while my father would say 'No, I want my kids home,' so we'd have to go in and be part of the family and then my father would leave and my mother would say, 'Ok, you can go back to your grandmother's,' and we were back and forth like that for many years.[126]

Mona told her life story with a great sense of humour, even the most difficult parts when she talked about her son going to prison or how lonely she was when she first moved to the Point. All four of her children attended St. Gabe's over a period of almost two decades, as did her three youngest siblings after their school, St. Anthony's, closed in Little Burgundy and her mother moved with them to the Point. I asked Mona what caused her to stay on at St. Gabe's so long in

[125] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 24:29.
[126] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 24:29.

all her different roles. She responded with a laugh, "I think that's why I kept having kids because I didn't want to leave,"[127] having her children over an eighteen year time period.

Mona moved to the Point when she married in 1974 and talks of being the only one in her community at the time who dated outside Little Burgundy, having met her husband as a student at James Lyng High School in St. Henri. She was clear in saying that "Everybody else dated from within,"[128] an image of community insularity but strongly imbued with a true sense of belonging. Mona's sister married a man that lived only three streets away in their neighbourhood of Little Burgundy, certainly the norm at that time. Mona's move to the Point, or even marrying someone from the "outside," marked a break from tradition and from all she knew. Little Burgundy was very much the Pointe-Saint-Charles of Mona's youth, filled with memories of active community life and extended family – a true sense of belonging – while her first years in the Point left her feeling lonely and isolated, away from her family and community.

> I guess it's just the feeling of not knowing anybody. Like in Burgundy you would know everybody … As teenagers and that, we were outside my mom's door every night – my brothers with all their friends. They all played baseball so they'd all come. We'd have thirty to forty kids in front of my mother's front door at night, you know just hanging out and being kids. Mind you, I lived next door with my grandmother and I had to be in for 9:00, but…[129]

Having lived for years with a tangible social and physical distance from Little Burgundy – boundaries that kept her feeling isolated, things only changed for Mona in the Point when her first son started kindergarten at St. Gabe's and she began to meet people at the school. When I asked if she met other mothers around the neighbourhood before that, her answer was straightforward:

> I didn't. If I didn't go to see my mum and my siblings, I went to my mother in law's. She lived on Rushbrooke Street so I would go over there. But mostly I would stay home. I

[127] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 3:18.
[128] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 35:50.
[129] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 23:30.

> stayed home with my son. That was it, like I really didn't know anybody until he started school.[130]

Only then, did she begin to feel a sense of community attachment and acceptance.

Although separated only by the Canal and Charlevoix Bridge, for Mona these geographic boundaries were enough to isolate her from home in Little Burgundy with its rhythms of community life and daily family visits. She was heavily impacted by what she experienced as physical barriers to a continued sense of community belonging in her home neighbourhood but at the same time, felt socially isolated in the Point. Of her early years in the Point away from home in Little Burgundy, Mona shared:

> We were a large family and all of my family was still [there] – like, I know it's not far but it wasn't walking distance. I couldn't go to my mom's every day. I couldn't go to my sister's every day. Everybody was there, and growing up, you were told, "Don't cross Charlevoix Bridge! Don't go into the Point!" Even Little Burgundy had its own reputation. … And so it was a big shock … My husband worked and I stayed home with the kids and when my son started school that's when I got involved and started meeting people.[131]

Mona's story got me thinking about the meaning of community boundary in places like Pointe-Saint-Charles where historical and cultural margins are effectively demarcated by physical borders of railway lands, road or water – boundaries creating a sense of cultural insularity in the neighbourhood and in Mona, intense feelings of isolation. This was a complex matter for Mona since these physical boundaries were very much as real as they were symbolic, a question that Anthony Cohen invites us to consider in his book, *The Symbolic Construction of* Community.[132] He holds that any definition of community boundary is ultimately a matter of perception both within communities themselves and from the outside, the idea of boundary existing "in the minds of their beholders … [which] may be perceived in rather different terms,

[130] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 8:00.
[131] Kircoff, Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 4:05.
[132] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*.

not only by people on opposite sides of it but also by people on the same side."[133] For Cohen, this reveals the "symbolic nature of the idea of community itself … enshrined in the concept of boundary,"[134] an idea echoed by Walsh and High for whom boundaries remain social constructs – outcomes of social interaction which can only be understood in subjective terms.[135] Key is that within the bounds of community, similarity and difference coexist simultaneously, a inherently relational concept rooted in patterns of social interaction.[136] Interpreting boundary and community as subjective constructs helped me better understand Mona's personal experience as so different from the profound attachment the other lunch ladies felt in the Point. Mona's sense of displacement at finding herself on the "other side of the bridge" would frame both her life in the Point and her insular perception of community. That Mona felt she couldn't easily walk the two kilometres from the Point to Little Burgundy equated distance with a form of community boundary – real or imagined. But it also likely originated in her early life experience growing up in close proximity to family, friends and community – something she found difficult to establish in the Point. From this perspective, the perceived distance may truly have been too great.

"Don't cross the bridge!" was something I heard often throughout my interviews with the lunch ladies as if the "other side of the bridge," Little Burgundy or the Point, was equally dangerous, and I would learn, unknown, unfamiliar and off limits. Mona shared that having grown up in Little Burgundy, the Point had a particular kind of reputation. It was:

> Very rough. Very Irish. Lots of crime. Lots of violence. But, Little Burgundy also had it but you lived in it. … I guess you felt safe. Even though there were the same things happening there, you felt safe. Everybody knew you and everybody would protect you and everybody knew you were Lena's kids and watch out for them and my mother had eleven kids by the way [laughing] … and I'm the second oldest.[137]

[133] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 12.
[134] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 14.
[135] Walsh and High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community."
[136] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*.
[137] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 5:28.

At the same time Mona knew that people from the Point were warned not to cross the bridge into Little Burgundy. When I asked her why, she replied:

> Probably for the same reason. They were told don't go over the bridge to Little Burgundy. It's rough up there. We had motorcycle gangs. We had Satan's Choice. We had things like that going on down there. Here you had the gangsters. You had the Irish mafia and stuff like that. It was a very different time, very different.[138]

Mona could say from experience that the Point and Little Burgundy were also very different places in terms of language and religion. About this, she would recall:

> … different communities. I always felt that the Point was more, back then, it was Protestant – Catholic. You had your French and English but you had Protestant – Catholic and the Point was more Protestant to me and we were Catholic. We were all there [in Little Burgundy]. Everybody I knew. Everybody had big families, [was] Catholic in that area.

If in the end as Cohen argues, boundaries – real or perceived – are what distinguish one social entity from another, then perhaps one of the reasons that Mona felt so isolated early on in the Point was that she felt she "just didn't fit in." She didn't experience similarities in the two working class neighbourhoods of Little Burgundy and Pointe-Saint-Charles and thus, the bridge remained her symbolic boundary to belonging. Her identity may very well have been tied to another place and another community, something she illustrated through her comparisons of religion, family history and her sense of being protected in Little Burgundy. Mona's stories of Little Burgundy were no doubt tinged with a sense of nostalgia for a past time and a place she left behind in her youth.

In all of this I wondered if St. Gabe's had become Mona's Pointe-Saint-Charles' community and whether this was her postindustrial story, especially when she talked about her young life in Little Burgundy and her move to the Point. I'm not sure. Unlike Natalie, Carol and Debbie, Mona didn't express the same sense of place-based identity and of being rooted in place

[138] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 6:02.

in the present. Much of her narrative focused on her feelings around community mobilization efforts to save St. Gabe's but more importantly, her sense of personal loss focused more on people she knew who had left the Point:

> A lot of the families that I was involved with when my children were in school … they moved a while ago. Like, once their kids finished elementary school a lot of them moved on. My friend Maureen moved to Toronto. My friend Hazel moved to PEI. My friend Debbie moved to the other side of the city. Any of the people I was involved with in the school back when my children were here – they're not around anymore, except for Carol and Debbie but they weren't really part of my circle and all the rest are gone. Then again, they didn't have children as spread out as I did.[139]

I do find it interesting that outside of her sense of belonging within St. Gabe's, I never asked if Mona had recreated a wider community for herself within the Point or what that might have looked like. In the end, Mona was only one of her siblings to settle in the Point. The others would ultimately move to nearby Verdun, Chateauguay or Ontario while her youngest sibling went out west. Perhaps the school had become Mona's real place of personal attachment but she didn't talk about it in the same way as the others. She is only paid for two to three hours a day yet she spends most of the day at St. Gabe's, arriving at 7:00am to prepare the day's snacks, then attending to her lunch duties, helping out around the school and tutoring special needs kids. Mona only leaves at the end of the school day and with that, says:

> My children, my daughters get upset with me. They feel like, OK mom, you're getting older now. Take some time for yourself. Why are you giving so much to the school? You only get paid two or three hours a day. Why are you there from 7:00 in the morning till 2:30 in the afternoon? And I try to explain to them, this is my life. So I didn't go out there and get a big education and I didn't go out there and get a big job but this is my job and this is what I like to do and I love the kids and that's all that should matter, as long as the rent's paid and there's food on the table. That's all that matters.[140]

Without question, Mona still believed that what defined a community school was that you could walk to it, "I know personally that if our school had closed, I was going to move where I was in

[139] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 28:22.
[140] Kircoff, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 37:40.

walking distance to my child's school. I would have in a second." In retrospect, I wondered if any of the lunch ladies could drive and if so, whether they had access to cars. Again, for some reason, I hadn't asked. In the end, I found Mona's story about leaving Little Burgundy similar to Natalie's narrative of her own life trajectory. I turn to her story now.

Natalie Sztych

Natalie is the youngest of the lunch ladies yet still has a forty-year history at St. Gabe's, as a student (starting Pre-K in 1975), aunt, daughter of a volunteer mum, a volunteer herself and as a lunch lady and occasional tutor for the last seventeen years. She has an infectious smile and a terrific sense of humour, laughing her way through most of the stories she told, if nothing else than to find levity even at times where little could be found. Natalie's memories of change bridged her experience of four generations – grandparents, parents, her own and that of her nieces – and with that, four generations of change in the Point. Her niece's daughter attends St. Gabe's and Natalie was happy to say, "So now we've started a whole different generation here. She's five. She's in kindergarten."[141] Natalie points to the extensive intergenerational ties within the school, asking "How many can say that I knew your grandmother, or I knew your grandfather? I knew your brother, or I knew your sister, your aunt, because when you come here, they do."[142] She would say, "My mom too – many years ago when I started school, she used to volunteer a little bit here,"[143] while for many years, Natalie's mother worked at the local Community Clinic just across the street from the school, a building long closed, graffiti covered and boarded up. There are now two Community Clinic locations in the neighbourhood. Natalie reminded me that in the Point, you never had to look far to find a community activist in the

[141] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 7:36.
[142] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 17:33.
[143] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 7:36.

family. She started working in the after-school program in 1998 and never left:

> I started here and that was that. I ended up staying here because too, my mom got sick. It was close for me. If something happened at home I was able to go home. So I stayed here and we're all like a family, like with Mona, Carol, you know, Debbie. And then there was Ms. Glenda. She used to be our caretaker. It's a small world because ... my sister-in-law's sister was married to the caretaker's brother. So they were brothers. It's like a small world, you know.[144]

Nathalie also remembers a neighbourhood where kids walked long distances to school, "much farther than now,"[145] she said with a laugh, playing at the local park, bigger families and lots more going on. As it happens, Natalie and Mona's paths had intersected long before they became lunch ladies, starting with cups of tea when Mona's daughter and Natalie's niece played together.

> … first I didn't know Mona that good but her daughter, too, she was with my niece. She grew up with Vickie, my niece. They were best friends. … They used to go to each other's house. I used to go to Mona's for tea. I'd go pick her up, whatever, and then the other one would want to come to our house.[146]

Born and raised with her brother on Centre Street in the Point, Natalie lived in the same house for forty-four years next door to her grandparents. As a teenager, Natalie attended Villa Maria, a private girl's high school in Montreal's Notre-Dame-de-Grace (NDG) west-end neighbourhood. From there she attended Marianopolis, a private CEGEP also in NDG before going on to Concordia University to study political science and psychology. In a neighbourhood where so many historically do not finish high school Natalie created a life trajectory that broke with the traditional norm early on. She was one of an unusual small group of young women who all went off to school together – a move that would take them beyond the boundaries of the Point. She reflected with a smile:

> Believe it or not, for high school I went to Villa Maria. It was me and four of my girlfriends from here also that … went. We all graduated from there the same time. Then I went off to college. I went to Marianopolis and then I went to Concordia. I studied

[144] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 14:18.
[145] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 13:13.
[146] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 14:18.

> political science. … I didn't really always know what I wanted to be. I picked political science and I'm not even sure but I took a minor in psychology… When it all finished, I didn't really know what to do with it all. I was like a bit, I'd stay home. My mother would be at work. My father would be at work so I'd take care of the house for them and everything.[147]

Yet even though Natalie had opportunities for her future that most in the Point did not have, she remained in the neighbourhood for most of her adult life and throughout that time, stayed connected to St. Gabe's. Perhaps it began as her attachment to the neighbourhood but in the end, Natalie felt she was called to stay out of family necessity. I never learned whether she kept in touch with her girlfriends or where the rest of them ended up. At the time, it hadn't occurred to me to ask. I would be curious to know.

You could hear a certain lament in Natalie's voice about not having followed a career path, a life course she set aside first, to care for her young teenage nieces when their mother died at a young age and later, to care for her grandmother and father – family ties that may very well have been stronger than her own need to make a break:

> [My brother's wife] passed away when my niece was fourteen. One was fourteen. One was eighteen. Their mum was only forty-five when she passed away. That was my sister-in-law. My brother was never the same after, right? He was never the same after so I always had to be there for the girls too. It's how I ended up becoming part of the school because my nieces both came here and so I volunteered when they worked. I would take them home, do homework with them, bring them to the park after school and stuff and let them play and make supper and then when they came home, I'd go home and take care of my other family, my parents, you know.[148]

About life and loss in her extended family Nathalie told me:

> Yes, I grew up here. I lived here for forty-four years. I just recently moved to Verdun. Because what happened was, in the past year and a half it started with my mom passed away. Then I was taking care of my grandmother and then she passed away and then my dad passed away this past September so the last year and a half has been quite difficult. After my grandmother passed away, my dad had been sick so I had to put him in a home

[147] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 10:46.
[148] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 7:36.

> cause he wouldn't let me do anything for him and he had dementia. He wouldn't accept help. He started a fire one day in the house.[149]

Even though she had no historical connection to Verdun, Natalie continued with the reasons why she moved there with her niece, having lived in the Point her whole life. Nothing has been the same though:

> [My father] was upstairs. My grandmother was downstairs so I'd run up and down, up and down, up and down and I had my niece at the time. She was staying with me to take some of the burden off when I had to be upstairs. My grandmother couldn't walk. She was bedridden. The last year and a half has been quite difficult so – all of them passing and him being in the home and so I decided that we were going to get away from the two houses. I'd been there for forty-four years – the same two houses – and I needed a change. My grandmother was downstairs I guess, thirty-some-odd years. She lived downstairs from us. We lived upstairs when my mother was there for forty-five years. I was born in that house and I was there for forty-four.[150]

Natalie's narrative was intensely personal and deeply nostalgic, turning most often to the house where she had lived in for over four decades.

Of all the lunch ladies, Natalie became my window to understanding the meaning of nostalgia, defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "A wistful or excessively sentimental yearning for return to or of some past period or irrecoverable condition; a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past."[151] Yet it was through Svetlana Boym's[152] writing that I came to appreciate not only the depth of Natalie's loss but also her nostalgic longing to return home. Boym asserts that longing is more about time than place, "… for the unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that [become] obsolete,"[153] a concept I was initially unable to disentangle from the idea of space, or place. As Natalie talked about her life in the Point it took some time to understand how she longed not only to return to the physical space of home but

[149] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 2:21.
[150] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 7:36.
[151] "Oxford Dictionary," 2017, (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nostalgia).
[152] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*.
[153] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia,* xv.

more importantly to a past time when "those two houses" were filled with intergenerational activity of family life and thus, a place which still embodied her family history. Boym holds that nostalgic yearning for a different time, what she calls, a "historical emotion," is very much a symptom of our modern age and I would find, so present in Natalie's story. In a very short period, Natalie suffered a series of traumatic losses. Each was connected to the actual place of home but they were also every bit about time – a time during which she remained attached to her community at St. Gabe's.

Natalie reflected wistfully on her recent move to Verdun in 2015, expressing an incredible sense of displacement both from her family roots as well as her most significant physical sites of memory. Most of all she missed her family home. Natalie always thinks of returning to the Point as the place her roots and still looks for intimate signs of family life:

> I was always close to everything. My bank was here. Everything was here but things change. I moved to Verdun. It's not the same. I don't have the feeling of home. My home is still here… I miss home…. It's not the same … I don't have the feeling of home. …This is my home. … There's a lot of memories in those two houses. That's where [the family] always came for Christmas. That's where I was with my parents. I took care of my parents at home, my grandmother. … I never ever thought I'd move away from there. I always thought, you know, that's where I'd end up, you know, going on – passing away from there, but, I don't know.[154]

The death of Natalie's mother, grandmother and father, followed by her move to Verdun, signified not only the loss of family and of home but also the impossibility of returning to a former time and place in her life. The physical structure of "those two houses" would come to symbolize loss itself but still, Natalie hopes to return there someday. She laughed as she said, "… if I ever had the chance and they sold that property I would buy that property, take it down and fix it all. Cause, you know, it's a nice area. It really is."[155] What I found so poignant was that a return home was long impossible for Natalie both because her family was gone but equally

[154] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 5:15.
[155] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 45:11.

important, the Point had become a different place – a postindustrial neighbourhood where residential displacement, high rents, rising property values and a completely redefined community was what Natalie faced. Ultimately, Boym accepts that nostalgic yearning for a past time is inevitably tied to particular places and our historical links to them, "… an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world."[156] Nowhere, she holds, is this as present as in deindustrialized landscapes and communities. For Natalie, nostalgia was her response to compounded losses of family, physical sites of memory and the lost ideal of return.

Conclusion

When I first set out to interview Debbie, Carol, Mona and Natalie I was interested in the story of a little English elementary school in Pointe-Saint-Charles that had been the focus for three rounds of intense community mobilization over a period of six years and had survived closure each time. However, in the end I discovered that I had a much broader aim – to better understand the changing meaning of community in a postindustrial era – specifically, how a community redefines or reimagines its identity after decades of loss and displacement, economic and social change and also further reconfiguration through revitalization processes. I effectively sought to contextualize the lunch ladies' life stories both within the legacy of deindustrialization and within the cultural markers left behind – a retrospective position made possible only through the passage of time and through the lens of memory. Drawing on the work of Stranglemen et al., High and others,[157] Debbie, Carol, Mona and Natalie gave me an opportunity not only to participate in a shared forum for storytelling but also to place their narratives within emerging

[156] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia,* xiv.
[157] "Crumbling Cultures: Special Issue on Deindustrialization," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84: Fall (2013).

scholarship on the long term cultural and social impacts of deindustrialization.

The lunch ladies' life also stories brought into focus Doreen Massey's notion that communities are forever in transition and Pointe-Saint-Charles is no exception – a community defined both by its industrial legacy and also by the challenge it confronts within the postindustrial present. For Massey, the identity of places is always in process, building layers of articulations over time and in space, each presenting a "multiplicity of readings,"[158] competing histories and different interpretations of identity. The lunch ladies' postindustrial present has become yet another "layer of articulation," emphasizing not only the uniqueness of Pointe-Saint-Charles' history and the potential for local agency but also which connects its story to a broader global context. The lunch ladies showed me that each story is unique and each place has a unique history.

The lunch ladies' life stories and their involvement in mobilization efforts to save St. Gabriel School provided incredible insight into the long term resilience of deindustrialized communities, confirming Steven's High's assertion not to believe that complete cultural erasure occurs in the wake of industrial and economic decline, especially in places where apparently not much has filled the void. As the neighbourhood changed around them, this small group of incredibly resilient women continually turned to the school community and to each other. In the process, they reaffirmed a sense of belonging they had previously found on the sidewalks, balconies and bingo halls in the Point. The lunch ladies' stories attest to the school as a lasting site of local place attachment where individual and collective memories find their voice and also their place in history.

Although Debbie, Carol, Mona and Natalie each told their story from a unique perspective – place attachment, displacement, loss, recovery and nostalgia – there was a uniting

[158] Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," 185.

element throughout – St. Gabe's as home and St. Gabe's as family. Boym holds that ultimately, "… nostalgia is about the relationship of individual biography and the biography of groups and nations, between personal and collective memory."[159] In this light, the lunch ladies have done something truly extraordinary. Although each was nostalgic for past times and places, they were able to recreate and maintain a community that satisfied their sense of longing. The lunch ladies show us throughout how St. Gabe's truly is a community school – an essential meeting place where memories solidify and cultural patterns persist. In that, their collective consciousness and shared history have only strengthened.

We have seen from mobilization efforts to save St. Gabe's that the potential loss of community schools as markers of intergenerational history and local identity can be devastating, especially in times of great economic uncertainty and decline. Such local schools exist within increasingly competitive education markets with their draw of niche schools and specialized choices outside the neighbourhood. St. Gabe's is an example. In a recent *Atlantic Monthly* article asking the question, "When Neighborhoods Gentrify, Why Aren't Their Public Schools Improving?" The answer was simple, "Gentrification, it turns out, usually stops at the schoolhouse door…"[160] as wealthier parents often send their children to school outside gentrifying neighbourhoods. For them it's a matter of choice. Few newcomers have turned to St. Gabe's as a school of choice. However, for so many in the local community the school has still survived as a neighbourhood site of historical connection and intergenerational continuity.

During all the interviews, I wondered how the lunch ladies felt about being asked so many questions about the past and to go places that they wouldn't otherwise have ventured. In an informal group conversation, I learned that they were surprised that someone actually wanted to

[159] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia,* xvi.
[160] Ester Bloom, "When Neighborhoods Gentrify, Why Aren't Their Public Schools Improving?," Atlantic Monthly, October 7, 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/10/gentrification-schools/408568/.

hear their story or even that they had one to tell. As Natalie said so plainly, “No one had ever asked.” Through our discussions, I discovered that their stories had given me incredible insight into personal experiences of deindustrialization and the meaning of place based attachment to physical sites of memory. But most importantly, they taught me so much about the strength of local agency and the resilience of community. I often asked myself what I had given them.

Chapter 2

Bridging the Postindustrial Divide: Looking in from the Outside

> There is an apparent contradiction between community spirit (solidarity and cohesion through strong families and networks) and community decline (as defined through socio-economic indicators). These two issues represent positive and negative sides of the socio-economic and cultural impacts of industrial decline: the positive side embodies a less tangible community spirit founded (at least initially) on a community with a strong industrial identity and the negative side involves material degradation and socio-economic deprivation.[161]

If the lunch ladies shared stories of continuity amidst change, a second set of four oral history interviews in the community and institutional sector in Pointe-Saint-Charles revealed very different perspectives. They call upon us to consider not only the personal and community impacts of deindustrialization but also a broader yet inescapable outcome of deeply embedded structural forces – the existence of a persistent "urban underclass," left behind and increasingly relegated to the economic and social periphery in postindustrial transitions. Paul Watt explains, they are caught between "upmarket property redevelopment and gentrification at one extreme and concentrated deprivation and stigmatization at the other,"[162] akin to Steven High's notion of double erasure as communities are hit first with deindustrialization and later, further marginalization through gentrification processes. However, in places he calls plunder zones, "epicentres of economic destruction,"[163] Andrew Hurley still encourages us not to focus exclusively on loss and deprivation in periods of postindustrial transition but equally, on what arises from the "wreckage." This is exactly where I placed the lunch ladies' resilient life stories and their incredible sense of community connection. But in all of this, my second set of

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[161] Alice Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination: Walker Riverside, Newcastle upon Tyne," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 409-410.
[162] Paul Watt, "Respectability, Roughness and 'Race': Neighbourhood Place Images and the Making of Working-Class Social Distinctions in London," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, no. 4 (December 2006): 776.
[163] Andrew Hurley, "The Transformation of Industrial Suburbs since the Second World War," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, 2017, 209.

interviews with community sector workers highlighted very different themes about the place of St. Gabriel School and about changing class dynamics in the Point. For some it is the belief that in the midst of neighbourhood change, the most disenfranchised Anglophone community is either unable or unwilling to change and thus remains entrenched in the past. For others, acknowledging an underclass[164] left behind in the wake of deindustrialization has been a call to establish new ways of understanding and adapting to the needs of those most impacted by structural change.

With this in mind, I interviewed Isabel Morgan, senior administrator and Emily Cole, former youth program worker on site at their community social service organization, Jim Daskalakis, St. Gabriel School Principal; and Sharon Parry, former Executive Director at the Pointe-Saint-Charles YMCA. With the exception of Emily Cole, a life-long Pointer and former St. Gabe's student, none of the other three were from the Point and thus, had no historical sense of place attachment to the community and no connection to living memory – all of which Alice Mah and Taljia Blokland point out, is essential to long term community solidarity and belonging.[165] My intent in conducting these institutional interviews was to learn about the role of community organizations in supporting St. Gabe's mobilization efforts and in many ways, I did. Yet, their narratives exposed something I hadn't initially seen in the lunch ladies' life stories and which became a central focus of this chapter.

Here I explore what it means to be on the outside "looking in" as community sector workers who live elsewhere but work in the Point become active participants in neighbourhood

[164] The term, underclass is not so easily defined - identified simply in the Oxford dictionary as "The lowest social stratum in a country or community, consisting of the poor and unemployed." In defining the underclass, Hartigan provides a list of benchmark indicators which local demographics in the Point exhibit – high levels of unemployment, poverty, high teenage school dropout rates, welfare dependence, female headed (or single parent) households. However, he and others like Kirk, Walley, and Blokland, note that the idea of an underclass must be viewed as a relational process - one's relative economic positioning to others in the world rooted in structural social, political and economic forces.

[165] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination,"; Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."

change and in the process, adapt their institutional practices to a new community landscape – at times turning away from the needs of the most vulnerable. Each of the four community interviewees had a different way of talking about the Point and in articulating their feelings toward St. Gabe's. However, I discovered that the significance of community in the Point ultimately depends not only on whom you ask but equally important, must take into account their positionality in relation to local collective history and memory. In this chapter I thus explore the extent to which those who have no localized or place specific or collective memory may ultimately remain on the outside looking in from a distance. Mah's work in the deindustrialized area of Newcastle upon Tyne draws our attention to exactly this point – that collective memories are by nature, socially constructed,[166] an idea that informed much of my interpretation of the four community narratives. As "outsiders," so aptly defined by Talja Blokland as "…anyone who cannot participate in the collective enterprise of remembering,"[167] I am interested in whether outsider institutional narratives expose a particular kind of postindustrial divide amongst those "working with" as opposed to "living within" the community. Missing from their experience is an attachment to the bricks and mortar of communities – physical expressions of memory, collective identity as well as the basis for constructing community.

In exploring place-making processes in the gentrifying New Haven, Connecticut neighbourhood in the US, Blokland holds that:

> Agendas of what assets a neighbourhood needs thus depend not only on commonly recognized elements as neighbourhood mobilization and access to the polity itself, but also on historical narratives of place. Erasure from such narratives may be one of the mechanisms contributing to unequal access to resources and the unintended durability of such inequality.[168]

[166] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination."
[167] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."
[168] Talja Blokland, "Celebrating Local Histories and Defining Neighbourhood Communities: Place-Making in a Gentrified Neighbourhood," *Urban Studies* 46, no. 8 (2009): 1595.

Blokland's ideas on historical narratives of place resonated for me in Pointe-Saint-Charles where a newly dominant narrative is evolving, again a process resonating with Raymond Williams' structures of feeling.[169] Particularly in the wake of deindustrialization and broader structural change we are now in a transitional period where historically dominant industrial narratives are becoming residual.[170] It has everything to do with who gets left out of the dominant discourse in the long term as newcomers move in and community institutions respond to changing demands. Ultimately, I am interested in whose voices become the strongest, whose are marginalized in the process and how "institutional outsiders" connect to local community culture in the absence a shared collective history. I am also drawn to the question of how community workers from outside the Point bridge the "institutional divide" in their community work in the Pointe-Saint-Charles community.

Finally, this chapter focuses on the question of whether outsiders' lack of historical attachment to the neighbourhood reveals what Andrew Sayer terms "the moral significance of class,"[171] inviting us to consider not only the structural foundations of social inequality but also the belief that persistent disparities can be seen as fixed in culturally shared and subjective experience. In the absence of traditional definitions of class based on work and production relations, for Sayer, the issue of class becomes a self-reflexive practice. He asks that we consider not only our social positions in direct relation to others but also the moral sentiments we attach to them – class based perceptions of cultural dysfunction which hold communities like the Point responsible for their own marginalization. Both Sayer and Kirk provide a lens through which I view negative representations of the longstanding Point community expressed primarily in one outsider narrative, particularly with regard to the most disenfranchised Anglophone population

[169] Williams, "Structures of Feeling."
[170] High, "Beyond Aesthetics."
[171] Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class*.

and St. Gabe's families. In the end these interviews provided great insight into the ways in which moral boundaries come to delimit disenfranchised neighbourhoods in spatial terms – socio-spatial relegation that becomes the basis for further marginalization, stigmatization and the continued reproduction of inequality.

My interpretation of these four community narratives – especially with regard to the "insider-outsider" divide – has also been heavily informed by the work of James Rhodes in Burnley, UK, a deindustrialized neighbourhood much like the Point.[172] Each has followed similar historical trajectories of advanced marginality and territorial stigmatization. In critiquing the work of sociologist, Loic Wacquant,[173] Rhodes addresses the causes of advanced marginality and territorial stigmatization, processes resulting in a "blemish of place,"[174] delineated "no-go" areas that become stigmatized as lingering centres of moral degeneracy. They become declining neighbourhoods to which "urban outcasts" are relegated, much like we have witnessed in the Point over time. What makes Rhodes' work so relevant to my study is his focus on white areas of relegation in the UK, a place where the underclass is concentrated most heavily on "white bodies and spaces,"[175] something that resonated with regard to similar demographic characteristics within the Anglophone population in the Point and that of Rhodes' study in the UK.[176] John Hartigan's early work on the largely white deindustrialized Briggs neighbourhood in Detroit addresses a similar issue. There, he holds, that "… whites complicate the assumption that the underclass is a uniquely racialized phenomenon," a concept long associated with poor inner city rust belt neighbourhoods in the US.

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[172] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries."
[173] Loic Wacquant, "Territorial Stigmatization in the Age of Advanced Marginality," *Thesis Eleven* 91 (November 2007).
[174] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries."
[175] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries," 687.

Rhodes' characterization of the underclass more broadly includes groups segregated not only on the basis of race but more importantly also on the grounds of class – an equally significant form of territorial "otherness" and a similar pattern to what Hartigan found in inner city Detroit. This also stood out in the Point. Around such areas "… boundaries are drawn and negative attributes assigned not just to minority ethnic groups or spaces, but also to white groups and spaces seen to represent a threat – be it moral, cultural, physical or social…"[177] Material and symbolic boundaries hence become solidified in social terms – a process heavily influencing institutional decisions about local investment, resource allocation and the provision of local services to hard hit areas like Pointe-Saint-Charles. The following four narratives thus provide a window to understanding not only how community workers in the Point bridge institutional and class divides – especially those on the outside "looking in" – but also the extent to which they reveal enduring class inequality in postindustrial places.

Isabel Morgan

I begin this second set of interviews with Isabel Morgan, a senior administrator whose organization opened its doors in Pointe-Saint-Charles in the early 1990s with three clear directives: "… so all may eat; all may learn and grow; and all may work,"[178] an institutional mandate that she says remains broader than any other community organization in the Point. When I set out to interview Isabel I knew little about her organization. However, I was interested in its relationship to St. Gabriel School and its commitment to serving the longstanding Pointe-Saint-Charles' community. In our interview, I learned that the institution's mandate reached far beyond the geographic boundaries of the Point through a school food program – delivering

[177] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries."
[178] Isabel Morgan (pseudonym), Anonymized Intervew with Tanya Steinberg. Interview is in the possession of the author. Audio, May 25, 2016. 33:08.

lunches to many schools within the English Montreal and Lester B. Pearson School Boards (including the nearby neighbourhoods of Verdun, Lasalle and Westmount). I was also interested that many of its volunteers, donors, board members and program participants originated outside the Point, which may ultimately have influenced how Isabel felt about the local population.

More than any other, Isabel's narrative provided the greatest insight into what it means for the "urban underclass" to have been left behind in Pointe-Saint-Charles, a place she led me to understand, where "underclass" and "Anglophone" were effectively synonymous. While my questions to Isabel in our interview consistently related to "St. Gabe's" or more broadly to the "local community in the Point," her responses frequently directed my attention to difficulties only within the Anglophone community, almost as if they were a group "set apart" from the rest of the neighbourhood and therefore relegated to the margins. I never asked directly about the Anglophone community yet her responses included the words Anglophone, Anglo or English twenty-three times during the interview and most often when she referred to difficulties within this population. Take for example her comments about drugs in the Point:

> You still have the drug trade here. It's very strong. Unfortunately, that's a route that the Anglos go. We did a study in our youth group (in 2011) and twenty five percent of our kids lived in homes where there is either high drug use or drug trade. They were mainly English at that time. We've had families where they have had drug busts in the family. I know them well. … and the cops have come in the middle of the night and the big outrage the next day is that they dragged their teenage daughter out of bed at gunpoint. The outrage is not that they had weapons in the house and drugs. That's what's endangering the kids, not the fact that the cops came in.[179]

As Kirk points out, "The ramifications of class inequality and difference cut into subjective experiences and bury themselves deep, and this in turn has profound implications for how people see themselves, [and] others and the world."[180] This is very much the framework within which I placed Isabel's comments that so often revealed subjective undertones towards the Anglophone

[179] Morgan, (psuedonym). Anonymized Interview, 33:08.
[180] Kirk, *Class, Culture and Social Change: On the Trail of the Working Class*.

population.

When I asked Isabel about her thoughts on mobilization efforts to save St. Gabe's over the years as well as her views on the school as a focus for community in the Point, she responded, "… It's a very mobilized community. Pointe-Saint-Charles is synonymous with mobilization,"[181] a point I agreed with. However, what she added shortly after was both unexpected and unsettling:

> It's also a focus for charity. I won't get started on that cause that's my biggest thing … English heritage is you give to people who are poor, in general. If you look at what we've done in Africa, the Western world, we've given aid and it's impoverished and created more corruption. There are a couple of books that we've based our changing methodology on this, "Moving from Charity to Development." The whole teach somebody to fish, not give them fish. But in this area, there's been tons of fish handed out and continue to be handed out. … We can actually teach kids to be poor forever. We can teach them how to rely on others, to be dependent as opposed to independent. … So lots of people give stuff to St. Gabe's. There's a lot free gifts because they're poor kids. We get that too here and we try and make it a privilege.[182]

Her reply left me uncomfortable for so many reasons. The first I took as her attitude toward an inherent lack of motivation for change within the Anglo community as a cause of its current situation. At the time I asked myself whether her sentiments were really just subjective class-based assumptions of community stagnation, opinions reflecting what Paul Watt calls an inherently "middle class gaze,"[183] or merely a function of being on the "outside looking in," while at the same time looking away from the Anglo community. For me, this was a particularly difficult moment in the interview as I chafed at how broadly she painted "English heritage" in such negative terms.

Isabel never directly used the term underclass when she referred to the local Anglophone population yet the implication was clear. I was troubled by her consistent focus on behaviours

[181] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 7:03.
[182] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 54:15.
[183] Watt, "Respectability, Roughness and 'Race,'" 778.

and cultural dysfunction within the longstanding Anglo community in the Point, not the more structural foundations of class inequality – which her experience and education indicated, she fully understood. Isabel has a strong background in business was well as extensive experience volunteering in poor communities overseas in the areas of program development and microenterprise. Upon her return to Canada after a period of time working overseas Isabel reflected on her future:

> When I came back I was kind of faced with – do I continue in software or do I respond to this tug that is to the community sector. So I had a client that I worked part time with and started looking at community sector contracts and I had one with a big organization putting in a finance system for them. My happiest moments in that job was sitting at lunch with people from the community using the food bank.[184]

She said of herself, "My head is business but my heart is community,"[185] but where the longstanding community in Point was concerned I wondered about the "heart is community" part of the conversation, especially in policy choices that all but excluded much of St. Gabe's population.

Isabel's sentiments towards the Anglophone community in the Point resonated with Rhodes' oral history research in the deindustrialized textile town of Burnley, UK, where narrators' depictions of "scruffy whites" in council estates revealed similar undertones to how she talked about Anglos in the Point.[186] For example, when one retired white male professional was asked about his views on the council estate of Burnley Wood, a housing estate long stigmatized by decline and dysfunction, he was quick to set himself apart, "… you've got Burnley Wood which is almost 100 per cent white, low quality because of the drug addicts living there."[187] Another felt that "… you've got the worse end of the white population living there,"

[184] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 54:15.
[185] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 54:15.
[186] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries," 696.
[187] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries," 697.

while pointing to "single-parent lasses with prams" as symbols of welfare dependence and laziness,[188] not far off from Isabel's sentiments on the community as a focus for charity in the Point. Nevertheless, Rhodes' exploration of "scruffy whites," "white trash," or "Asians," in separate but declining areas of Burnley directs our attention to the ways in which council estate residents in his study were continually marginalized and also stigmatized by outsiders:

> … 'white estates' were also seen to be sites of various dysfunctional behaviours: promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and antisocial behavior were identified as the cultural practices through which 'scruffy whites' areas were identified … notions of cultural dysfunction remained preeminent.[189]

Throughout, Rhodes' narrators point to commonly cited negative social indicators describing the underclass – also seen as gauges of cultural dysfunction – in particular where "… single mothers were a … powerful symbol of the moral and cultural degeneracy seen to exist in 'scruffy white' areas."[190] Both Watt and Rhodes emphasize that such forms of negative stigmatization not only symbolize but also are heavily implicated in reproducing class inequality and social polarization, something I found deeply embedded in how Isabel spoke about the Point.

Given all of this, when I asked Isabel how she saw the future of the Point evolving for its longstanding local population, again her answer pointed if nothing else, symbolically, to an entrenched underclass left behind. For example, I thought it was a good thing when she began to talk about the importance of social housing in the midst of a rapidly changing local economy:

> [The Point] is changing very fast. I feel that it's picking up pace. … you also have this almighty dollar moving in at an incredible rate – people who can plunk down a million dollars for a house and that automatically affects property taxes. Those are built in rhythms. So, thankfully, there's a good social housing infrastructure that's in place and I think that mobilizing a percentage of new development that includes social housing, that will guarantee that there's at least a significant percentage. But it's going to gentrify.[191]

[188] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries," 697.
[189] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries," 697.
[190] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries," 697.
[191] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 39:59.

Quite surprisingly, this is exactly when she turned to her comments on Anglos and the local drug trade, a sharp segue into subjective territory.

In Isabel's opinion, the Anglophone community remains most at risk yet is the least likely to participate in community programming geared to a social economy model of empowerment and personal growth her organization was committed to. I asked her how the relationship between her organization and St. Gabe's had changed over time. Her answer was straightforward but still troubling:

> It has evolved. If we talk about the time when the school was up for closure [2011], it is different than what it is today. We still have a relationship with St. Gabe's, which is great, but because the whole area is changing, the relative weight of that relationship has shifted. Back in the day … we had a large, drop-in type youth group. At one point we had about ninety-five kids, the vast majority of which were St. Gabe's kids, which was about the whole school population.
>
> … now we have over 250 kids in our programs and St. Gabe's obviously represents the smallest proportion … Youth group was very much … low barrier to entry. We didn't really have an official registration process other than we had a list of names. But as we formalized, we needed to have things like parental consent that the child is here. We need to have phone numbers, addresses so if something happens to the child, we can contact somebody. As we put those in, a lot of the St. Gabe's kids dropped off. So we did things like fill in the forms for them. Please just sign it. That meant that over time we lost some St. Gabe's kids…[192]

Isabel's tone and observations caused me to reflect on who was being left out and why. In our interview she told me:

> So in all reality, the [Anglophone] population is probably the most vulnerable. … We find that the most vulnerable people are often not reached. In the past I think we had the most vulnerable families who were coming to our youth group but as soon as we put in formal measures of who's here, things started dropping off. It wasn't any longer just a drop in. You actually had to come if you were registered – so minimum levels of responsibility. We lost people.[193]

I wondered to what extent this "inability" to reach the most at risk had as much to do with changing institutional philosophy within her organization as it did with her perceived inability of

[192] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 0:20.
[193] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 5:24.

the Anglo community to adjust to changing times. I asked myself why "losing people" seemed all right to her. It didn't to me. It was clear that recent policy changes had the longer-term impact of excluding those from more informally based social community networks who depended on a less controlled and structured environment – specifically, long standing Pointe-Saint-Charles' and St. Gabe's families. Why did losing St. Gabe's kids appear not only inevitable but also acceptable – a form of institutional abandonment with long lasting implications. Isabel also pointed out that as demographics in the Point have transformed over time, changes in the relationship between her organization and the community at St. Gabe's were not unexpected but also she seemed to place responsibility on the community itself:

> Some of the Anglo parents, the impression is … if it's a drop off babysitting service that's great. And what we did was, as we formalized, we started taking attendance and although we had ninety-five kids on the list, they were very sporadic in their attendance. So it was when they were stuck or when they didn't have something else to do… and we would have kids, four or five years old coming here at night by themselves unaccompanied. That's the population difference. It's not all of them but that was kind of the makeup of that population.
>
> So as our programs have shifted to really getting the dropout rate down, which is fifty-one percent, we collect report cards. We work on reading and math. We work on music, so all skills that develop the brain – cooking, things that are going to move those social indicators forward. But all that language is very formal, very foreign.[194]

What Isabel told me in our interview was in stark contrast to how strongly she supported St. Gabe's in a 2011 brief she wrote to the English Montreal School Board. The content of her report revealed a obvious disconnect:

> The children of St. Gabriel School are the heart and soul of our Youth Group Program. Begun four years ago after two local boys from a group home asked one of the staff to do something for them, we became directly involved with the real issue of elementary-aged children spending their evenings in the streets and in the parks with no adult supervision. Our proximity to the school made our centre a natural place for them to come for a youth group that provides a safe and warm place, arts and crafts, games, sports, music and outings, not to mention the listening ear of animators who accompany the children through the challenges they face. Of the over seventy children in the Youth Group, two-

[194] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 2:44.

> thirds of them are students at St. Gabriel School. … Through their Youth Group involvement, students from St. Gabriel School have become involved in other programs that have a direct impact on their long-term academic success. … As a percentage of the total student body, St. Gabriel students are certainly the highest.[195]

What happened to the "heart and soul" that Isabel referred to here? At the time of our interview she was clear that St. Gabe's students had been left behind, effectively cut off by new rules and regulations in youth programming and an institutional commitment directed elsewhere. Yet the needs of this community hadn't changed. If anything, given continuing transitions in the neighbourhood, their needs would only have increased. It was difficult for me to reconcile Isabel's institutional voice in the report to the English Montreal School Board with her personal sentiments towards the Anglo community in our interview.

It became clear to me that under Isabel's direction her organization had essentially turned its back on the Anglophone community while, in part, holding them responsible for their own deficiency. I learned in our interview that her organization continues to run tutoring and bursary programs for St. Gabe's and the other two French elementary schools. Yet Isabel still expressed strong opinions that the Anglophone community had not kept up with change in the Point, not only with regard to an influx of renovators and condo dwellers but equally, with new programs and communities now served through her organization. She felt that unlike Anglophones in Quebec, recent waves of new immigrants who now make up the majority of program participants that come from cultures that intrinsically value education and family advancement. In our interview she had this to say:

> In the Point the challenging social demographics are keenest among the Anglophone community. We have every community under the sun that comes here and uses our programs. We have a large proportion of immigrant kids in our tutoring and music programs, more demanding programs and the parents are pro-education. They could be

[195] Isabel Morgan (pseudonym), "Brief Submitted to the English Montreal School Board Regarding Recommendations for the Future of St. Gabriel School." (Montreal: November 1, 2011: 3).

> from Southeast Asia, mostly South Asia, parts of Africa. Those would be the main ones. Some are European but they're all from here. They all live here. But they are cultures that value education very highly so even if you're poor, education is important. … but the Anglophone Quebecois do not typically come from a culture in which education is important and where formal education is important.[196]

Her comparison of "Anglophone Quebecois" to more motivated and functional newcomers again left me very uncomfortable, as did her comments about cultural dysfunction and negative behaviours endemic to the Anglo population. Blokland asks an important question here, "… what processes and social locations of people in relation to others (present and in other settings) "make" a place stigmatized as a ghetto of passive, dependent, disengaged residents…?"[197] I considered this deeply as Isabel's statements expressed not only the reality of economic decline in the Point but also her subjective attitudes towards an underclass left behind in the midst of structural change. Sayer[198] and Kirk[199] would argue that the answer to Blokland's question rests in subjectivities associated with one's own moral compass – in this case, Isabel's sentiments toward Anglophone Quebecois and the stigma she attached to them. At the end of our interview, Isabel suggested I speak to her colleague, Emily Cole. As former youth program worker in her organization and someone from the Point, Isabel felt I had much to learn from Emily about family and community dynamics in the neighbourhood.

Emily Cole

I found the interview with Emily Cole especially thought provoking in that she bridged many different "divides" in this story – both as a lifelong "Pointer" and in her institutional role

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[196] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 2:44.
[197] Talja Blokland, "'You Got to Remember You Live in Public Housing': Place-Making in an American Housing Project," *Housing, Theory and Society* 25, no. 1 (2008): 32.
[198] Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class*; Kirk, *Class, Culture and Social Change: On the Trail of the Working Class*.
[199] Kirk, *Class, Culture and Social Change: On the Trail of the Working Class*.

working with youth for seven years and more recently in the areas of administration and event planning. Emily's narrative gave me a unique lens through which to explore two central themes. The first is the reality of an underclass left behind from a personal perspective, especially having lived through change herself and secondly, the changing meaning of community and place attachment in Pointe-Saint-Charles over time. It took some time to tease out Emily's critical views as she talked about the needs of local youth and although she never said so directly, how her organization had left them behind. But most importantly as a community worker, Emily wasn't at all on the "outside looking in." As a community member she had a very different perspective in relation to the other institutional interviews. She was on the "inside looking out" with a distinctly insider's view of local history and towards institutional realignment at her organization. Alice Mah's reference to the term "inner landscape"[200] in areas of industrial decline is particularly meaningful in placing Emily's narrative in the context of local history. Yet it also invites us to consider how her story reveals "… the lived experience of memory in the present,"[201] emphasizing how memory attaches one to place even in the midst of widespread decline and neighbourhood change. Her narrative thus connected two quite different perspectives – one as a service provider, the other, a true "Pointer," whose living memory continues to anchor her in collective history.

Born in 1972, the Pointe-Saint-Charles of Emily's youth was filled a true sense of belonging and community spirit, "To me, I had the best time growing up, just with the neighbourhood kids and the families and the activities. I loved it. Like, I have the best memories. I'm still here."[202] She also shared without hesitation: "If I had it to do over, I wouldn't do it any other way. Would I change being raised here or change raising [my daughter]? I wouldn't in a

[200] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination," 401.
[201] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination," 401.
[202] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 3:10.

heartbeat, just because who [she] is today."[203] As I learned more about Emily, her "positionality" became increasingly interesting for many reasons. First, like the lunch ladies, her story was one of intergenerational attachment to St. Gabe's and the Point, serving to anchor her both in history and in her understanding of the postindustrial present. Emily and her sisters attended the school in their youth as did her daughter for a short time in pre-K, before moving to St. John Bosco Elementary in nearby Ville Emard. Of her own school experience and of life growing up in the Point, Emily related with some amusement:

> I moved here when I was two so I started at St. Gabriel's in pre-kindergarten. My teacher was Ms. Chin. It's funny because my daughter and I both had the same pre-kindergarten teacher. I went to St. Gabriel's, myself and so did my sisters. We're three sisters. … We were a whole block of kids that were pretty much all girls and that's where we went. … I loved it. I enjoyed the school. I enjoyed the friends. I'm still friends with everyone that I went there with. It's funny, for our kids, for friends that I went to school with throughout, my daughter is hanging out with their kids and doing the same things. It's funny.[204]

Yet, having lived through decades of deindustrialization and now gentrification, Emily understood the meaning of decline in a disenfranchised neighbourhood that she felt was also long due for change. She was all too familiar with the profound loss of community in the Point, "Houses are going up for sale. Wealthier people are moving in the area and the people that I've known all my life are pushed out. They have to move because they can't afford it anymore."[205] Like others, Emily has lost so many family and community bonds reminiscent of her youth. Both sisters left the Point to live elsewhere and her parents are soon to go, but she still has a strong attachment to the local community even though her family has often questioned her decision to stay:

> For a while, my sisters' now husbands always said 'I can't believe you're going to choose to raise a daughter in Pointe-Saint-Charles.' Because it's known to be rough and tough, they seem to think that kids are led to more drugs and what not. That's their opinion. My

[203] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 1:01.
[204] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 0:16.
[205] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 32:56.

> daughter is a lot more street smart than my niece and my nephews will ever be. You cannot imagine the difference between the two of them. It's crazy.[206]

Nevertheless, again Mah holds that such connection ultimately transcends the experience of decline in formerly industrial areas like Pointe-Saint-Charles where physical and symbolic bonds remain tied to sites of history, even within what she calls, "landscapes of devastation."[207] Mah's insight into how communities maintain a strong sense of belonging in the midst of postindustrial transformation highlighted a reality that Emily understood in the Point – even though local economic prospects were limited and so much has gone. In Mah's own research in Walker, UK, a working class neighbourhood profoundly hit with the decline of the local shipbuilding industry, one interviewee shared her thoughts about the lack of jobs in Walker, UK, "We can't all sell each other baskets and jam."[208] This spoke so clearly of loss and the kind of local economic rejuvenation in the Point to increasingly upscale housing and specialty services which have all but excluded the longstanding local community.

Emily's attachment to Pointe-Saint-Charles was clear in how she spoke about the importance of mobilization efforts to save St. Gabe's and also about her relationship to the students:

> I think it's because it's the only English school in our neighbourhood and so that's why they want to keep it vibrant and keep it there. I mean, some people that probably fought to keep it open, they don't even have kids in the school. It's just that everything keeps disappearing out of our area, right? And so anybody who's interested in keeping the community vibrant is going to fight for something that is the last of its kind in the area.[209]

> Even bingo night for the seniors, that stopped last year. So there's really nothing. We keep losing bits and pieces of everything and so I think that when something's at risk, they're more voiceful because they don't want to lose everything. We've lost a lot of things in the Point but there's nothing left, besides school. … It was important to me

[206] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 3:10.
[207] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination: Walker Riverside, Newcastle upon Tyne."
[208] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination," 410.
[209] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 18:22.

> because of the relationship I had with practically ninety kids that went there. So it was their opinions and their views and their lives that make me do what I do.[210]

I had no doubt that Emily's greatest concern was for neighbourhood youth who had been so heavily affected by changes within her organization. Early in the interview, she reminisced about her early days working with youth and relationship to children in the neighbourhood.

> Why I know so much, I guess, is I ran the youth group. We had a hundred kids registered. We'd see sixty kids a night. I know these kids because I know their parents from growing up, and the kids were just very comfortable. They'd tell you anything. One of my first nights at youth group, where I thought, we really need this group, we were sitting around the table, talking. We're talking anywhere from [age] four to sixteen, so we had a really large group. Kids asked me who my parole officer was and I had to explain to them that not everybody has a parole officer. I mean the kids that we had here needed to be here and so I know a lot about the families' history and background. I did it for seven years and I stopped three years ago.[211]

Her comments about parole officers and community need underscored how importantly she viewed her role in supporting local youth. Emily talked about the past with some nostalgia, yet she still had a realistic view of the challenges facing Pointe-Saint-Charles youth – that so many have been set aside and so many she worked with have an uncertain future. Emily's unwavering attachment to community was clear yet I felt she was in a difficult position – caught between her role as a worker in a community organization and her commitment to local youth. I never asked why she left the job working with youth – an important omission on my part. Yet I later wondered that if I had, whether she could have spoken freely given her position within her organization. I can imagine that Emily was bound by institutional constraints that made it difficult to open up completely. The point was, I didn't ask.

Still, when I related Isabel's comments about how the shift to more structured programming had impacted the Anglophone Point community I had the feeling that Emily might have done things differently:

[210] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 31:21.
[211] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 5:22.

> It's true, exactly. I think, for example, when I ran youth group. I started youth group and I kept it going for seven years. I couldn't have 'this is time to listen, time to eat time to sit' because it was like no fun for them. They'd lead lives at home where they're just told what to do and people don't listen to them. Here they were allowed to be free souls. We had our structured activities and they were free to choose which one they wanted to do and that was very successful. I had like ninety kids. They kept cutting it down until I was allowed only twenty kids a night because there were too many.[212]
>
> … it was a drop in. Now, we've never discussed it since but youth group is maybe ten kids and why? Because it's very very very structured and the kids, they're too stressed in that kind of environment. I don't know what really it is but, you take a child that has graduated from St. Gabe's and a child that graduated from St. John Bosco and they clearly aren't the same type of kid. Like, the St. John Bosco child would be able to go to a program that's very structured. A St. Gabriel's child wouldn't. Why that is, I don't know.[213]

Blokland invites us to consider how "politics of remembering … create understandings of place and community from which inferences are made about symbolic qualities and community needs."[214] Given Emily's perspective on institutional realignment, I found that her sense of what the community needed differed from the direction of change within her own organization, particularly as it had turned away from its traditional constituency. Perhaps in being excluded from processes of remembering, Isabel could more easily maintain a detached view of community needs. I wouldn't learn directly what Emily thought about institutional changes that had effectively closed the door on a community that was so much in need. However, she did say, "It just takes organizations just to be open to the kids,"[215] no doubt, her own organization included.

Unlike many in the neighbourhood Emily's was an extended family of homeowners, which had me reflecting on the meaning of class positionality, internal differentiation within a working class community and also, next generation narratives. Her grandparents, parents and

[212] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 23:45.
[213] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 24:40.
[214] Blokland, "Celebrating Local Histories and Defining Neighbourhood Communities," 1594.
[215] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 1:04:48.

later, Emily who purchased her grandparents' home next to her own parents in her early thirties, had a sense of stability and perhaps, social mobility, that not many had in the Point. In addition, Emily had been employed full time with the same organization for more than ten years – an unusual condition in today's economic landscape. Such long-term security got Emily and her family through periods of decline and until recently, increasing gentrification pressures. However, Emily said her parents are now selling their home and perhaps, moving to the Eastern Townships of Quebec, "They just decided, you know, the taxes are getting ridiculous and they're going to move … so I have a choice, like, 'do I want to sell mine or not?'"[216]

I questioned whether the ability to "choose" set Emily, her family and others like them apart from a Pointe-Saint-Charles underclass left behind. Homeownership had allowed Emily and her family to transcend an economic and social divide while I would say, still identifying with the traditional working class community in the Point. As I thought about Emily's story, Christine Walley's personal journey resonated for me. Her quest was to resolve her own internal class divide as the daughter of a steel working family, a private school student and later, as an academic studying the broader impacts of deindustrialization from a theoretical perspective – two radically different class identities.[217] Walley's challenge was thus to reconcile her upward mobility while her working class family of origin lived through the difficult process of deindustrialization and decline in Southeast Chicago – a profound discomfort that became the link to her family stories. As Walley explains, life stories are very much about class trajectories and economic positioning in relation to others but that her own working classness, as I would say of Emily's, remained deeply embedded in her family history and narrative.

[216] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 32:56.
[217] Walley, *Exit 0: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*.

For Emily, stability and homeownership was a practical question and perhaps she was one of a lucky few who had the chance. She shared the reason she had bought a house in the Point, "Just wanting more for [my daughter]. Working with the kids here, I seen a thousand stories and it just made me want to be stable and in that way, I'm still around to help other kids that need to be helped."[218] She knew that few original Pointers could now think of purchasing a home of their own, "If you owned a home in Pointe-Saint-Charles, you've probably owned it for the last fifty years. It's just now that it's changing. … The block that I live on, I actually knew the owners, all of them. If I think about it, none of them were rented. They were all home owned."[219] Emily was definitely in a minority and as Isabel pointed out in her interview, "…the people who may keep insisting on the good old days, if they're renters, I have huge sympathy for their point of view but they don't have a lot of power."[220] This, I understood, unless their power came from long term stability of living in social housing. In the end, homeownership and stable employment provided the kind of choice that has set Emily apart from others and at the same time that has kept her in the neighbourhood.

Rhodes draws our attention to a similar issue in exploring internal class distinctions as the basis for stigmatization and othering "within" relegated neighbourhoods,[221] specifically that symbolic boundaries become the means through which people within a community distance themselves from others with whom they share both place and history. Similarly, Watt identified internal class differentiations as divisions of roughness and respectability within marginalized council housing estates where discord centered on "problem tenants and the rest."[222] I didn't feel any of that from Emily but that didn't mean she wasn't critical of certain aspects of the local

[218] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 34:05.
[219] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 34:56.
[220] Morgan (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 37:53.
[221] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries."
[222] Watt, "Respectability, Roughness and 'Race,'" 779.

community. At one point during the interview I felt she was quite negative toward the school community and local Point families – something I initially saw as a "moral gaze," subjective judgments about those who had been left behind. However, I realized that this wasn't so at all. I learned so much from her, especially that while she is fiercely committed to youth and the children she knew at St. Gabe's, she is equally frustrated with parents who neither encourage their children nor have a long term vision for their future:

> There's no little support system out there. ... I have two views on Pointe-Saint-Charles families. One is that they're babied. They've been so spoiled. For example, St. Gabriel gets a lot of outsiders helping because they think that the kids going there live in poverty, say… and it's not necessarily the fact. If those kids went elsewhere, for example, St. John Bosco [the now closed elementary in Ville Emard], they made the parents responsible. You know what I mean? …
>
> There's not that at St. Gabriel's, I don't think. Or there's just the families that you just can't get through. The kids that I had in youth group, I'm telling you, I mean I had a half a dozen living with me here or there. If you take the time to communicate with the families and build that relationship, that trust, as soon as you have that trust, you have their support. .[223]

Yet, while she had strong personal connections to St. Gabe's, Emily still had opinions about the school, both about the inferior quality of education and of the families who are still there:

> I think parents are very … they can't see broad. They're focused here in the Point and so the kids … go to St. Gabriel's … It's because it's convenient and it's in the area and that's why they go there. I don't think it's for any other reason. Like, the reason I pulled [my daughter] from St. Gabriel's is I just found with the youth group that the kids were leaving there without the same level of education as kids that were coming in from other schools. … The parents, they don't see, a lot of the parents, not all of them, don't push their kids to excel. So they just send them there.[224]

I felt that Emily's critique was more personal than anything and that negative sentiments she articulated were based on her commitment to so many of the Point's local youth, not that the Point as a place had stagnated.

Finally, her narrative invited me consider the uncertain future confronting an already

[223] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 26:35.
[224] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 7:52.

disenfranchised next generation profoundly affected by long-term institutional abandonment and economic disinvestment. She was acutely aware that the Point had long been left with a declining physical infrastructure, especially to meet the needs of local youth, but also with fewer social supports for the most at risk. Rhodes calls this "structural violence from above," or more aptly refers to it as "institutional desertification."[225] Emily had a deep sense of indignation about how the most disenfranchised people in the Point had long been abandoned by the City of Montreal:

> There's nothing. … For the low-income housing that's still here, for people that are staying here, there's nothing for those young-uns to do. So, it's just trouble. At the tennis courts, there's a metal basketball court with no net. It's been like that for years and years. Why can't the city put up a simple net, a proper net for the kids? The only thing there is, is maybe the little ice rink. That's all there is. It's up to the kids to create their own things. There's just nothing for kids and so … I know twelve year olds that are sitting at the park smoking weed. It's ridiculous now.[226]

She knew that so many who had already been "left behind" continue to be socially marginalized. In the following narrative she effectively offers a social critique that not only highlights the effects of economic and institutional abandonment but also of enduring intergenerational patterns of welfare dependence and social marginalization:

> It's funny. It's crazy. I would say that half my daughter's friends have dropped out of high school and just their parents … there's no home life for these kids. In this area for the last ten years, there's nothing – no sports, no community activity. There is NOTHING [her emphasis] for these kids and so what are they going to do with their time, right? They go out and they get themselves into trouble. The only thing there was was football. … it's struggling to stay together. They don't have teams for all ages anymore. There's no, like, Bantam. The teens, they're being left out so there's nothing there.[227]

> It's funny. [My daughter's] crowd that she hangs around with, the friends that are in this area, I think they're all on welfare … the friends, I mean, ten regular people and they are on welfare as well as their parents. … A lot of them have moved out on their own. But they all live in groups. Like there's four of them in a house. But they're all collecting welfare. They're not working. Most of them dropped out of high school. But why they aren't working? I think it's they were raised that way because their parents are on welfare

[225] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries in de-Industrial Burnley," 686.
[226] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 49:11.
[227] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 9:55.

> also and they don't see them work. It seems normal not to work. I've had this conversation a hundred times with [her].[228]

Emily could relate to challenges in which local Pointers had increasingly limited choices in a postindustrial economy but at the same time, she worried about local youth repeating entrenched intergenerational patterns. She placed some of the responsibility on local families who could not imagine future opportunities for their children. Jim Daskalakis expressed similar concerns about St. Gabe's families and what is ahead for the next generation. I turn to his interview next.

Jim Daskalakis: St. Gabe's Elementary

> Gentry residents reject local schools, both their physical and social space; thus they reject a portion of the community. …The rejection of local social/physical space by the gentry creates a dynamic whereby social relations between gentrifiers and lower income residents are segregated and stratified.[229]

When I interviewed Jim Daskalakis, he was in his fifth year as principal of St. Gabe's, having arrived with very little knowledge of the community and also at a time when the 2011 mobilization was well underway. As principal, he had to maintain a distance from the process. It was the responsibility of St. Gabe's Governing Board and parents to organize on behalf of the school so here, Jim stood on the outside. Yet for him, "The important thing [was] that the governing board that existed at that time took upon itself to mobilize all the parents, to mobilize all the stakeholders in the community…"[230] Jim also said of that period:

> It was my first year at St. Gabriel School. I was hired as the principal … It was very surprising knowing at the same time that the school was slated for closure. But in the meantime, the school board gave the opportunity to the school. … Being new at the job and being new in the community, it was a time of a learning curve."[231]

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[228] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 35:44.
[229] Judith N. DeSena, "'What's a Mother to Do?' Gentrification, School Selection, and the Consequences for Community Cohesion," *American Behavioural Scientist* 50, no. 7 (October 2006): 241.
[230] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, Principal of St. Gabriel Elementary School, 0:22.
[231] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 0:22.

Before taking over as Principal of St. Gabe's, Jim spent twenty-six years as a teacher and vice-Principal at FACE (Fine Arts Core Curriculum), a downtown Montreal EMSB school whose specialized bilingual art and music program draws its diverse student body from all over of the city. Over time, Jim worked to create a similar "niche" program at St. Gabe's, a repositioning of the school which merits the broader question of how community institutions adapt to postindustrial transitions while specifically addressing the needs of an increasingly disenfranchised local population. Jim's response was to deal with pressures on both sides – to preserve St. Gabe's as a local community school and anchor while creating a program to attract eligible newcomers. In any case, just three years after St. Gabe's came through its third successful mobilization the school made EMSB press headlines in 2014 with this, "St. Gabriel Elementary School Embraces the Arts,"[232] an article showcasing the school's new curriculum in music, drama, art and dance in community partnership with McGill, Concordia and the Point Saint Charles YMCA. In that article Jim was happy to say that "Most of this is offered for one small price: gratitude. … We're in a small school in a small community, but we have a big heart."[233]

Creating niche programs isn't a new strategy for rejuvenating local schools, especially in transitional neighbourhoods like Pointe-Saint-Charles – often taken on in direct response to changing community dynamics and demands of middle class newcomers. In exploring community impacts of school closures in New Zealand, Witten et al. highlight the related issue of what happens to poorer families who have little opportunity to "escape from place," to overcome class-based disadvantages embedded in local public schools.[234] Judith DeSena's work on processes of school selection in one gentrifying Brooklyn neighbourhood creates a dialogue

[232] Michael J. Cohen, "St. Gabriel School Embraces the Arts," *EMSB Press Release*, January 24, 2014.
[233] Cohen, "St. Gabriel School Embraces the Arts."
[234] Witten et al., "Educational Restructuring from a Community Viewpoint."

in conversation with Witten et al. Both resonate with the situation at St. Gabe's and Jim's response to it. In Brooklyn, DeSena identified a "cultural clash"[235] between gentrifiers and the longstanding local population when middle class families choose schools outside the community. In the end, DeSena found that because of this local schools remain segregated on the basis of social class and in her case study, by race and ethnicity – all of which places local schools under pressure to adapt if they are to attract newcomers. In the southwest neighbourhood of St. Henri near Pointe-Saint-Charles, this is exactly what we are seeing. Local activists in groups like Solidarité Saint-Henri and student support group, Le Milieu éducatif La Source, talk of increased pressure for local schools to adapt to gentrification processes:

> … middle-class families have higher expectations and are putting new pressures on the historically working-class neighbourhoods' schools to provide the kind of programs and activities they expect for their children. … That pressure, they say, has left Saint-Henri schools trying to balance these interests with the needs of kids from low-income or impoverished families. Some see this new pressure as a good thing, but others worry the neighbourhood's more disadvantaged residents could ultimately lose out.[236]

In contrast, Volaine Cousineau, St. Henri resident and commissioner with Montreal's French language school board (Commission scolaire de Montréal), has been a vocal advocate for the positive influence that middle class families bring to local schools in gentrifying neighbourhoods:

> There are now middle-class families who have decided to invest in the future of the schools in those neighbourhoods and send their children to those schools, and they're creating, even forcing, social diversity. … middle-class parents tend to be more engaged on the governing boards of schools and involved in projects like the revitalization of school yards. They are also active at the political level … pushing borough councils, school boards, and even the province for improvements to their local schools.[237]

[235] DeSena, "'What's a Mother to Do?'"
[236] Steven Smith, "Gentrification Puts Pressure on Saint-Henri Schools to Adapt to New Social Mix," CBC News, November 3, 2017, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/saint-henri-schools-gentrification-1.4385678.
[237] Smith, "Gentrification Puts Pressure on Saint-Henri Schools."

The only hint of this in my interviews was something Sharon Parry said about local families and the efforts of one newcomer to the Point who made the uncommon choice to send his children to St. Gabe's.

> If left on their own – first of all if it wasn't for [newcomer] David Benoit, they wouldn't have gotten anywhere. But, left to their own, I'm not sure we would have had the same outcome that we had. Because when we talk about community, it was the other people coming in and everything that surrounded it – the David O'Neill's [former Pointers] that could push the old guard of the community to say "no, no, no, this is important to us," and to rally around that. I worried. I worried when the whole thing started, how on earth that would happen.[238]

But still, where does this leave space to recognize the input of local parents on St. Gabe's Governing Board and local community members who were central to mobilization efforts to save the school from closure three times? David Benoit agreed to do an interview with me yet never responded to my calls or emails to set a date and time.

Jim Daskalakis' "institutional response" at St. Gabe's was to reposition the school to engage the community in new ways while placing himself within a locally shared cultural understanding. Not originally from the Point, Jim was definitely on the "outside looking in" but he was also on the "inside looking out," as he sought ways to connect his own working class heritage with that of the local population. Without a direct bridge to collective history he expressed a cultural solidarity that gave him a "way in." Coming from a working class Greek immigrant neighbourhood in the north end of Montreal, Jim felt he understood the importance of cultural heritage and community connection, "I use the word culture because the culture of this community goes back into its Irish roots – those Irish roots, from my understanding, and you're talking to a Greek,"[239] having arrived in an area whose history and culture were not his own. I found it interesting that Jim's school of twenty-six years was located just over six kilometres

[238] Sharon Parry, Interview with Sharon Parry, Former Director of Pointe-Saint-Charles YMCA, May 24, 2016, 12:58.
[239] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 8:50.

from the neighbourhood where he grew up. Perhaps this was his way to stay close to his own roots. Blokland might argue that in the absence of "physical" bricks and mortar as a means to anchor himself to a collective sense of community in the Point, Jim was building "cultural" bricks and mortar in establishing links to his own working class history.

> This is an opinion more than anything. Again, somebody being here five years, what I see is that Pointe-Saint-Charles is a social, economically depressed area. By the way, I grew up in Parc Extension which is another area very much depressed [said with a laugh]. The communities in terms of history are different but in terms of economic and stresses, and basically, all that brings in … tends to be at the roots of that's going on.[240]

Of his first impressions of the school and of the Point, Jim had this to say:

> It's distinct. It's got its own culture and at the same time it was one of the last schools that was, if you like, in this particular area, that served the Anglo community in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Pointe-Saint-Charles is a distinct area and in that particular territory, you have St. Gabriel School as being the pillar of education for elementary. … [St. Gabe's] serves the community and it serves, of course, the culture of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Being the pillar, being at the centre of things, and of course, the propagation of that history and the propagation of that culture is maintained and continues on. We celebrate St. Patrick's Day, very much so. We were once in the parade too. Now we're more multicultural.[241]

When I asked Jim about his thoughts on youth growing up in the Point, his response spoke directly to their cultural isolation and their need for new sources of inspiration. He continued that only by gazing outward would the next generation thrive:

> That's why we have to get the students out of here so they can experience the whole world and we want them to come back. We want them to come back and let everybody else know that there's a world out there, there's opportunity out there. Take it. It may be hard but you can take it.[242]

> … this particular area with its rich history can also be an area where it becomes again, global. One culture's great but having different, if you want to, opinions, different foresight, different opportunities too at the same time. ... That makes them into a society that allows them to be free thinkers rather than just working in one particular area. …You keep on giving our students the opportunity to experience the world around them. They'll come back and they'll tell other people and therefore, there'll be growth.[243]

[240] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 1:00:55.
[241] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 5:26, 13:38.
[242] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 1:00:55.
[243] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 56:07.

Although many families already send their children outside the neighbourhood for French immersion programs – an available option grandfathered in for siblings before St. Gabe's offered a bilingual program – for so many in the Point school choice remains a place bound process until kids must leave the Point for high school. Jim was offering something new in the school but still felt strongly that to succeed in the future, local kids must venture outside the confines of the Point, especially for those that stay local for elementary school.

Figure 3.1: Mural in St. Gabe's Lobby – Jim Daskalakis Looking to the Future. (2015) Photo taken by Tanya Steinberg.

So symbolic is this mural of the school principal looking outward from St. Gabe's over the rainbow to the promising beyond, I asked Jim what he thought about the local area.

> I feel that Pointe-Saint-Charles is an isolated area. It's bound by, I guess, Bridge Street, the tracks on the north, the Canal. It's a culture but it's stagnant. You need to, of course, bring in and enrich not only the people that are moving in but enriching our students that will be going out. … So what I see is growth by allowing our students to experience the world around them. … Maybe in the future there will be a movement out of the area. … I'd like to see them come back and then tell everybody else about it.
>
> I see it basically as a community that is going to be evolving. In order for a school to be identified with a community, it needs to, at times, redefine itself and the redefinition is

> through the education of the students about their culture but more important, also, about other cultures around them. … They have to know what's going on around them and to do that we have to become more multicultural but also multiethnic. But more importantly we have to become more global. What we're striving for is besides our fine arts program we're trying to instill and to give students the opportunity to express themself. But we're opening up the door through that particular program to the world around them.[244]

Still, he reflected on the school as a uniting community focus, one that reached back to the Point's Irish roots, "That's where the school comes in, from the point of view of continuing that history and keeping everybody into a community, into a family."[245] As Witten et al. hold, "… local, community-based schooling offers opportunities for overcoming disadvantage – that local place is a resource, rather than a set of conditions to be transcended if possible."[246] I expect that Jim would agree.

My interpretation of Jim's narrative would change noticeably over time, especially in relation to what I viewed initially as subjective opinions about who had been "left behind" as well as his emphasis on "getting students out of the Point." However, this ultimately wasn't the case. Jim understood exactly what he had inherited at St. Gabe's – a school with a "stigma" in a neighbourhood not only with a long history of community mobilization but also long marginalized by the effects of deindustrialization and economic decline:

> Five years ago when I arrived here we had ninety-eight students. There was also a stigma for how people felt about the school, even the community, how they felt, and that's why, basically, they were not sending their children here. … It didn't have a positive, if you like, stigma, a positive title, that is, the community of St. Gabriel. People have to experience a school before they make judgment calls. Unfortunately for people outside the Pointe-Saint-Charles area, their call is one they've heard or they may have been influenced by. So that particular stigma has to be dealt with.[247]

Natalie told me something in her interview that resonated here as well – that the stigma of St.

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[244]Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 56:07.
[245] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 18:30.
[246] Witten et al., "Educational Restructuring from a Community Viewpoint: A Case Study of School Closure from Invercargill, New Zealand," 2003, 205.
[247] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 36:32.

Gabe's and the neighbourhood continued to mark them in negative ways, making it difficult to overcome the local and embedded blemish of place:

> There are some things about the Point that a lot of people say. Like they always say, 'Oh, there's drugs there. People get killed there.' But you say that about anywhere, anywhere these days. Some places maybe they hide it better, a little bit. Right? But, you know what? Some of these people, they help us too. Some of them, they're behind the scenes, you know. They're in our corner because some of them came here. Some of them regard [St. Gabe's] as a place they like, that they send their children to, so you know, but you can't just say the negative and disregard all the good.[248]

In stark contract to Isabel's opinions about an entrenched Anglo community in the Point, Jim's reflections took on a very different tone. He understood the challenges of a community left behind in the wake of deindustrialization yet at the same time, worked from within to implement change. However, unlike Isabel whose subjective opinions of the local Anglophone community marked it as dysfunctional, the way that Jim described the community never implied that theirs was a situation of their own making. I genuinely believe that Jim understood the roots and consequences of marginalization but also saw a community resistant to change:

> What happens is the opportunities maybe are not there as much … families may be where they are as such single parents or families where … there are a lot of stresses in terms of economic difficulties. So the students, the kids as they grow up … but they don't see very much opportunity so they may fall into the same kind of pattern that the parents may be having. … They may be single. In terms of adults not having the work. Unemployment that is inherited by the students that stay with the same family and they, themselves, become part of that cycle. Therefore, of course, what easier way than to just not bother with work things, look at opportunity, work with school but just continue the cycle that you're in already. The bottom line, though, is that they fall into the same pattern as the parents do – the parents of the last, I guess, ten, fifteen years. We're not talking about thirty years ago. That is what's happening at this particular point.[249]

When I asked Jim why he thought people stayed in the Point over the long term, he replied, "They stayed because of the previous histories. Also, I think at the same time, some of them

[248] Sztych, Interview: Community at St. Gabriel School, 28:28.
[249] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 1:00:55.

basically didn't know where to go."[250] Nonetheless, Jim understood that so many were caught in a cycle of poverty, a condition incredibly difficult to change, and a class inequality that Mah and Blokland might suggest, has something to do with historical attachment to place and to community:

> At the same time we have people that are staying here, a family of five or six… It's very hard to move away, especially when you have your roots here. And of course, you have people who can support you here. … You had different Irish organizations coming together to keep the people together. Some of the people got into situations, economically. They were very stricken and they didn't have the possibility of moving somewhere else. Their kids grew up in such a way as [they] weren't given the opportunity to go away simply because there was such a large family and also because of the help that they received or the people that worked together in the community to help each other…[251]

Similar to Pointe-Saint-Charles, Mah found intergenerational bonds to be particularly strong in areas of industrial decline like Walker, UK, where families had lived in close proximity for generations and rarely traveled far, including the younger ones. As one of her interviewees put so simply, one could look at staying in the place of one's roots "as a form of stagnation [but also] a strength and an asset,"[252] something that still defined community in Pointe-Saint-Charles for so many and which Jim understood. It is this idea of place attachment that leads to my next and final community based interview with Sharon Parry. Also from outside the Point, Sharon's work with local youth provided such insight into not only what it means to belong in a disenfranchised community but also is another example of how outsiders can take on a positive role in motivating change.

[250] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 18:30.
[251] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 18:30.
[252] Alice Mah, "Devastation but Also Home," 295.

Sharon Parry: Pointe-Saint-Charles YMCA

As the former director of the Pointe-Saint-Charles YMCA, Sharon Parry gave me a unique perspective on questions of an underclass left behind in the Point, specifically from the experience of local youth – born not only into an intergenerational legacy of deindustrialization but also who remain peripheral in the postindustrial present. What I learned from Sharon was very different from the other community interviews as she focused heavily on understanding how adolescents define their roots and sense of belonging, and how they connect to place in the absence of strong community anchors. I frame Sharon's "outsider interview" through quite a different lens that resonated with themes from Chapter One, bringing me full circle to questions of place-based attachment, community culture, and in particular, how collective identity is imprinted on urban space for a generation far removed from the Point's industrial heritage or immigrant history. In this context, Opp and Walsh invite us to consider "the significance of place as a site made meaningful by memory and commemorative practices,"[253] something that was definitely missing for local youth in the Point and which Sharon was strongly committed to. She worked hard with adolescents to cultivate attachments through the creation of new sites of commemorative practice and collective identity, in particular, graffiti mural projects aimed at tapping into youth culture while presenting a venue for building community on their own terms.

Our discussion led me to reflect on the experience of local youth – one of the most at risk and marginalized groups in the Point, having inherited what Strangleman et al. so aptly call, the "economic landscape of deindustrialization," left behind by decades of community abandonment and caught within the structural realities of economic decline. My interpretation of Sharon's narrative thus focused on two main themes – first, her perspective on the nature of community in the Point and

[253] James Opp and John C. Walsh, "Introduction: Local Acts of Placing and Remembering," in *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2010), 4.

the role of St. Gabe's as a local anchor and second, the challenge of instilling a sense of place based identity and community attachment among adolescents.

Although Sharon was often tentative when talking about the most marginalized in the Point, she recognized the issues facing the local community and specifically, those at the school:

> If you look at St. Gabe's … I think there's been significant change over the last, almost five years. It was the families that were left – either the families who steadfastly wanted to stay for different reasons or the families who either didn't have the resources or didn't have the vision or didn't have the care to send their children somewhere else where they could get something. We're dealing with children with a lot of needs at St. Gabe's, a lot of needs, maybe not always with a lot of support and I would agree that it's a huge issue.[254]

These were most often the children who ended up in her YMCA Teen Zone programs and who would challenge Sharon to find personal points of connection with them. In the end, Sharon's insights had me asking how this disenfranchised group finds its "place" in the absence of physical anchors to collective history or cultural links to the area's industrial past – especially as many are at least third generation removed from industrial culture. Here, Blokland might ask on what foundation do youth construct their own "historical narratives of place,"[255] when they are not only disconnected from working class traditions but also deeply marginalized in the present? If as Blokland holds, place making is a collective process requiring physical sites for its expression,[256] then Sharon's goal was to create exactly this.

Sharon was definitely on the "outside looking in" and although she had volunteered at the YMCA for several years and had a glimpse of life in the Point, like Jim Daskalakis, she still felt she had little knowledge of the area:

> I had been working at the Westmount YMCA in child development and aquatics. I applied for the position to be centre director [in the Point] and I was hired. That was my first experience being in Pointe-Saint-Charles … I had known that particular Y for

[254] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 26:42.
[255] Blokland, "Celebrating Local Histories and Defining Neighbourhood Communities."
[256] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."

> several years. I volunteered at the annual Christmas dinner for many years. In fact, I was at the inaugural event almost ten years before that. I remember peeling potatoes and carrots and actually cooking the dinner and then volunteered almost every year after that. But aside from that I have to admit that I didn't really know a lot about the community. So it was a really big learning experience for me.[257]

Emily Cole said this of Sharon as well, "When Sharon first came to the YMCA, I don't think that she was very familiar with the type of kids in the community. She grew with them and so now what she does is very important. She's changed her role and she knows how important the kids are in the neighbourhood."[258] However, like Jim Daskalakis, I came to understand that Sharon had bridged a kind of "class divide," especially as an outsider. I didn't feel a "moral gaze" as she spoke about the community. Quite the contrary, there was no judgment or edge. She felt it was her role to understand and to make links between Pointe-Saint-Charles' history and the challenges facing local teens.

Sharon had different thoughts on why the community fought so hard to save the school. One was that local families genuinely valued community education while the other focused on the actions of a hugely vocal community fighting to save what little was left of their neighbourhood:

> I think there are two different perspectives. The parents who were attached to the school really valued local, neighbourhood schools but especially local neighbourhood elementary schools. I think that that was really really important that there could be a place for their children to go – that was close, that was safe, that many could walk to, that many could feel involved in the activities at the school and that if need be, have the school have connections with other, local community organizations for further activities. That was important.
>
> What was really expressed by some of the parents and sometimes getting through that language was an interesting experience, was, "Nobody's going to come into our neighborhood and take away what's ours," if I can put it as bluntly as that. It's not wrong [said with a laugh]. Really, that's where that sense of fight comes in, what often gets expressed. It's our heritage. It's our culture. It's our neighbourhood. It's our place. Nobody can remove that from us.[259]

[257] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 0:13.
[258] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 45:50.
[259] Parry, Interview with Sharon Parry, 10:56.

When I asked Sharon how she defined community, particularly around mobilization efforts to save St. Gabe's, she responded that it was a concept she struggled with personally. She remembers being asked by the coordinator of Action Gardien, a largely French local community group actively involved in efforts to save the school, "Sharon, what does the Anglophone community think about this? … What is the Anglophone community in Pointe-Saint-Charles? … I have no idea,"[260] a sentiment so different to Isabel's description of the Anglophone population around which she drew clear social and symbolic boundaries. But there was something interesting that Sharon learned as she worked with Action Gardien – the French word, "revendication," which she defined for me as "… to take opposition to. To fight for what's right,"[261] an idea that remained with her in her years working with local youth and that would frame her understanding of community mobilization in the Point.

I liked Sharon's honesty about things she didn't understand, especially, how the next generation defined their sense of place attachment and historical connection to the Point:

> It's a huge challenge and I'm thinking back to a certain cohort, again, of teens maybe who were in our teen zone maybe four to five years ago because that's when we really started to work with them. They said that that they had an attachment. This is my PLACE [her emphasis]. They go out and get the shamrock tattoos at thirteen-fourteen years old. I'd ask them, well, that's great but what does that mean to you? 'Cause I'm Irish.' What does that mean? There's no concept of what that means. It's always hard to put into words but I think it's a question of being able to articulate. I truly believe that it's a question that they don't know. It's something that they grew up with.[262]

I believe they had certainly inherited a sense of cultural identity passed down through the generations, perhaps through family stories, traditions or collective memory – an embodied sense of belonging they couldn't easily articulate but which still held symbolic importance. They might have had no personal experience with the Point's industrial past but they have surely inherited the long

[260] Parry, Interview with Sharon Parry, 15:38.
[261] Parry, Interview with Sharon Parry, 12:58.
[262] Parry, Interview with Sharon Parry, 43:48.

term fallout. They, too, were looking for a place to belong. In this context, I draw insight from the work of Christine Walley,[263] James Rhodes,[264] and Alice Mah,[265] all of whom consider how successive generations define their sense of identity in the postindustrial present, particularly as they seek to establish their own symbols of history. In the life stories of her own working class family history, Walley identified a deep generational "divide" in which older relatives focused on memories of the past while the next generations sought a different and more hopeful future – distinct from a history of working class life while framed within a protracted period of economic decline. For Walley, the landscape of her working class neighbourhood of Southeast Chicago remains "saturated with history,"[266] even if generations removed, like youth in the Point, do not feel a personal connection to history nor have cultural practices that connect them. I have often thought about what a more hopeful future might look like for youth in the Point or what it might look like for their landscapes to be saturated with history.

Rhodes found a similar generational discord in the city of Youngstown, a sentiment articulated so clearly in the narrative of one thirty-something autoworker who still felt a strong connection to the city's steelmaking industrial heritage, "Young people don't realize what this place was and there's no pride … There's no motivation to be proud and I think it's hurting us …"[267] Similarly, in an attempt to place what Mah calls "generational nostalgia" in the deindustrialized shipbuilding region in Newcastle, England, she was told by one older woman that "… all the people who worked in shipbuilding were elderly and that it was up to the younger generation to find something else to do,"[268] as local youth remained the most detached and distant from local industrial

[263] Walley, *Exit 0: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*.
[264] James Rhodes, "Youngstown's 'Ghost'? Memory, Identity, and Deindustrialization," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84, no. Fall (2013): 55–77.
[265] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination."
[266] Walley, *Exit 0: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago,* 22.
[267] Rhodes, "Youngstown's 'Ghost'?," 63.
[268] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination," 406.

culture. I found myself asking questions about youth in the Point. What is the "something else" they could do? What's left in the neighbourhood? What I found most striking is that these adolescents had found a way to express pride in their heritage, creating a historical link in the form of the shamrock tattoos. These were very much personal expressions of historical attachment – a symbolism so strong as to be permanently imprinted on their bodies. Thus when Sharon said to me, "They've been told, 'We're Irish. This is our place. This is the Point.' But they don't have that connection. They don't know what that means,"[269] I had to disagree where the tattoos were concerned. The body itself had become a site of memory and connection – its own historical landscape. What stood out was the similar language that parents used when expressing their attachment to St. Gabe's and how the teens defended their choice of tattoo. Both focused on images of culture, neighborhood and place – all enduring symbols of a collective history reminiscent of the lunch ladies' narratives.

In working with local teens Sharon's goal was not only to meet them on their own terms but also to find new ways to strengthen their sense of community and place attachment. She shared a story of a teen mural project that she had organized some years ago in Parc le Ber just across from the Y – all with the intent of creating a physical space of community identity and shared collective practice. Essentially, they needed a place to own:

> We had some very interesting projects in the park across from the Y and this goes back again four or five years. We had very interesting discussions in our teen zone. And again, these were some very difficult young people we were dealing with. I just remember a conversation started, 'Well, you know. It's not fair. I walk in the park. I get stopped. I get stopped by the police. They think I'm doing something.' The police by that point knew them all by name. …. 'But I wasn't doing anything.'[270]

At the time, the teens felt no connection to the existing mural at Parc Le Ber. It had been there for ten years and they wanted an opportunity to create something new. Mah points out that the most common definition of place attachment is "an effective bond between people and

[269] Parry, Interview with Sharon Parry, 43:48.
[270] Parry, Interview with Sharon Parry, 43:48.

landscape."[271] In doing a graffiti mural this is exactly what they sought to establish. Sharon remembers:

> It got to the conversation, there's a kind of basketball court with a cement wall. Now there are murals. When we got there until about five years ago there were murals from ten years before that – a neighbourhood project doing the mural. One side was a mural that some artists did. On the other side, there was a memorial wall to someone who had passed away.
>
> … by the time I got there and a couple of years since I got there, it was completely tagged, completely tagged. It was ugly. It was gross. It got to the point when the teens in the teen zone said. … We talked about it, and they said, 'Well, it doesn't represent us. People think that we're the ones tagging,' which they probably were, 'but it's not us.' If the mural was created ten years before these guys, they have no attachment to it, nothing at all …[272]

All they had to do was keep two walls free of graffiti for nine months – painting tags over and over again – time enough to develop a sense of collective responsibility and ownership. Then, the space was theirs:

> We started to work with an artist that has a lot of experience with graffiti. … He said first we have to instill a sense of responsibility and pride in our community. We said our challenge was to leave it blank for at least the next nine months … So that any time there was a tag on there … and all winter, eh, we cleaned and cleaned and cleaned. It was very successful and at a certain point the tagging stopped. Every now and again somebody tries but you paint it over. People are not going to tag in a place where they get their stuff erased all the time. It's pointless.[273]

Sharon spoke about the mural project as a real community anchor for the kids involved. Yet Emily had a different take on this project, especially as she compared it to the Knox Street mural depicting the history of Pointe-Saint-Charles. She told me:

> I knew about [the Y mural] but it wasn't kid or teen oriented as they say. It wasn't even the kids' design. The mural that's under the bridge there, THAT [her emphasis] was community. Anyone was able to go from the community, from anywhere and help paint it. You felt a lot more involved there than at the Y.[274]

[271] Mah, "Devastation but Also Home," 291.
[272] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 43:48.
[273] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 43:48.
[274] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 46:26.

But I'd say that each had a different goal – one historical, the other a search for identity and community, something that Sharon felt very strongly about:

> So the attempt is to have that sense of community … I'm not sure if you were to ask young people what their sense of their community is … with some of the people who were involved in these projects I think there was at least something. They don't have to be artists but it's just to expose and have the conversation of what it means. It's not an art project to teach somebody how to paint. But it's that responsibility so that when we go out with a bucket and we paint gray over something and we have those conversations and you're involved in something. That's our hope – through something like this and any other initiatives that we have we can help them decide what their meaning of community is cause it's not for us to tell them what it is. I'm not sure they'll be able to tell you.[275]

Mah asks, "Where are the cathedrals of the working classes?"[276] lasting physical symbols of industrial heritage. As she would have it, perhaps the Parc Le Ber mural became a "cathedral to memory" for local youth, albeit a temporary one. Sharon addressed this directly:

> What we also decided was that if we're going to paint murals, is that it can't be there forever. Because you let it go for four years, these kids have moved on from the Teen Zone. There's a whole new group. You're going to have the same problem. They didn't create it. It doesn't mean anything. So we decided to do those two surfaces. We painted one on one side one year. Another half of one on one side another year, another half another year and then we painted over our original mural and painted something else. It's an evolving and revolving project that our teens are involved with.[277]

All of this got me thinking about the value of memoryscapes and murals as representations of collective history, in particular, what they might mean across the generations. Daniel James[278] lends insight into this question in describing a mural painted in the Centro Civico (Central Square) of the former meatpacking town of Berisso, Argentina. Like the Knox Street mural in the Point, the Berisso memoryscape is a powerful illustration of historical events – celebrating not only the great achievements of industrial progress but also portraying workers' suffering and hardship endured in the process – something James found both symbolic yet

[275] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 43:48.
[276] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination," 404.
[277] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 47:54.
[278] Daniel James, *Dona Maria's Story: Life History, Memory and Political Identity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).

paradoxical. For James the Berisso memoryscape represented a means to ward off loss while at the same time validating the town's industrial past. However, what I found so compelling was how he spoke of the relationship of local youth to the Berisso memoryscape – or lack thereof – and how directly it resonated with youth experience in Pointe-Saint-Charles.

> For the older generation it spoke nostalgically of an idealized community. For the younger generation of high school kids who gathered among its symbols it makes a claim for the value of a past that was rapidly slipping beyond their reach.[279]

> The high school kids who socialize among the monuments in front of the murals may well have other, more immediate concerns: the icons of this plaza may have acquired a taken-for-granted status that defeats the memorialist's best intensions.[280]

But to memorialize history wasn't at all the point of the teen mural in Parc Le Ber. The idea was to anchor collective practice in place – as much a means to create community as it was to find a physical site of attachment. What struck me about the Parc Le Ber mural was that it was painted on Victoria Day – a time of huge historical and cultural significance in Pointe-Saint-Charles:

> As their reward, there's always a big party on Victoria Day. We had created a mural design and we painted a mural that day, something that they wanted, something that meant something to them, something that they got their hands into as well that they helped create and that mural was never tagged.[281]

The more deeply I considered Sharon's views toward the neighbourhood, the more I understood her commitment to local youth, but also that she had strong opinions about the place of St. Gabe's in the Point. She felt that it was an older generation of former "Pointers," the "old guard," who continue to be the driving force behind community solidarity. I was curious why she thought the "old guard" was so committed to local causes. She wasn't sure:

> I don't know. I don't feel smart enough to answer that question. I know that a strong group of people who grew up with – I hear a lot about the values, families, of unity, neighbourhood, people working together sometimes in difficult situations but always with a strong work ethic. The children of that time, of the sixties, seventies, many of them

[279] James, *Dona Maria's Story*, 5.
[280] James, *Dona Maria's Story, 294.*
[281] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 43:48.

> are very successful people now and who don't live in Pointe-Saint-Charles anymore but really hold it to heart. There's a group of them who got together almost a dozen years ago now to form the Hall of Recognition Committee. When you say community of support, that's David O'Neill is part of that wall in the Y, Kevin Figgsby, Sean O'Donnell. All those people, they will be there. Those are the driving forces.
>
> I'm not sure after those group of people, I can't think of the English word, le relève, the succession is … there doesn't seem to be that same succession because those that may have stayed didn't have that same thing. There's something that got lost there. There's a gap that I personally noticed that I can't really explain.[282]

At the end of our interview, I asked Sharon what might have happened to the local community had St. Gabe's closed. Her response was direct yet thoughtful:

> I think the community would have survived. It's horrible to say and I know in our briefs and in our presentations, it's all or nothing and I understand that. I understand that. I truly believe that the community would have survived. There would have been a lot of anger, a lot of displacement but ultimately it would go on. I don't know …
>
> It would have been more challenging. I think the risk would have been again to see a lot of the things that we're seeing in adolescence, you know, scattering and moving off … the risk would have been that we would have lost them a lot sooner. In some ways they could survive. They'd hop on a bus and go to another school but I would be very concerned that we would discover a couple of years down the road and even before high school that essentially, for lack of a better term, we would have lost them to something. That's to me something that would have been an effect. It's not something you could see in the street, tangibly see, but it's even more scary when you can't see it. I don't know if that makes sense.[283]

It absolutely made sense.

Conclusion

James Rhodes holds that "'Territorial stigmatization' serves not only to marginalize the claims of specific areas, it also provides a means through which those that don't reside in such locations assert their own social, cultural, and moral distance…"[284] This, and the question of what it means to be "looking in from the outside" in postindustrial places were initial points of

[282] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 16:48.
[283] Parry, Meeting with Sharon Parry, 50:21.
[284] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries in de-Industrial Burnley, 701.

departure as I began to write about the four community based interviews in this chapter. However, as often the case, my early interpretation of these narratives changed considerably in the process. What I originally saw as deeply subjective and class-based attitudes towards the longstanding Pointe-Saint-Charles community – an underclass left behind – turned out to be much more complex and in most cases, much less disparaging than I had thought. Perhaps I had gone looking for an overwhelmingly "moral gaze" in these narratives – conceivably a function of my own subjectivity – but what I found was quite different.

However implicitly, Isabel, Emily, Jim and Sharon all accepted the existence of an underclass left behind in the Point while recognizing the myriad challenges of serving this high need population. The neighbourhood had experienced so many forms of displacement already – economic, residential and as the result of gentrification pressures. Yet Isabel was the only one to reveal deeply subjective opinions of a disenfranchised community that she held responsible for its continued marginalization. New and more structured institutional practices within her organization and a commitment to what she saw as a more functional group effectively abandoned the most in need, not only reinforcing patterns of stigmatization but also signifying yet another form of displacement. In essentially closing the door on the most marginalized, her community organization had thus become participants in further "relegating" the Anglophone community to the periphery in a material way. Cowie and Heathcott articulated early on that deindustrialization and disinvestment signaled the dissolution of a way of life.[285] Continued institutional withdrawal by community organizations merely reaffirms this process under another guise while at the same time reinforcing patterns of class inequality. What struck me so deeply in Isabel's narrative was how such divergent opinions coexisted within this period of postindustrial transition – the lunch ladies stories of resilience and community on the one hand and hers that

[285] Cowie and Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins*.

revealed subjective assumptions of community stagnation and an increasingly relegated underclass on the other.

In their efforts to understand and work with the Point community "from the inside," Emily, Jim and Sharon showed me what it really means to bridge the postindustrial, or class divide. From her own experience, Emily knew what it meant to live in a neighbourhood that had little to offer local youth – a perspective that bridged her own personal history and community attachment with her institutional role working with local youth. She became my link to understanding not only what community needed but also how bit by bit, a local institution turned its back on that need.

Emily had an incredibly realistic view of challenges the Point, that things had stagnated and in her opinion, many parents weren't supporting their children as well as they might. But still she gave me tremendous insight into intergenerational dynamics of community attachment as well as entrenched patterns of social dependence. Given that she could choose, I asked Emily if she would ever consider living elsewhere. I was personally moved by her response, especially the reference to her daughter, "I mean would I leave the area? Probably. My daughter says she doesn't think she'll ever be comfortable anywhere else," [286] a telling comment about lasting community connection and intergenerational attachment. Unlike Emily, Jim and Sharon were truly outsiders with no links to living memory, collective history or place attachment. However, they were committed to finding "a way in," even if they couldn't participate in what Mah emphasizes, is the social act of remembering.[287] They had walked into the built environment of Pointe-Saint-Charles – what Blokland defines as the physical expression of collective memory[288] – from which they were excluded. Like Mah, Blokland holds that "The raw material is there, but

[286] Cole (psuedonym), Anonymized Interview, 32:56.
[287] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination."
[288] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."

the collective remembering is still an *act*."[289] Nevertheless, both Jim and Sharon searched for points of intersection where they could effectively connect to local culture while promoting the needs of local youth, even if it meant for Jim to encourage local Pointers to look outward for new and enriching experience. He was correct in saying, "Right now we're living in a global environment and Pointe-Saint-Charles, our students, and my view is they have to be part of that global environment."[290] I agree completely. Whether it is Jim establishing a niche music and arts program at St. Gabe's or Sharon working with youth to create new sites of commemoration on Victoria Day – culturally one of the most important days of the year in Pointe-Saint-Charles – they had it right. The issue here is that even coming in from the outside, they worked from within to combat a multilayered erasure not only of local youth, but a collective history with long roots in industrial culture.

[289] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories," 280.
[290] Daskalakis, Interview with Jim Daskalakis, 56:07.

Conclusion

Once at the centre of Canada's industrial heartland, we have seen Pointe-Saint-Charles and many industrial neighbourhoods like it in Montreal's Southwest Borough hit with of decades of deindustrialization, first when the St. Lawrence Seaway displaced the Lachine Canal as Montreal's main shipping route and later cemented with the final closure of the Canal to industrial traffic. Since then, a protracted period of industrial decline in the entire region has been marked by the closure of most factories, warehouses and railway yards – a process decimating the region's economic base while stimulating a sharp decline in the local population. While the Southwest Borough lost fifty percent of its population in the two decades following the Canal's closure, the area adjacent to the Canal has since developed into a zone for recreation and high-end condominiums and lofts – a pattern we have seen throughout the entire region as local economies catering to a higher income population have all but excluded the most in need.

Pointe-Saint-Charles has long been known for its fierce grassroots activism embedded in its early Irish roots, yet it remains one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Montreal where entrenched patterns of institutional abandonment and community marginalization continue to relegate the hardest hit to the economic and social periphery. Disenfranchised communities like the Point remain caught between embedded patterns of exclusion and stigmatization on the one hand and an increasingly upscale economic landscape on the other – existing in a liminal space between a historical culture of industrialism and present day local economies of consumption. This thesis has thus addressed the broader question of what happens to working class neighbourhoods struggling not only with the long term effects of industrial decline and community abandonment but also, a reconfiguration of local areas through redevelopment and gentrification processes.

This work has been heavily influenced by Massey's notion that communities are forever in transition and forever unachieved,[291] where local transformation remains inextricably linked to global forces of economic and social restructuring. This ultimately results in local struggles over the identity of place and the definition of community. As Massey puts it, struggles over the identity of places are thus "place-*bound* rather than place-*based*,"[292] locating the foundation of community at the intersection of local process and broader structural forces. However, as we have seen in Pointe-Saint-Charles global influence does not preclude the strength of local agency in determining local identity or community resilience. Thus, conflicting identities of place and community in the end have as much to do with local response to broader structural forces as they do with the strength of local agency and collective historical identity. Walsh and High assert that that identity of place is "very much the product of inter-communal relationships and struggles."[293] This is exactly what we have seen in the Point and other working class neighbourhoods like it, dislocated from markers of their industrial heritage while contending with an increasingly unfamiliar urban environment. The existence of multiple intersecting communities is now redefining what it means to be a "Pointer."

The story of saving St. Gabe's three times over a period of six years is every bit about the legacy and trauma of deindustrialization as it is about the historical roots of community activism, collective identity and saving vestiges of working class culture in the Point. In disenfranchised neighbourhoods like Pointe-Saint-Charles, community schools often stand as one of few remaining sites of intergenerational memory and social cohesion, particularly given the spatial fixity of neighbourhood schools and limited mobility of local low income populations. St. Gabe's is one such place. Amidst continuous losses of community anchors and thus, sites of

[291] Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," 183.
[292] Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," 184.
[293] Walsh and High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," 266.

collective memory, the lunch ladies' stories attest to the fact that repeated mobilization efforts to save the last English school in the Point were very much about saving community life itself. For them, St. Gabe's has survived as a physical symbol reminiscent of a time when large families and a vibrant neighbourhood defined day-to-day life in the Point. The school remains a place where their sense of home, family and community persist.

Debbie Fox, Carol Clifton, Mona Kircoff and Natalie Sztych's narratives of resilience and their fierce desire to protect one of their last spaces of social interaction in the Point have become a testament to the irrepressible strength of community amidst profound economic restructuring and continued marginalization. Their individual stories were intensely personal and in some moments, deeply nostalgic. Yet each revealed the human reality of living through the fallout of deindustrialization, especially the experience of successive generations "left behind" confronting bleak economic prospects for the future. Thus, if we reject the notion that working class culture is effectively erased in postindustrial transitions, then the lunch ladies' stories must stand as personal testimonials to the potential for local agency and the persistence of working class culture within these periods of change. In the end as their memories meandered through time and place, the lunch ladies offered tremendous insight into the changing political, historical and sociocultural framework of working class life in postindustrial Pointe-Saint-Charles – especially the continuous losses which have come to define the Point's changing postindustrial landscape and the resilient community response to them.

This thesis has also addressed the question of class, particularly the persistence of an urban underclass left behind in deindustrialized places like Pointe-Saint-Charles where successive layers of displacement continue to relegate the most marginalized to the economic and social fringes. "Looking in from the outside" through the eyes of community workers who

live outside the neighbourhood but who work in the Point highlighted two complex issues associated with postindustrial change. The first relates to what happens when disenfranchised communities may be held responsible for their own marginalization – subjective judgments about personal accountability and cultural dysfunction. Given such "moral representations of class,"[294] what chance do these communities have to succeed when community institutions can effectively abandon the most vulnerable, a position ultimately leading to even more entrenched class inequality and community marginalization? As Kirk suggests, the implications of class inequality and moral sentiments attached to them run deep,[295] in this case when the result is a repositioning of community institutions away from the most in need toward "more functional" or perhaps, "less stigmatized" others. These are not structural but subjective responses to class positioning and class inequality – internal class distinctions that identify some as more worthy than others. However, as Rhodes so clearly stated, such "institutional desertification"[296] inevitably leads to further marginalization and stigmatization of already disenfranchised communities, a pattern we continue to see in Pointe-Saint-Charles.

Second, I also asked in this thesis what it means to be on the "outside looking in" with respect to the absence of historical place attachment to community in the Point. Institutional outsiders may have no connection to living memory or local history, making it difficult if not impossible to engage in the social act of collective remembering,[297] and thus to effectively participate in community process. However, I found that it was still possible for community workers from the "outside" to form attachments to communal "bricks and mortar"[298] and therefore, the social foundation of community in the Point. This was definitely true for Sharon

[294] Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class*.
[295] Kirk, *Class, Culture and Social Change: On the Trail of the Working Class*.
[296] Rhodes, "Stigmatization, Space and Boundaries,"
[297] Mah, "Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination." ; Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."
[298] Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories."

Parry and Jim Daskalakis, both of whom were personally committed to building constructive and collaborative relationships with the local community – Sharon with adolescents at the Y and Jim, with families at St. Gabe's. Neither participated in creating another form of postindustrial displacement. Sharon and Jim both understood the challenges facing an underclass "left behind," yet did everything they could to work "from within," making connections that bridged their institutional roles with their understanding of collective culture in the Point. Emily Cole became the only one in this study to fully "bridge the postindustrial divide" and in that, provided tremendous insight into what it means personally to live through the long term fallout of deindustrialization while at the same time engaging the community from a critical institutional perspective. Finally, I point to Isabel Morgan's narrative as an example of what happens when subjective assumptions of class and community dysfunction can result in further relegation and institutional abandonment of the most marginalized – in this case, her organization turning its back on the most vulnerable Anglophone population in the Point. In the end I discovered that the answer to all of this often lies not only in a narrator's positionality with regard to their sense of local place attachment and relationship to collective history but also the level of their personal commitment to positive community engagement, especially amongst the most marginalized. This effectively means leaving moral assumptions about class aside.

This study began with the question of how a local elementary school in Pointe-Saint-Charles became an intense flashpoint for community mobilization when it was up for closure three times in six years. Although I had long been interested in the history of industrialism along the Lachine Canal – which I knew mostly as one of Montreal's most popular cycling routes – I knew little about Pointe-Saint-Charles or St. Gabriel School. However, in the end, the story of St. Gabe's became my avenue to explore the very personal and long term consequences of industrial

decline. This is where my work makes the greatest contribution to scholarship on deindustrialization and its aftermath. Here, I have explored many different yet intersecting postindustrial divides in Pointe-Saint-Charles – social class, the changing nature of community and the persistence of working class culture. Especially through personal narratives, we still have much to learn in the future about the possibility of cultural continuity and resilience amidst decline, the persistence of working class identity and also the enduring challenges of an underclass left behind at the margins of once thriving industrial communities.

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