The Geographic Imaginaries of Empire: Migration, Tourism, and Constructions of Difference in Panamanian Travel Narratives

By

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Panama’s tourism industry has flourished since 1990 to become one of the premiere travel destinations in Central America as described by tourism literature. Using historical geography as its methodology, this thesis offers an analysis of how colonial logics of empire remain embedded in the Panamanian tourism industry and nation building agendas. In particular, the discourse analysis of Panamanian travel narratives in archival and contemporary travel literature has revealed both substantial transformations and persistent congruities of imperial discourse from 1880-2017. The findings of this project demonstrate how hegemonic Euro-American geographic imaginations help construct tourism materials and influence tourist behavior in Panama. In particular, themes of wilderness and nature, white supremacy, and American exceptionalism emerged from the analysis of tourism literature as the primary factors contributing to the conceptual and material organization of Panamanian space in travel literature. These themes are contextualized within broader discussions of empire studies and amenity migration literature.
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Chapter 1: Panama as ‘Place’: The Construction of Panama’s Geographic Imaginary in the Context of American Nation Building

In April 2018 *National Geographic* published a special issue on the topic of race. In an effort to examine the *National Geographic’s* historical complicity in the perpetuation of racial discourse, Professor of History John Edwin Mason from the University of Virginia was hired to analyze the magazine’s past representations of people from the Global South. Professor Mason concluded until the 1970s *National Geographic* portrayed “every type of cliché” in reference to racialized populations (2018, p.4). People of the Global South were pictured as “famously and frequently unclothed, happy hunters, and noble savages” while also being described as possessing the “lowest in intelligence” (2018, p.4). The practices of *National Geographic* were especially influential for mass audiences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the magazine was understood as a bastion of scientific and academic authority in popular culture. In 2018, Editor in Chief Susan Goldberg reflects in this new issue on *National Geographic’s* influence in educating readers across the globe. Goldberg writes,

“*National Geographic* wasn’t teaching as much as reinforcing messages they already received and doing so in a magazine that had tremendous authority. *National Geographic* comes into existence at the height of colonialism, and the world was divided into the colonizers and the colonized. That was a color line, and the *National Geographic* was reflecting that view of the world” (Goldberg, 2018, p.4).

While Goldberg and *National Geographic* admit to racist representations as an element of the magazine’s past, scholars of colonial discourse (Stoler, 2016) argue that it is difficult to identify the temporal and spatial breaks of colonial narratives from past to present. Imperial narratives continue, often un-noticed, as they have been transformed from the abrupt and seemingly transparent rhetoric of archives past and rearticulated through “processes of partial reinscriptions, modified displacements, and amplified recuperations” (Stoler, 2016, p. 27). As the *National Geographic*‘s “apology” so aptly exemplifies colonial narratives continue to permeate contemporary writing, particularly with regard to disruptions and representations of “other” people and places (Said, 1978).

This thesis critically analyzes how colonial-imperial logics of empire remain embedded in the contemporary national development agendas in Panama. I draw from the
case of Panama to demonstrate how hegemonic Euro-American geographic imaginations shape the past and present through the themes of migration, construction of difference, and tourism. This thesis focuses on the imperial construction of place and space in Panama through geographic imaginaries that are shaped by western notions of nature and wilderness, white supremacy, American exceptionalism and forms of “othering” embedded in travel literature and advertising. Through the discursive analysis of a variety of travel narratives, found in newspapers and autobiographical accounts, I argue that tourists and affluent migrants reproduce particular understandings and geographic imaginaries of Panamanian space, place, and people. Such representations link present and past in the context of nation building in Panama from 1841 to the present.

My methodological approach focuses on the historical geographies of Panamanian travel literature. I do so to investigate the relation between Panamanian travel narratives and imperial logics. I use discourse analysis to examine American, Canadian, British, and Panamanian newspapers, magazines, and autobiographical novels, as well as a small number of contemporary travel materials. Findings from this project illustrate that constructions of empire continue to exist within the Panamanian tourism discourse and reveal the ways that residential tourists or affluent migrants are complicit in the reproduction and dissemination of imperial logics that shape the past, present and likely the future.

Panama’s tourism industry has flourished over the past three decades to become one of the premiere travel destinations in Central America as described by tourism literature. Labeled as the “Next Luxury Hot Spot” by Forbes magazine (Kester, 2015) and a “favourite tourist destination” by The Globe and Mail (Selkirk, 2018) publicity for Panama has continued since International Living designated the country the number one retirement destination in 2014. Tourism literature and marketing materials emphasize Panama’s natural landscapes, colonial history, and growing capitol city as the main attractions for the country. The success of Panama’s tourism industry has also been used as a model for tourism development in Central America and the Global South. For actors in Panama’s federal government, the tourism sector is an important source of foreign exchange and economic growth in the country. Specifically, tourism is thought to play an important role in the overall growth strategy, poverty reduction, increased employment, improved wages,
and development of related industries in Panama (Dorosh & Klytchnikova, 2013, p. 71). The recent success of the tourism industry in the country, as illustrated through increased travel rates and tourism spending over the past three decades, illustrates the commitment by the Panamanian federal government to developing the tourism industry (Dorosh & Klytchnikova, 2013). Encouraged by the World Trade Organization and The World Bank, tourism development strategy has been propagated in the Global South through a variety of initiatives since the mid twentieth century. Originating in the 1960s, increased tourist spending is assumed to alleviate poverty at a variety of scales and give federal governments revenue to build necessary infrastructure and implement social services (Winters et al., 2013, p. 177; Hawkins & Mann, 2007, p. 350). Panama’s interest in tourism emerged in the 1990s, as the shift to a democratic state, demilitarization of the government, and impending transition of power of the Canal back to Panamanian control was the start of a new chapter in the country’s history. Supported by the development strategies of international actors, the Panamanian government viewed tourism as a viable strategy for the strengthening of its economy and as a way to represent itself as a peaceful nation (Guerron-Montero, 2014). The government of Guillermo Endara (1989-1994) declared tourism a national priority in 1993 and in 1994 President Perez Balladares (1994-1999) signed an agreement to create a Tourism Development Master Plan (Guerron-Montero, 2014). The national tourism strategy was to pursue the development of heritage and eco-tourism, as well as “rebrand” Panama’s image among international tourism markets (Guerron-Montero, 2014). Subsequent government leaders including Moscoso (1999-2004), Torrijos (2004-2009), and Martinelli (2009-2014) expanded upon the national Master Plan by also developing the residential tourism sector in Panama (Guerron-Montero, 2014; Dorosh & Klytchnikova, 2009). Residential tourism is defined as the spatial mobility of affluent individuals from the Global North to Global South who are in search of a better way of life (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009). As the Panamanian government pursued tourism policy throughout the following decades, the nation rebranded itself to wealthy tourists as a safe and attractive nation to visit, live, and work. Studies have illustrated that residential tourists are attracted to Panama due to its relatively inexpensive living costs, tropical climate, and accessible health care (Benson, 2013; Watts & Ruff, 2012). The Panamanian government has also facilitated the mobility of affluent migrant
populations by providing special visas and citizenship pathways to enter and reside within the country (Benson, 2013, Guerron-Montero, 2011). These policies have allowed Panama to compete with other residential tourism destinations and emerge as one of the most popular countries for North-South migration (Van Noorloos, 2011).

Although tourism in Panama is often described in travel literature as a new development for the country, residential tourism's foundation is rooted in the imperial relations of Panama and the United States, as well as a history of Spanish colonialism. Literature on this topic reveals that affluent migrants from Canada, The United States, and Europe experience the migration process differently due to privilege, wealth, racial hierarchies, and the impacts of colonial histories (Guerron-Montero, 2011; Guerron-Montero, 2014; Janoschka & Haas, 2013; Spalding, 2013, Mollett, 2017). Special policy and laws created for North American and European populations are reflective of racial bias in immigration processes, such as special visas (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009, p. 609). Although Panama has had high rates of migration throughout its history, migrants from China, The West Indies, and African populations have been stigmatized by the government and employers, despite being essential to national infrastructure projects (Noxolo, 2009). Alternatively, the government of Panama has created special visa pathways, residential laws, and citizenship for lifestyle migrants. However, these processes are fundamentally supported by assumptions that lifestyle migrants will positively impact a receiving nation solely because of their affluence (Ferguson, 2011; Wilson, 2008).

In addition, migration scholars have asserted that colonial narratives and imagery also influence the actions of migrants in their new home (Benson, 2012, Mollett, 2017). The ideological dominance of Northern migrants in the Global South has manifested spatially through the contemporary displacement and management of racialized communities (Janoschka & Haas, 2013). In particular, lifestyle migration literature argues that affluent populations are able to reinforce and legitimize problematic narratives due to their economic and social positioning at a global scale (Benson, 2012, p. 1689). Residential tourists continue to settle in areas marked by high inequality because these issues do not negatively affect their livelihoods due to the physical and social segregation of migrants from impoverished locals. In fact, many residential tourists benefit from low housing prices, illegal land purchases, and a lack of governmental protection for certain
Panamanian citizens (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, p. 619; Mollett, 2016; Thampy, 2014). Alternatively, the receiving communities of lifestyle migrants are often burdened by changing socio-spatial relations, landscape deterioration, and limited access to resources as a result of the rapid and unregulated development of residential tourism (Spalding, 2013, Guerron-Montero, 2011, Mollett, 2017). Scholars in the field of transnational mobilities have demonstrated the enduring characteristics of imperial knowledge production on North-South migratory patterns to Panama. The inter-spatial mobilities and settlement of affluent residential tourists mirror asymmetric structural relationships between imperial actors during Spanish colonialism and the establishment of the US Empire during the first half of the twentieth century. Panama’s historical past has informed the development of tourism through the enduring presence of imperial logics (Guerron-Montero, 2014; Mollett, 2017).

Figure 1: From National Geographic’s “Panama, Bridge of the World” (Marden, p. 594, 1941)

For the past five centuries Panama has been an important zone of both transportation and trade, which has attracted different empires from around the world. Colonial settlement in the region commenced in the early 16th century. Spanish
conquistador Rodrigo de Bastidas was the first European to visit the isthmus in 1501, followed by Christopher Columbus a year later, and Vasco Nunez de Balboa’s Atlantic to Pacific crossing of Panama in 1513 (Gordon, et al, 2018). By 1519, permanent European settlements were established on both coasts of the Isthmus (Gordon et al, 2018). For the Spanish, Panama’s geographic centrality was an important factor in the expanding economic interest of the empire, by facilitating the temporary storage of gold and minerals from Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia before being transported to Europe (Marrin, 1999).

Although Panama remained under Spanish rule for nearly three centuries, its geo-political boundaries changed frequently. Originally designated as territory in the Viceroyalty of Peru, in 1538 the region became part of the Real Audiencia of Panama governing body as designated by Henry V (Gordon et al, 2018). Although the Spanish had colonized cities such as Portobello, Colón and Panama City, much of Panamanian territory remained in control of Indigenous populations. This regional autonomy facilitated the mobility of English, Dutch, and French pirates in Panama, who were interested in intercepting gold and silver that came to Panama from Peru (Marrin, 1999). From the mid sixteenth to late seventeenth centuries a variety of ill fated and short-lived British colonies were established in rural Panama.

During this time period, British pirates such as Sir Frances Drake and Sir Henry Morgan worked in conjunction with the British crown to disrupt the Spanish empire in the New World (Marrin, 1999). The conflict between European imperial powers was reflective of greater tensions in regard to the Caribbean and Latin America. In particular, as each empire expanded into the New World, territorial disputes were a frequent occurrence and especially prominent in regard to Panama’s strategic location (Gordon et al, 2018). Under orders from the British Crown, privateers frequently intercepted gold transportation routes and destroyed Spanish settlements (Marrin, 1999). Motivated by revenge after being attacked by Spanish warships and the quest for gold, British slave trader and privateer Sir Frances Drake attacked the Panamanian port of Nombre de Dios in July 1572 and March 1573. After successfully capturing the town and nearly twenty tons of treasure Drake returned to Britain as a national hero (Gordon et al, 2018). Nearly a century later in 1669, Queen Mariana of Spain ordered that Spanish warships attack English trade ships over rising tensions in the region. As an act of retaliation, Sir Henry Morgan sailed along the
Spanish Main from 1670 to 1671 slowly capturing small settlements such as Old Providence, Santa Catalina, and Chagres (Marrin, 1999). In January 1671 Sir Henry Morgan attacked the Old Panama City, successfully capturing the settlement’s treasure and burning the port to the ground. Morgan’s actions were considered a strong blow to the Spanish empire, “When news of Panama’s destruction reached Spain, millions of ordinary people put on black armbands and flocked to their churches” as an act of national mourning (Marrin, 1999, p. 199).

Panama was also shaped in this period by the transatlantic slave trade, as European powers transported African populations in high numbers throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. The first African slaves arrived in Panama in 1513 with Vasco Nunez de Balboa (Gordon et al, 2018). Slave populations were important to inland transportation routes and were responsible for moving cargo from Portobello to Old Panama City in preparation for the trans-Atlantic voyage (Sigler et al, 2015). The Spanish empire also used African slaves for mining, textile production, domestic labor, and trade work. The dependency of the Spanish empire on slave populations resulted in the substantial increase of African slave arrivals over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Lasso, 2013). This practice drastically influenced changing demographics in the region and by 1607, 70% of Panama City was comprised of Afro-colonials (Lasso, 2013, p. 560). This pattern of growth continued with African populations in Panama numbering 3,500 in 1610 to 23,000 in 1789 (Lasso, 2013). Forced migration practices continued well into the nineteenth century when independence from Spain in 1821 brought the end to legal slavery in Panama (Sigler et al, 2015).

From 1821-1903 Panama voluntarily became part of The Republic of Colombia (Gordon et al, 2018). Soon after Panama’s colonial emancipation from Spain in 1821, national infrastructure projects and regional economic growth spurred a second wave of migration in the mid- nineteenth century. As the United States’ expanded into its Western frontier, American actors grew interested in establishing a route through Panama that would allow faster transportation for settlers from the East Coast of the United States to California and Oregon in order to facilitate economic growth and settlement on the West Coast. Initially, Americans used subsidized passenger ships to travel to and from Panama, while traversing the terrestrial portion of the isthmus on mule over routes first established
by the Spanish. Remarkably, this route was considered faster and less arduous than travelling internally through the United States (McCullough, 1977). However in 1848, William Aspinwall created the Panama Railroad Company and commenced construction for the Trans-Isthmian Railroad (Gordon et al, 2018). In order to successfully complete the project, Aspinwall’s Panama Railroad Company needed labor from 1880-1885. This sizable project attracted laborers from Southern Europe, China, the West Indies, and other areas of Latin America. However, by far the largest demographic of migrants came from the West Indies, with approximately 200,000 black West Indians arriving in Panama from 1849 to 1910 (Lasso, 2013). At this time, economic migration for working class West Indians had become increasingly common due to the growth in the mechanized sugar industry in the Caribbean. Specifically, technological advances in agriculture and crop production caused widespread unemployment in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Grenada, and St. Kitts (Sigler, 2014; Sigler et al, 2015). The construction of the Trans-isthmian railroad coincided with the start of the California gold rush in the United States. For this reason, prospectors were able to quickly travel from the East to West coast of the United States by traversing the Panamanian isthmus on railroad (McCullough, 1977). This phenomenon resulted in substantial prosperity for Panama along the old Spanish trails and the railroad track, as travellers contributed to an economic boom. In other parts of Panama, corporations such as The United Fruit Company also started to establish American enclaves in the late nineteenth century (Gordon et al, 2018). The combination of these historical factors illustrates presence of American economic and political power prior to the development of the Panama Canal.

The late nineteenth century in Panama brought the attempted development and initial construction of the Panama Canal by the French companies La Societe du Canal Interoceanique and the Compagnie Nouvelle from 1881-1894. The project failed and was subsequently acquired by the United States in 1903 (Gordon et al, 2018). Although the United States initially attempted to gain control of the Canal through diplomatic means with Colombia, the Colombian government’s failure to ratify they Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty in the same year resulted in President Theodore Roosevelt supporting a Panamanian rebellion against the Colombian government. In 1903, Panama successfully separated from the Colombian Republic and granted the United States rights to the Panama Canal Zone for
ninety-nine years (McCullough, 1977). As the United States pursued the construction of the Panama Canal Spanish, Italian, Chinese, and West Indian migrants came to work as laborers on the infrastructure project. The labour and remuneration of these migrant populations and American workers were spatially distributed in the Canal Zone. High paying jobs were reserved for the approximately 4,800 white American citizens that immigrated to Panama in the early part of the century. American populations benefitted from a two tiered labour systems, which granted superior employment, housing, and benefits to white Americans. For the project developers, a homogeneous composition of the white-collar employees and heterogeneous composition of laborers was viewed as an essential tool to prevent unionization, a factor that was considered potentially disastrous to infrastructure progress (Lasso, 2013; McKillen, 2011, p. 58, Sigler et al, 2015). For West Indian migrants, the poor quality and overcrowding of state rooming houses exacerbated the deficient health and safety standards already faced by migrant laborers in the Canal Zone (Franck, 1913). Unlike the houses of American workers, poorly built tenements allowed for the proliferation of mosquitos, which contributed to the rapid transmission of malaria and yellow fever among the blue-collar population (Cohen, 1971; Lasso, 2013). State officials remained indifferent to high rates of mortality among racialized workers, as other migrant populations could easily replace the perished individuals. As a response to the poor quality of living conditions, many migrants chose to leave government housing and construct their own dwellings in peripheral spaces of The Canal Zone. The development of precarious enclaves was incredibly challenging for migrants due to the low economic earnings within the community (McCullough, 1977, p. 578). In particular, segregation in the Canal Zone was facilitated by a two-tiered pay scale, with West Indians and African Americans assigned to the “Silver Role” and white Americans and Europeans to the “Gold Role”. Besides a substantial pay disparity, the Silver Role also hindered West Indian migrants from accessing “white-only” spaces, such as restaurants, shops, and community centers. Similar ideologies and treatment of racialized populations existed throughout economic and political enclaves of the American empire. As discussed by Frenkel in Geographic Representations of the Other: The Landscapes of The Panama Canal Zone (2002), a stringent labor hierarchy was used in conjunction with sanitation initiatives to create a physical boundary between white Americans and other non-white laborers living in the territory.
This geographic organization of the Zone was representative of American political and racial ideologies of the time period that placed white American populations in a superior position to West Indian, Chinese, and Panamanian populations (Frenkel, 2002, p. 88). The urban landscapes of the Panama Canal Zone were considered so successful by the American government, that the territory was used as a model for other colonies in the tropics. In particular the “plans, ideas, and official housing reports” were shared among urban planners and administrators throughout American colonies of the early twentieth century from Latin America to the Pacific (Frenkel, 2002, p. 88). Although the self-contained environment was considered a pillar of a successful imperial agenda by the United States government and public commentators, white Zonians residents often described their life in Panama as isolating. One administrative worker compared the enforced segregation of the Panama Canal Zone to “a man in a fort surrounded by enemies” (Frenkel, 2002, p.92).

The presence of the United States in Panama continued to influence economic, political, and demographic factors in the country throughout the nineteenth century. A strong wartime economy in the 1940s attracted approximately 22,000 laborers from the Caribbean and Central America to work on infrastructure projects. Rural to urban migration patterns within the country were also influenced by employment opportunities in Panama City, with subsistence farmers and agricultural workers leaving the countryside to work in factories and construction projects (Biesanz & Biesanz, 1964). This pattern of economic growth and migration continued until the 1980s, when the military dictator Manuel Noriega seized power.

The political and economic initiatives launched by the United States in Panama during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century was closely accompanied by public documentation of US imperial expansion. In particular, public actors recorded the social, geographical, economic, and political transformation of the Panama Canal Zone through the act of travel writing. The development of travel writing, a genre of writing which describes an author’s experiences of people and places while travelling abroad, has long been related to the expansion of the United States empire in American history (Pratt, 1994). This phenomenon in closely analyzed in Le Grand and Salvatore’s anthology Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of US-Latin American relations, where
Salvatore discusses the emergence of popular travel writing during the nineteenth century (1998). Although travel narratives in Central and South America during this time period were still uncommon, authors such as John Lloyd Stephens (1841) gained significant notoriety by recording their adventures in the region. At the turn of the twentieth century a variety of economic and technological factors influenced the rise of travel writing. In particular, the increase of international investment in the Americas, in combination with technological advances, and the mass production of commodities lead to the development of mainstream travel literature (Salvatore, 1998, p. 76). New technological systems that facilitated the mass production of literature fed American audiences’ curiosity regarding The United States’ newest economic frontier. For the first time, travel photography, advertisements, and magazines were widely circulated among an American public. In fact, the introduction of photographs to the National Geographic magazine increased subscribers from 3,400 in 1905 to 107,000 in 1912 (Salvatore, 1998, p. 82). Travel writing was also used as a political tool for the United States to investigate the possibility of imperialism in the Americas, with different actors assuming responsibility for the procurement of this information. In particular, Salvatore states there were three different kind of American investigators during this period: the merchant adventurer, scientific explorer, and the missionary (1998, p.77). Each actor was responsible for gathering different forms of information in Central and South America and disseminating this knowledge to a wider audience (1998, p.77). However, the narratives that emerged from scientific, economic, and social travel literature were often repetitive and inaccurate. In particular, authors emphasized that Latin America was in a persistent state of childhood, characterized by economic and societal backwardness. The demographics of the region were also commonly discussed, with significant commentary dedicated to the region’s racial mixture (Salvatore, 1998, p. 82). These popular narratives had a variety of consequences, resulting in further investigation of the Americas by philanthropic and academic actors from the United States. In particular, imperialists imagined Central America as familiar territory that was filled with passive and manageable populations. This imperial sentiment was also replicated in regard to scientific exploration and academic interest in Central America. In particular, the popularity of organized research trips by American universities to Latin American significantly increased during the early twentieth
century (Salvatore, 1998, p. 82). In both contexts of philanthropic and academic research, scientists and educators became actors to assemble information for the United States government, which needed knowledge on the region in order to effectively carry out its imperialist ambitions. The activity of scientists, educators, and adventurers was widely circulated in the American press and was responsible for shaping the perceptions of the public regarding Central America. For this reason the collection, modification, and dissemination of knowledge encouraged by the United States government “made readers participants in the expansionist project” through the circulation of popular travel media (Salvatore, 1998, p. 82).

As the empire of the United States expanded abroad to encompass Guam, the Philippines, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal Zone during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a greater portion of the American imaginary was dedicated to imperialist expression. In particular, the physical celebration of the new empire was seen in the establishment of world fairs. As discussed in the book Empire on Display: San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, the United States imperial accomplishments and future ambitions were presented to a national audience through the medium of built form, including displays, models, and structures (Moore, 2013). The world fair illustrated the technological advances, new commodities, and scientific achievements that were responsible for America’s successful expansion of colonies and construction of the Panama Canal (Moore, 2013, p. 4-6). The organization of the exhibit was essential to illustrating imperialist progress, as American inventions and commodities were contrasted against exhibits showing Indigenous culture and peoples (Salvatore, 1998, p. 85). However, the dominant narrative of the exhibition was dedicated to the actors of American expansion abroad. In particular, imperialism was inscribed on the bodies of American men, who were understood to be both physically and ideologically “vigor, muscular, innately superior, powerful, and radiant” (Moore, 2013, p. 4). This celebration of masculinity was not an unusual in reference to expansion both within the United States and American territories abroad. As discussed in Martin’s work Becoming Banana Cowboys: White-Collar Masculinity, The United Fruit company, and Tropical Empire in Early Twentieth Century Latin America (2013), American workers for The United Fruit Company perceived their endeavors in Central America and the Caribbean as similar to that of settlers on the American frontier.
American men living in economic enclaves of The United Fruit Company, considered themselves to be hardworking, purposeful, and masculine (Martin, 2013, p. 335). In addition, the hierarchy of The United Fruit Company placed white American men in control of West Indian and local laborers, allowing them to discipline and dominate black populations through racial logics (Martin, 2013, p. 322). In fact, American administrators often used the large population of West Indian and Latin workers on the plantations as a definitive characteristic in descriptions of danger that permeated travel narratives (Martin, 2013, p. 322). Racialized laborers were also used in representations that portrayed tropical spaces as being on the edge of civilization, a theme that first occurred in American travel narratives during the early nineteenth century (Martin, 2013; Salvatore, 1998).

Representations of American workers as essential actors in the imperial expansion of the United States shaped the self-image of these men, as well as the domestic celebration of these populations illustrated during the Panama Pacific Exhibition (Martin, 2013; Moore, 2013).

The representational binary evident in tourism literature between white American workers and racialized migrant laborers was essential to strategies of American nation building in both the United States and the Panama Canal Zone. Although the hierarchical positioning of racialized migrants in regard to white Americans was shaped by segregation policy imposed by the United States government, narratives in the American press supported notions of moral, intellectual, and administrative superiority of American migrants over “other” populations (Frenkel, 2002). In general migrants from the Global South were characterized as a menace to American identity and national progress, while particular subgroups such as the Chinese and West Indian populations were considered criminal and blamed for infectious disease (Cohen, 1971; Lasso, 2013). In particular, scientific racism, the pseudoscientific study of racial superiority, promoted the belief that migrant laborers were inherently problematic to the canal building initiative, as they did not possess the admirable quality of discipline and devotion seen in white American workers (McCullough, 1977). Thus, foreign migrants were widely acknowledged in popular media as the reason for any delays or failures in the canal building process, despite their essential contribution to the construction of the project (Lasso, 2013; McCullough, 1977).

The negative representations of West Indian, Chinese, and Latin American migrants
functioned as a binary to that of the virtuous American worker. The progression of canal construction and the possession of superior employment in the zone were the two factors used to measure American prosperity and success. For journalists and travel writers, the labor hierarchy in Panama reflected a natural order between nations; if American workers were the most intelligent and capable in the Zone they would naturally hold the most important and senior positions on the Isthmus (Frenkel, 2002; McCullough, 1977). Thus, the identity of white workers and their portrayal in popular media was inherently linked to discourses of empire from the United States. Workers stood as a representation of America’s values and convictions as a superior nation, particularly in relation to the control and management of racialized populations (Martin, 2013). The spatiality of the Zone, a bounded area previously controlled by the French, functioned as a test center to illustrate the competency of American imperialism in the tropics. Unfortunately, these narratives also erased the contributions made by foreign residents and people of color in the development of the Canal (Lasso, 2013, McKillen, 2011). The binary between representations of white workers and migrant laborers functioned to abolish “un-American” bodies from nation-building narratives and geographic imaginaries (Frenkel, 1992; Frenkel, 2002). For these reasons the representation of American workers within travel literature was not apolitical, but influenced by broader structures of empire such as white supremacy and nationalism. American workers were able to physically control racialized populations through segregation laws that influenced the spatial mobility of laborers as well as conceptually degrade the contributions of migrant workers in Canal development. As a result, American citizens were given sole credit for the progress of the Panama Canal, transforming white workers into an important symbol of American imperialism in the tropics (McCullough, 1977; Martin, 2013). The representation of white Americans by writers, tourists, and canal residents supported ideological narratives that linked whiteness to The United States’ identity and supported racial logics in nation building agenda.

In this thesis I illustrate the ways in which imperial narratives and euro-American geographic imaginaries shape tourism development in Panama. Building on the insights of scholars of empire, I analyze travel and tourism narratives and trace the conceptual and material links between tourism and imperial expansion in Panama. Specifically, I examine
imperial narratives found among North American and European newspapers, magazines, autobiographical novels, and online materials from the 1880s, until 2017. In order to analyze travel and tourism discourse, this thesis employs the use of historical geographic methodology to demonstrate the pervasive nature of imperial narratives in the reproduction of historical representations and logics. Findings illustrate that these representations have re-emerged as new narratives and imperial understandings in modern forms (Stoler, 2016). To summarize, historical sources highlight how narratives of American nation building and imperial expansion have become embedded in discussions of migration, construction of difference, and tourism in the context of US-Panama relations. The analysis of archival materials revealed a number of themes related to nation building, including the celebration of American governance in the Zone, particularly through the discussions of hygiene and built form. In rural areas of Panama, nation building was constituted through the settlement of ‘wild’ land and the development of the natural resource industry. Discourse from modern publications also focused on the establishment of Spanish and American empires in Panama, while simultaneously perpetuating a geographic imaginary of Panama as a vacant and untouched space. In conjunction with the examination of themes appearing in popular newspapers, magazines, and online mediums, this project also examined autobiographical texts written by Americans living in the isthmus over the past century. Findings from this analysis illustrate the commonality of race-based discourse, including discussions of local Indigenous populations, West Indian labour, and mestizo Panamanian incompetency. Themes of American and white superiority supported these discussions, which have also lead to the historical and contemporary resistance of Northern migrants to integrate within broader Panamanian society. As illustrated, the thematic findings of this study reveal a variety of connections between temporal, spatial, and conceptual elements of the tourism industry and the expansion of both North American and European empire to Panama. The extensive analysis of Panamanian travel and tourism literature over the past century has provided insight into the processes of empire, which have played an integral role in the historic development of Panama’s tourism industry as well as the contemporary representation of people and place.

The analysis of tourism literature offers dynamic insight into imperial knowledge production and its influence on geographic organization at both transnational and regional
scales. Since the mid-twentieth century, the tourism industry has become one of the world’s fastest growing economic sectors and one of the largest industries (World Tourism Organization, 2018). This thesis illuminates the perpetuation of imperial ideology as an important factor in global mobility, community place making, and the formation of geographic imaginaries in relation to Panama. By tracing the derivation of travel narratives over an extended temporal period, this project contributes to academic discussions that investigate the histories and congruities of empire embedded in contemporary contexts.

Similar to National Geographic’s recent attempt to confront the inequities of representation that have persisted as essential elements of the magazine’s character, imperial narratives continue to exist in travel literature as a palpable foundation to the industry itself (Goldberg, 2018; Kaplan, 1996). The transformational nature of imperial discourse over the past century has resulted in the appearance of modified narratives that often remain unacknowledged due to the imperceptible character of their new form (Stoler, 2016). For this reason, the identification and examination of narratives in Panamanian travel literature is essential to discussions of imperial legacies and their resulting material effects.
Chapter Two: Imperial Logics of the Tourism Industry: Empire, Amenity Migration, and Constructions of Difference

2.1 The Geographic Imagination of the ‘New World’: European and American Expansion in Latin America

Scholars of empire have asserted that the production of geographic imaginaries by imperial actors was an essential facet in the spatial expansion and inter-personal subjugation of Latin America (Smith, 2003; Grandin, 2006; Pratt, 1992; Frenkel, 2002). Geographic imaginaries, defined as the spatialized cultural and historical knowledge of distinct social groups, facilitated a binary of representation between imperial actors and citizens of the newly formed empire (Gregory, 1994). In particular, European and American
empires were able to shape their own national identities and define geo-political boundaries through discursive means (Pratt, 1992; McKintosh, 1995). McClintock supports this assertion when describing the process of documentation as a mechanism to formalize actions of discovery, “made for real after the traveler returns home and brings it into being through texts” (1995, p.29). For this reason, empires frequently discussed “other” places and people as a way of controlling narratives important to nation building and imperial identity (Said, 1978; Frenkel, 2002). For citizens of empire not directly related to expansion initiatives, geographic imaginaries were a particularly powerful tool used by elite populations to characterize Latin America as a space in need of colonization (Pratt, 1992; Smith, 2003). As Pratt discusses, geographic imaginaries easily facilitate persuasive discourse as it “alters people’s experiences and the way people imagine, feel, and think about the world they live in” (1992; p. 4). Interestingly, scholars of empire have also demonstrated the evolution of Latin America’s geographic imaginary in relation to the shifting imperial motivations and power in the region (Grandin, 2006). Stoler contends that imperialism’s “tenacious presence” formed through “refashioned and sometimes opaque and oblique reworkings” helps contextualize the efficacy of imperial geographic understandings in regard to both European and American interests (2016; p.4). The following discussion of empire considers the malleable character of spatial geographies and the influential relationship between understandings of Latin American space and the material contingencies of geographic, political, and economic expansion of contested empires (Smith, 2003; Grandin, 2006).

The first geographic imaginary of Latin America emerged from the texts of European imperial actors, who purported the region as a space on the “rim of the known world” (Smith, 2003, p. 55). The characterization of Latin America as an unknown land facilitated the erasure of Indigenous civilizations while simultaneously obscuring the absence of imperial knowledge regarding the histories and geographies of the “New World” (Pratt, 1992; McKintosh, 1995). Instead, imperial actors turned their focus to the “extraordinary nature” that was understood to dominate the landscapes of South and Central America. Described as “capable of overwhelming human knowledge and understanding” the geographic imagination of virgin nature supported imperial initiatives of economic and political expansion in Latin America, by representing Latin America as
malleable and empty land (Pratt, 1992, p.118). Smith comments upon the mutually constituting dynamic of *virgin spaces* and imperial motivations in the following passage, “They too wrote America as a primal world of nature, an unclaimed and timeless space occupied by plants and creatures (some of the human) but not organized by societies and economies; a world whose only history was the one about to begin” (2003, p.123). The ideologies of imperial actors from Europe also influenced the geographic imaginary of Latin America in representational practices from the United States (Grandin, 2006; Smith, 2003). Similar to the expansion of settlers across the United States, geographic imaginary of the *frontier* was also extended to the territory of Latin America. As Smith discusses, “… the continent also included large stretches that were still marginally integrated into the larger world, and these were the areas that attracted [interest]” (2003; p. 54). The curiosity in “unknown” parts of Latin America facilitated the mobility and investment of actors from the United States who perceived some territories of Central and South America as a spaces to re-enact settlement, resource development, and subjugation that characterized frontier expansion domestically (Frenkel, 1992; Frenkel, 2002; Grandin, 2006; Smith, 2003). In both European and American imperial contexts, the geographic imaginary of Latin America as a “blank spot on the world map” was a result of, and determining factor in, imperial expansion (Smith, 2003, p.2).

Scholars of empire attest that the competing interest between European and North American actors in Latin America were caused by ideological and representational deviations informed by broader *nationalistic discourses* of each empire (McKlintock, 1995; Smith, 2003, Domosh, 2006). In particular, the end of Spanish colonialism in Latin America was accompanied by growing political and economic interest of imperial actors in Northern Europe (McKlintock, 1995; Pratt, 1992). The shifting power dynamics of contested empires in Latin America also influenced “relations of representation and imagination” by actors in each nation (Pratt, 1992, p. 110). McKlintock described this process as “the reinvention of America” that was informed by the “energies and imaginations of intellectuals” such as scientists, entrepreneurs, and authors” (1995, p. 110). As Northern European nations such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands exercised increasing commercial and bureaucratic control of Latin America, the United States also began to penetrate South and Central American markets through private investment supported by the American government.
(Domosh, 2013; Smith, 2003). Smith comments that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "U.S. expansionism took an increasingly geo-economic rather than colonial form" in Latin America (Smith, 31). Scholars assert that the United States differentiated its national identity from European nations by emphasizing economic and commercial practices as a superior and modern form of colonialism (Domosh, 2013). Pratt explains that, "Central to this configuration was the belief that American economic expansion beyond its national borders was different from, and better than, the military and political manoeuvres of imperial Europe. In other words, American commercial expansion was a great work of peace, a noble cause" (1992; p.2). Although the United States conceptualized American imperialism as distinct from the archaic practices of European empires, many of the narratives and imaginaries utilized by the United States were informed through a shared colonial history (Grandin, 2006; Domosh, 2013). In particular, imperial actors from the United States perceived free trade and economic integration as practical method in “subduing” and “civilizing” the “natives” of Latin America, similar to religious and linguistic impositions of the Spanish and Portuguese (Pratt, 1992, p.2). Temporal and spatial imaginaries of Latin American populations were also influenced by binaries of modernity and power between Northern and Southern hemispheres. In particular, American imperialists possessed a geographic imaginary of Latin America as “recapitulating the course of US history” through economic development (Domosh, 2013, p. 947). The people and spaces of Latin America “were seen as representing a past time, in this case, a time in the recent past of the United States”, which encouraged both public and private American actors to penetrate the markets and spaces of Latin America (Domosh, 2013, p.947). In both European and American contexts, the narratives and imaginaries related to imperial expansion were justified through nationalistic discourses that privileged particular aspects of national identity (Gregory, 1994; Domosh, 2013, Frenkel, 2002). Distinct religious and cultural practices were the central focus of European colonial subjugation in Latin America, while the American celebration of economic freedom was used as the principal justification for expansion initiatives (Pratt, 1992, Smith, 2003).

2.2: Historical Repercussions in Global Mobilities: The Case of North-South Amenity Migration
Amenity migration, known as the movement of people based on the “draw of natural or cultural amenities”, has become of growing interest in the field of tourism mobilities (Gosnell & Abrams, 2011; Sheller, 2015, p.145). Discussions of amenity migration initially focused on European contexts, including research that analyzed vacationers from Northern Europe that resided in Mediterranean regions (Jackiewicz & Craine, 2010). However, in the past two decades academics have shifted their attention to other areas of the world that are affected by North-South mobility patterns. Residential tourism in Central America has grown exponentially, with Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, and Nicaragua emerging as the top destinations for migration among affluent populations (Van Noodoos, 2011). A variety of connections exist between amenity migration and intersecting field of residential tourism, defined as the semi-permanent or permanent migration of populations that buy or rent private residence in another country (Van Noodoos, 2011, p. 429; Benson & O’Reilly, 2009). In particular, leisure, lifestyle, cost of living, and the geographic imaginations of receiving countries are the principal factors influencing both amenity and residential migrations (Van Noodoos, 2011, Benson, 2013). Studies have illustrated that North-South mobility patterns to Latin America will continue to increase over the next decades, demonstrating the need for scholarly attention to this burgeoning migratory phenomenon (Hayes, 2015, p.8).

The Impetus for mobility is a key facet in discussions of amenity migration and residential tourism literature. Residential tourists chose to move away from their home country and select their new host nation based on the variety of myths propagated by tourism literature and disenchantment with their lives in the Global North (Sheller, 2015; Benson, 2013). In particular, amenity migrants have cited growing levels of crime, unemployment, a lack of community, and high-pressure careers as the reasons for leaving Europe and North America (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009, p. 610.). As amenity migrants make the decision to move, their selection of a new host country is fully informed by both collective and personal constructions of the national identity for specific developing countries (Guerron-Montero, 2014; Janoschka & Haas, 2013; Jacobs, 2009). The imaginary of “Arabian Nights”, an area filled with luxurious goods and sexual freedom, has encouraged European tourists to live in Morocco (Janoschka & Haas, 2013). In Panama and Costa Rica, the construction of an eco-paradise is used to entice tourists that want to
mentally disassociate from the “rat-race” (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009, p. 610 & Guerron-Montero, 2014, p. 427). In Egypt, female amenity migrants have cited their attraction to the ‘masculinity’ of local Bedouin men, which is understood through acts of chivalry and a closeness to nature as an impetus for migration (Jacobs, 2009). Around the Caribbean, scholars have repeatedly discovered that imagined ‘remnants of conquest’ such as feminized landscapes and servitude of black workers has helped construct residential tourists’ imaginary of place (Guerron-Montero, 2014, Mollett, 2017, Sheller, 2015). Within the United States, the concept of “The American Dream” inspires residential migrants to pursue a better way of life abroad (Spalding, 2013). Despite the differences in cultural imaginaries, each host nation serves as a space of fantasy for amenity migrants and residential tourists. For this reason, studies have illustrated that the mobility of affluent migrants is informed by a geographic binary, which overstates the short-comings of the amenity migrants home country, while simultaneously promoting unrealistic and attractive depictions of the new receiving nation (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009, p. 610).

The second theme emerging from scholarly research is the privileged migration pathways of affluent amenity migrants. When contrasted with the legal and social obstacles of migration experienced by economic migrants and refugee populations, scholars have asserted that amenity migrants frequently receive preferential treatment by receiving nations in the Global South due to their wealth, racial identity, and citizenship status (Benson, 2013; Spalding, 2013; Barrantes-Reynolds, 2011). In particular, migrants from the Global North are not considered a risk to national modernity and identity of receiving nations, due to the perception of whiteness among affluent populations (Escher & Peterman, 2013; Mollett, 2016, Sigler, 2015). As a result of this perception, national securitization measures enforced through immigration, investment, and ownership laws are not implemented evenly across the bodies of different migratory populations. In Panama, retired foreigners are able to qualify for a ‘Pensionados’ visa if they receive a pension through a government program or private business equal to at least $1000 a month. As part of this program pensioners are allowed a one-time tax exemption on imported goods and are able to receive discounts on commercial purchases (Sigler, 2015; Dorosh & Klytchnikova; 2013). In the countries of Morocco and Thailand, amenity migrants and residential tourists are able to purchase homes and businesses without obtaining
official residency (Janoschka & Haas, 2013). Although tourist, work, and residency visas are available, federal governments facilitate the undocumented migration of amenity populations from the Global North by only charging a small fee if affluent migrants overstay the stipulated timeframe without a visa (Janoschka & Haas, 2013). In the country of Costa Rica, foreign populations without domestic citizenship are allowed to own property in their own name or the name of a corporation. As a result of this practice, foreign populations are given the same rights to purchasing land as citizens of Costa Rica (Barrantes-Reynolds, 2011). The purpose of these policies is to encourage tourists to invest in these countries by reducing the complicated bureaucracy process (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009, p. 619; Jackiewicz & Craine, 2010). However, scholars have asserted that a variety of negative environmental, economic, and social effects frequently offset the benefits of amenity migration to receiving nations. Amenity migrant enclaves have been responsible for increased pollution, reduced access to resources for local populations, and the destruction of various ecosystems on Costa Rica’s Pacific coast and Panama’s Atlantic coast (Van Noorloos, 2011; Barrantes-Reynolds, 2011; Spalding, 2013; Mollett, 2016). Foreign investment and the growth of tourism enclaves in Central America have resulted in the displacement of local populations due to the rising cost of living (Spalding, 2013, Benson, 2013). Environmental degradation in conjunction with increased privatization in Bocas del Toro, Panama has made sustenance cultivation and fishing more difficult, forcing local residents to become increasingly reliant on amenity migrants for employment (Mollett, 2016; Mollett, 2017, Spalding, 2013). Power relations in the region that have been informed by racial logics and socio-economic inequality have also facilitated the sexual and physical abuse of local female workers by affluent foreign migrants (Mollett, 2017). For these reasons scholars of tourism and migration have asserted that without proper regulation and oversight by the federal government, amenity migration can negatively influence local economies and social relations, disproportionately affecting low income and racialized populations (Dorosh & Klytchnikova, 2013).

2.3 Marketing Cultural Difference: The Role of “Other” in the Tourism Industry
Within the tourism industry, constructions of cultural difference remain a principal factor that influences the destination selection and mobility of specific tourist populations (Sheller, 2015). The intersections of identity and cultural differentiation render places and people desirable or undesirable for various kinds of tourists (Urry & Sheller, 2004). As discussed by scholars of sex tourism, differences in gender, sexuality, and power helps construct geographic imaginaries of places, people, and interactions between visitors and locals (Jacobs, 2011; Morgan & Pritchard, 2000; McKintosh, 1995). Research on female sex tourism in Egypt illustrates that “that western (mostly white) women who sleep with local men in third world tourist resorts exploit their first world and racial privileges in their search for a sexualised and racialised ‘other’ (Jacobs, 2011, p. 44). The desert in Egypt is essential to geographic imaginaries of sex tourists, who understand the natural landscape to exist outside of ‘time and place’ (Jacobs, 2011, p. 44). In the archipelago of Bocas del Toro, female Afro-Antillean workers are frequently harassed and exploited by the white European and North American employers (Mollett, 2017). The persistent representation of racialized women in Panama as being “less than human”, supported by legal and cultural frameworks, is grounded in colonial logics persistently exercised in Panama’s Caribbean coast (Mollett, 2017, p. 4). Although race, gender, wealth, and mobility can influence conceptual understanding of the “other” and tourist behaviour in place, so too can political and social transformations to particular regions (Urry & Sheller, 2004). In the context of Nicaragua, tourism marketing co-opted the country’s history of socialism and twentieth century ‘revolution’ as a marketable strategy to environmentally and socially conscious tourists (Babb, 2004, p. 542). The refashioning of Nicaragua’s conflict for tourism dollars demonstrates a broader trend in the industry with revolutionary, war, and disaster tourism becoming increasingly common (Babb, 2004). In the context of Egypt, Panama, and Nicaragua, specific and often intersecting aspects of cultural differentiation are a marketable ‘product’ for each tourist attraction.

Scholars of tourism have asserted that historical logics continue to be a principal factor in the conceptual understanding and material contingencies of tourism places (Sheller, 2015; Urry, 2004). By examining repetitive narratives that appear in travel discourse, scholars have been able to identify the relation between colonialism and contemporary patterns of short and long-term migration (Guerron-Montero, 2014; Benson,
As described by Echtner and Prasad, the “myth of the unchanged” and “myth of the unrestrained” remain two of the most common discourses in contemporary travel media (2003, p. 669). Tourism regions are categorized as “unchanged” when their natural and built environments ascribed to ideals of a particular historical period (Urry, 1992, p. 183). For this reason, tourism destinations are imagined in both spatial and temporal realms (Urry, 1992, p. 184). The celebration of the Panama Canal and American Zone can be understood as the celebration of a definitive era in the imperialist expansion of The United States. The second discourse of representation in tourism literature is the myth of the unrestrained (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 672). This narrative is dependent on the concept of a modern paradise that is distinct and removed from current, everyday processes and burdens. In the unrestrained paradise, sensuality, sexuality, and the submissiveness of racialized bodies and calming natural environments are essential (Echtner & Parad, 2003, p. 672; McKittrick, 2006; Morgan & Pritchard, 2000, p. 117). Intrinsic to this representation is a romanticized version of colonial exploitation that relies on shared perceptions of gender, sexuality, and personal relations (Echtner & Parad, 2003, p. 672; Morgan & Pritchard, 2000, p. 117). In particular, statements are that describe the area as “paradise” draw on romanticized colonial discourses, despite high incidence of poverty, displacement, and racism in the region (Guerron-Montero, 2011).
In the context of Panama, the representation of *paradise* is an extremely common in travel literature. In particular, academics assert that the colonial relations present on the isthmus over the past five centuries have been accompanied by the geographic imaginary of paradise with the bodies, landscape, and culture of Panama as represented by colonial actors (Guerron Montero, 2011; Guerron Montero, 2014; Janoschka & Haas, 2013; Spalding, 2013). In particular, the theme of paradise is composed and intersects with other Eurocentric narratives, including exoticism, bodily pleasures, and romanticized nostalgia in tourism literature (Guerron Montero, 2011, p. 28). Tourists continue to view tropical destination spaces as care free, tranquil, and ‘gifts of nature’ (Guerron Montero, 2011, p. 4).
Despite these imaginings of paradise, areas with extensive tourism markets often have high rates of poverty and inequality (Ferguson, 2011; Wilson, 2011). Lower income communities in these areas are not considered essential to growth and are thus treated as a superfluous population that can be dispossessed in the name of economic development (Nixon, 2011, p. 151; Mollett, 2016). For this reason, scholars argue that affluent populations justify their own migration practices by relying on socially constructed notions of paradise; despite clear evidence that contradicts these narratives (Benson, 2011, p. 1689). The tourism industry, host countries, and migrants from the global North work together to perpetuate these ‘imaginings’ in order to support economically and individually beneficial practices for privileged tourists from the Global North, at the expense of local populations (Benson, 2011, p. 1684-1689).

2.4: Historicizing the Present: The value of Historical Geography as a Methodological Approach to the Study of Empire

This thesis utilizes the methodological approach of historical geography, which is defined as “geographic study of a place or region in the past or the study of geographic change in a place or region over a period of time” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). Scholars of geography have asserted that historical geography as a methodological practice can facilitate greater understanding of space and place as it allows for both historical and spatial discernment within the discipline (Domosh & Morin, 2003; Schein, 2011; Salda Portio, 2016). Historical geography is useful to scholars as it facilitates spatial understandings of the past, as well as the continuation of historical logics in the present (Stoler, 2002; Mollett, 2017; Raghuram & Clare, 2006). Stoler (2016) comments upon the lingering effects of imperial knowledge production as an example of this phenomenon, “Colonial pasts, the narratives recounted about them, the unspoken distinctions they continue to “cue”, the affective charges they reactivate, and the implicit "lessons" they are mobilized to impart are sometimes so ineffably threaded through the fabric of contemporary life forms they seem indiscernible as distinct effects, as if everywhere and nowhere at all” (p.5). As Stoler (2016) illustrates, the investigation of imperial narratives and other forms of historical logics reveals the persistence of particular understandings between and within different temporal and spatial periods. The practices and approaches
of historical geography facilitate the identification of these processes, as well as the historicization of the present (Mollett, 2017; Raghuram & Clare, 2006; Saldana Portio, 2016). In the context of Latin America, Mollett (2017) illustrates how colonial knowledge production influences the material contingencies of racial difference in modern contexts, “Indeed, colonial and postcolonial power in Latin America is comprised of both modernity and coloniality, where racial subjugation and superiority are materialized through the entangled processes of land appropriation, religious hegemony, and the forced labor of indigenous and black bodies” (p.6), By examining the influences of historical relations on modern spaces and bodies, historical geography “continues to emphasize its unique perspective” by using the “historical record to develop a theoretical argument through which to tell a story” (Birge-Liberman, 2010; Mitchell, 1996). For this reason, historical geography is the most appropriate methodological practice to contextualize discussions of affluent migration to Panama within broader discussions of American nation building and imperial logics.

In the field of historical geography, methodological practice predominantly relies on the archive as a primary source of data. As historical approaches were incorporated more fully in the field of geography, the acceptance of the archive as an appropriate space equal to ethnographic research “Signalled a legitimacy of historical scholarship that extended beyond geography to other disciplines, history in particular” (Schein, 2011, p. 13). For scholars of geography, a variety of methodological questions emerged as the use of historical archives was more widely accepted within the discipline. Firstly, geographers were encouraged to examine the archive as its own “site of knowledge production” where different voices were privileged or silenced depending on a variety of geographic landscapes and power hierarchies (Schein, 2011; Stoler, 2002, p.87). Stoler contends that this can be achieved by examining the archive as colonial project that contains “both transparencies on which power relations were inscribed and intricate technologies of rule in themselves” (2002, p.87). Secondly, Domosh also interrogated the methodological practices of historical geography in regard to archival research. In particular, Domosh contends, “the epistemological and methodological assumptions of historical geography have not been seriously challenged” in regard to constructions of difference such as gender within the investigation of the archival documents (Domosh, 1997, p.226). Addressing
these concerns, geographers encouraged that extractive archival activity be used in conjunction with the analysis of discursively constructed concepts and the application of theoretical perspectives (Stoler, 2002; Domosh & Morin, 2003, Schein, 2011). The combined use of these methodological practices compliments archival research as a means of “interaction between the researcher and past voices embedded in the documents” (Birge-Liberman, 2010). Thus, scholars in the field of geography have contended that discourse analysis is a useful mechanism for archival analysis, as it is “concerned with the constitution of knowledge on the one hand and power relations, subjectivities, and identities on the other,” which helps to reveal voices traditionally privileged or hidden in historical archives (Birge-Liberman, 2010, Schein, 2011). For this reason the methodology of historical geography, in conjunction with the use of archival discourse analysis is an appropriate method for the examination of North American, European, and Panamanian historical publications in this thesis, as well as the persistence of these discursive elements in modern travel sources.

2.5 Research Methods: The Discursive Analysis of Archival and Modern Travel Narratives

Data collection for this project has been divided into two separate time periods. First, historical data was collected from archival newspapers and magazines in The United States, Canada, Britain, and Panama from 1880-1950. Articles from this time period coincide with the French construction of the canal, Panamanian independence from Columbia, legal and military control of the Panama Canal Zone by the United States and the early development of the tourism industry in Panama (McCullough, 1977). In particular, The American newspapers that were used for data collection were chosen for their geographic location in The United States, as well as their popularity. The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Chicago Tribune, The Los Angeles Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Atlanta Constitution, and The Washington Post were chosen for data collection purposes. Newspapers in Canada and Britain were also used including The Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail, The Observer, and The Guardian. The Panama Sun and Herald was the most popular English newspaper in The Canal Zone and often used as a source for American, British, and Canadian news stories. For this reason The Sun and Herald was also
included in the data collection process. All newspapers mentioned were accessed using ProQuest and articles were found using an internal search engine. Terms used within the search engine included but were not limited to: travel, tourism, The United States, American, workers, labour, steamer, immigration, migration, Bocas del Toro, white, black, native, Indigenous, inhabitant, race, and The United Fruit Company. In addition, magazines that were circulated widely in North America such as Harpar's Bazaar and National Geographic were also used in the data collection process and accessed through the magazines' online archives.

In addition, historical data collection was also completed using autobiographical novels of Americans living and visiting Panama during this time period. Most of these autobiographical novels also function as travel guides for American tourists, who were interested in visiting the Canal Zone from 1907-1914 during construction. These historical novels included The Canal Zone Pilot: Guide to the Republic of Panama and Classified Business Directory (Bienkowski & Haskins, 1908), The Zone Policeman 88: A Close Range Study of the Panama Canal and its Workers (Franck, 1913), Glimpses of Panama and the Canal (McCarty, 1913), Fifty Years at Panama: 1861-1911 (Robinson, 1911), and Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and the Yucatan (Stephens, 1841). Autobiographical novels were selected from the references of David McCullough's 1977 book The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914, as well as scholarly articles that focused on the historical development of the Panama Canal Zone (Frenkel, 2002; Frenkel, 1992; Scott, 2016).

The second period of data collection focused on contemporary travel literature both in print and online. In particular, the contemporary time period for tourism emerged in Panama after the United States government removed President Noriega from power in 1989. For this reason the contemporary data collection of travel literature focused on the years 1990 to present. The same newspaper sources were used as the historical period in order to facilitate a comparison of travel narratives. These sources include, The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Chicago Tribune, The Los Angeles Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Atlanta Constitution, The Washington Post, Toronto Star, Globe and Mail, The Guardian and The Observer. In addition to these sources a variety of other print sources were also utilized, such as popular magazines Harpar's Bazaar, National Geographic, Conde
Access to magazine and newspaper articles was provided through each publication’s website and internal search engine. Data collection also focused on travel guides specific to Panama including Fodors, Rough Guides, and The Lonely Planet. Online sources focused on travel blogs including Nomadic Matt, The Blonde Abroad, WikiTravel, and Trip Advisor. Local Panamanian news and blog sites such as The Bocas Breeze, The Panama Guide, Panama Newsroom, The Bulletin Panama, and The Visitor Panama were also utilized. Finally, data was collected from the official tourism website of Panama (Visitpanama.com) as well as both tourism websites for Bocas del Toro (bocasdeltoro.com & bocasdeltoro.travel). Magazine, blogs, and guidebooks were chosen due to their brand popularity and inclusion in various academic journal articles and discussions on travel literature. In all cases the contemporary data collection focused on the descriptions of people and place in Panama, as well as advice for travellers and potential expatriates on what to expect in the Isthmus.

In addition, contemporary autobiographical travel narratives were also collected for this study. The authors of these texts were often residential tourists based in Panama City or Bocas del Toro that wanted to share their experiences and advice regarding the migration and settlement of tourists in Panama. These books include, Your complete Panama Expat Guide: The Tell It Like It Is Guide to Relocate, Escape, and Start Over in Panama 2016 (Acero, 2016), Don’t Kill The Cow Too Quick: An Ex-Pat’s Adventures Homesteading in Panama (Henderson, 2004), Superstition, Pirates, Ghosts, and Folklore of Bocas del Toro, Panama (Henderson, 2012), Island Experiences (Matrishon, 2013), The Gringo Guide to Panama: What to know Before You Go (Murphy, 2013), Paradise Delayed: Our New Lives in the wild of Bocas del Toro, Panama (Usher, 2013), and Eurisko Sails West: A Year in Panama (McBride, 2012). These autobiographical books were selected from the Amazon website with search terms such as Panama, Life in Panama, Bocas del Toro, Boquete, Panama City, and tourism in Panama.

Articles that were selected from modern and archival sources were coded for themes using a manual discourse analysis. Firstly, passages of discourse determined to be important were highlighted by the researcher and placed into a word document. Secondly, discourse was manually coded for themes considered to be important to broader discussions of migration, tourism, racism, spatiality, and identity as informed by academic
discussion in the field of geography. This resulted in the final themes of governance, hygiene, infrastructure, tourism, resource development, labour, Indigenous representation, cultural imperialism, escapism, and the modern celebration of colonialism. The purpose of thematic analysis in this circumstance was to illustrate a congruent relationship between the discourses present in archival and contemporary publications, and how these discourses may influence the expectations, perspectives, and actions of migrant populations from the 1880s until 2017. This form of analysis was selected because it allows for a comparison across data sets to identify patterns and relationships. (Petty et al., 2012, p. 381).

In February and March of 2018, I conducted a research trip to Panama City and Bocas del Toro over a two-week period. During this trip, I visited various sites that were considered important to narratives of Panamanian nation building such as the Miraflores Locks, Panama Canal Museum, Ancón, and Panama Viejo. In Bocas del Toro, I visited the Tourism Authority Office, Bastimientos Town, and The Red Frog Beach Resort. My data collection methods included participant observation, photography, informal unstructured interviews, and the collection of tourism literature. Field notes were taken at the end of each day, with special attention directed towards interpersonal discussions and the presentation of Panama’s national history in government sponsored tourism sites. I met all of the participants for informal unstructured interviews at these and other locations popular with international tourists, including the Bocas del Toro airport and Casco Viejo. For this reason, participants for the interviews were gathered through unplanned encounters. In all circumstances I identified myself as a researcher and asked for verbal consent before engaging in an interview with participants. Interviews lasted from 15 minutes to 60 minutes. Tourism literature was collected from the Tourism Authority office, airports, hotels, and museums. The data collected from interviews, participant observation, and tourism literature was also coded using a thematic analysis (Petty et al, 2012). The same manual process of discourse analysis was used to identify and organize relevant discourse into themes from interviews and field notes as the discourse analysis of archival and modern travel literature.
Figure 4: Aerial View of Bocas del Toro Archipelago: Kyla Egan (March, 2018)
Chapter Three: “Panama Under the Stars and Stripes” Archival Newspapers and Magazines from 1880-1950

3.1 The Function of Newspapers in Imperial Nation Building

Archival newspapers were chosen for this study due to their role as the predominant public medium during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In particular, federal policies instituted during the nineteenth century established the subsidization of newspaper transportation through the national post service (John, 2000). The United States government also promoted communication among national editors by implementing the free exchange of newspapers between companies (John, 2000). As a result of these initiatives, reports from geographically distant cities and states were included in newspapers that previously focused on local events (John, 2000). For the first time, American citizens were regularly informed on events and opinions from other areas of the United States (Schudson, 1991). By 1840, approximately 40 million newspapers were transmitted through the mail, although researchers indicate that the number of readers were much greater due to the communal use of each text (John, 2000). The newspaper had become a source to join American readers across the nation. The growth of the newspaper industry due to the transformation of printing technology and development of the national post service also changed the way community was understood. Previously, newspapers were used to develop local communities by supporting the connection between the individual reader and the region in which they lived (Nord, 2001). In particular, newspapers promoted events, news, and even gossip that joined individuals in common interest (Nord 2001).

For colonies of the United States, a similar process of connection and community took place (Schudson, 1991; Nord 2001). In the context of Panama, reports from the Isthmus allowed readers to feel included in discussions of economic, political, and social affairs, despite their geographical distance from these events at home in the United States (Schudson, 1991). As a result, readers of domestic newspapers imagined Panama as part of the United States and white-collar workers in The Canal Zone as members of their American community. The progression of transportation technology and development of national systems facilitated the rapid transmission of messages from Panama across
geographic distances. For example in 1906, three years after the acquisition of The Panama Canal Zone by the United States, President Theodore Roosevelt completed a diplomatic tour of Panama and Puerto Rico. This event was the first state visit outside of the United States by a sitting president (McCullough, 1977). Journalists and photographers followed President Roosevelt to the Isthmus, documenting his encouraging words towards the still struggling engineering project. On November 15, a photograph was published that showed President Roosevelt manning a large steam shovel in a white linen suit (McCullough, 1977). The circulation of this photograph in conjunction with the publication of President Roosevelt’s encouraging speeches in major newspapers across the United States was considered essential to boosting the morale of the American public in regards to slowly progressing Panama Canal project (McCullough, 1977).
Due to these factors, the journalistic dissemination of Panamanian information was essential in the public support of The Canal Zone as territory of the United States both materially and conceptually. The construction of the Canal, migration of American workers, and subsequent development of American tourism to the region was portrayed positively in national newspapers for mass audiences (McCullough, 1977; Nord, 2001; Salvatore, 1998). For this reason, the stories that appeared in American newspapers regarding Panama and American citizens of the isthmus were an incredibly important factor for the geographical imaginations underpinning nation building in the United States.
Newspapers were responsible for the transmission of images and narratives from Panama to the United States fostered public support for the Panama Canal Zone project. In particular, the power of the newspaper was incredibly important to elite populations who were able to discuss and encourage a variety of actions through the printing press (John, 2000). In relation to Panama, newspapers allowed government officials and nationalistic reporters to portray the struggling Canal Zone as a suburban ‘paradise’, a perfect setting to raise a family and find well paying work for white American men. For business interests, newspapers often included information that speculated upon the resources lying in Panama, “The Republic is almost entirely undeveloped and in the evolution of the future I think there could be many changes for Americans and others to make money” (Carpenter, 1905). As time progressed and The Canal Zone became increasingly habitable, newspapers published advice on how to travel to and within the Panamanian isthmus for upper class tourists. A travel writer for the New York Times writes addresses tourists in 1949, “The fundamental confusion concerns South America itself, its basic geography and characteristics. The best advice for potential travelers being this: get out your map and take a good look at it before you pack up all your old misconceptions and set out for South America” (New York times, 1949).

Tourism developed in conjunction with streamliners and accommodation in the isthmus, with advertisements for these services being increasingly circulated around the United States (Duque, 1912). For these reasons, elite business interests including tourism, resource development, and political propaganda were reliant on the newspaper industry’s interpretations of the Panama Canal. These stories appealed to many readers, but in particular sought the interest of elite populations who possessed the financial means to travel to Panama, invest in the Isthmus, and support the political parties responsible for the engineering success.

The discourses pertaining to Panama in newspapers from the United States, Canada, Britain, and Panama are important to the study of human geography. In particular, the popularity of newspaper articles regarding Panama spurred substantial migration between the United States and the Isthmus (Salvatore, 1998; Scott, 2016). Economically, white-collar workers from the United States were attracted to the Panama Canal Zone because of the employment opportunities and high quality of life that was advertised in newspapers.
An author from *National Geographic* describes life and work for Americans in the Zone:

"People accept Zone jobs as much for the commissary privileges as for the wage. Commissaries are government-operated stores where workers and their families may buy foodstuffs and supplies of all kinds practically at cost. With high school plays, its lodge meetings, and its bridge club social, life within the Zone is completely self-contained. I have talked with Americans who had lived in the Canal Zone for more than thirty years and yet could not speak Spanish" (National Geographic, 1941, p. 593).

The population of short-term visitors and tourists that migrated to the isthmus each year substantially increased throughout the twentieth century in conjunction with the growth of media attention. From 1907 onwards, reports that positively described the Isthmus inspired tourists to gaze upon the changes made to Panama for themselves,

"The desire to see the great work being unfolded across the Isthmus is a strong one with many Americans. In this vast country there are plenty of things to admire and to wonder at, so people need to be reminded of the canal as a wonder of the world " (Panama Star & Herald, 1910).

The advertisements and reports which appeared in popular newspapers also contributed to the growth of transportation systems, such as steamliners, airplane routes, and post service, that made travel and communication possible between the United States and Panama (The Chicago Tribune, 1935; The New York Times, 1919). Politically, newspapers were the principal medium for government officials to disseminate their political agenda in Panama to the public. Support for the questionable intervention and acquisition of the Canal Zone by the United States, as well as political support for funding the Canal project was principally gained through large newspapers (Nord, 2001). In 1919 the *Panama Star and Herald* commented on the imperialist actions of Theodore Roosevelt in separating Panama from Colombia, "While there might be controversy of the acquisitions of the Canal Zone there can be none about the material and sanitary results obtained (1919, Panama Star and Herald). For this reason, a discourse analysis of newspapers is essential in understanding the narratives that inspired human migration from the United States to Panama.

For American, Panamanian, and international readers, the construction of the Panama Canal and residential Zone were considered a triumph over nature by the United
States government (Frenkel, 1996). For many tourists the primary reason for travel to the region was to see the transformation of topography and built forms of the Canal. In particular, the implementation of sanitary and infrastructure systems within the Panamanian tropics was considered an important change to the livability of the region and colonization initiatives by the United States (Sutter, 2016). Outside of the Canal Zone in rural areas of Panama, newspapers often reported and encouraged the settlement of American residents. These discourses focused on the ability for new settlers to tame their environmental surroundings and thrive within the challenging tropical ecosystems (Carpenter, 1914). In 1914 the New York Times told readers that for American migrants in Panama “The task was to bring into a wilderness scourged by dreadful diseases a new civilization and regime” (New York Times, 1914).

3.2 “Panama Awaits Americanizing”: Geographic Imaginaries of American Governance in the Panama Canal Zone

Panama was often represented as needing American imperialism and innovation by popular newspapers in the United States. Initially, discourses referring to the efficacy of each consecutive administration and controversy regarding sovereign possession of the Zone emerged during the French occupancy of the Canal Zone in the late nineteenth century. In 1877, the French Navy Lieutenant Lucien Wyse travelled in the name of the public company La Societe Civile Internationale Canal Interocéanique to negotiate a treaty with the Colombian government, including present day Panama. As a founding member of the public company, and under request by bureaucrat Ferdinand De Lesseps, Lieutenant Wyse negotiated a treaty known as the Wyse Concession, which granted exclusive rights to Societe Civile to build a Canal through Panamanian territory. After obtaining permission, the founders of the French Company sought funding for the project over the next four years and commenced construction in 1881 (McCullough, 1977). As Societe Civile initiated the plans for the world’s largest engineering project, American newspapers assumed an interest in the daily operations of the Canal, as well as Panama’s transforming landscapes. Initially, newspapers negatively described the political, economic, and physical attributes of the Isthmus. A writer from the Chicago Tribune stated upon his return from Panama in 1881, “If any of your friends think of going to Panama, advise them not to. I never saw a
more sickly, poverty stricken, and forsaken people” (1881, p.6). A writer from the *San Francisco Chronicle* stated that, “No one can be tolerably safe, except for the half-indian half-negro natives” (1885, p.5). Due to the tropical temperature and 8 month rainy season, the Isthmus was known for its mosquitos, yellow fever, and malaria, which was blamed on Panama’s “miasmatic wilderness” (Carpenter, 1898, p. 28). Panama’s tropical landscapes were represented as dangerous to white populations, “It rains ten months in the years and a poisonous insect lurks under every stone and naked ignorant blacks are almost your only companions” (San Francisco Chronicle, 1902, p.4). The political characterization of Panama’s government was also regarded as tumultuous due to the prevalence of rebellion against Colombia’s colonial forces and conflict in the Central American region. Despite receiving independence from Spain in 1821 and subsequently joining Colombia, many Panamanians objected to a new constitution formed in 1843 that diminished Panama’s political agency by Bogota (Anguizola, et al, 2018). For this reason, conflict between Panamanian political interest groups and the Colombian government was common during the nineteenth century. An author from the *New York Times* commented in 1890, “All that can be said is this, that taking into consideration the extent of Central America and its inhabitants, the disturbances there are entirely out of proportion to the statistical conditions” (New York Times, 1890). American commentators also freely expressed criticism of the French company’s progress in construction of the canal and financial expenditure. At the time, the French project had experienced delays due to the unique topography, climate, and diseases of the tropics, which posed a challenge to the success of the Canal. The French were indisputably unprepared for the rainy season in Panama that contributed to landslides, rusted equipment, and the proliferation of mosquito populations. American Lieutenant William Kimball who toured the French Panama Canal Zone described the persistent challenges experienced by the French government as, “Unforeseen and vexatious, as well as stupendous and apparently insuperable, difficulties are constantly occurring” (McCullough, 1977, p. 180). Throughout the late nineteenth century the mortality rate due to malaria and yellow fever skyrocketed (Robinson, 1907). As many as 200 workers died every month from mosquito born disease, with infected persons only facing a 50% survival rate (McCullough, 1977, p. 138-142, 161). The poor living and working conditions of the Canal project impacted the reputation of the Zone, known to
many as the “white man’s graveyard” (McCullough, 1977, p. 140). By 1894, the French had made little impact in the construction of the Canal and depleted available funding for the project. Considered a national embarrassment to the country, another public French company, Compagnie Nouvelle de Canal de Panama, took over the Canal for the next nine years, with little success. American newspapers did not withhold their negative commentary regarding the perceived failure of the Societe Civile and subsequently Compagnie Nouvelle. Sir Henry Tyler from The New York Times wrote in 1895 “I will not dwell on the unfortunate history of the canal which is only too well known or upon the previous robber, jobbery and reckless waste of money and material connected with it” (New York Times, 1895). The author goes on to write, “I will not dwell on the lavish expenditure which was incurred in the earlier history of the canal” (Tyler, 1895). Even decades later, American newspapers continued to describe the era of French occupations as an “an orgy of extravagance and mismanagement, an epic of toil and courage, a tragedy of disease and death” (Ybarra, 1931). The combination of discourses regarding bureaucratic ineptitude by the French, constant revolution in Central American politics, and an uncontrollable health crisis created a picture of Panama for many Americans as an undesirable space to live, work, and travel during the late nineteenth century.

The change of governance in the Canal Zone from French to American control was accompanied by a transformation of narratives appearing in popular newspapers. In 1902, The United States purchased the land used for the interoceanic canal from the bankrupt Compagnie Nouvelle. However, after seeking the necessary rights from the Colombian government and signing the Hay-Herran Treaty in the same year, the Senate of Colombian failed to ratify the agreement. As a result, Theodore Roosevelt supported Panamanian rebels in a bid for independence from Colombia in 1903 (McCullough, 1977). In particular, President Roosevelt commanded his naval ships to impede Colombian interference during the acquisition of sovereignty by Panama. Panama succeeded in its bid for independence and rewarded the United States by signing the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, which gave the United States control over the interoceanic canal in November 1903. Although, this military action by The United States was a result of Colombia’s hesitancy for American control in the region, newspapers commentators had long anticipated interference by the American government in the French Canal Zone. As early as 1885, The Washington Post remarked,
“Have we the right to interfere at Panama? Is there any treaty recently concluded with the United States or Colombia by which the US government has full right to land troops and guns at Panama and guns at any time? These questions not only concern the sovereignty and full integrity of Colombia but also rights and public liberties of citizens of Panama” (DeMeza, 1885, p.2)

As the Washington Post questioned if the United States should involve itself on the Isthmus, the San Francisco Chronicle encouraged the idea of American influence in the Canal Zone,

“Finally it is absolutely a prerequisite not to withdraw from The United States but rather take advantage of its immense power and gigantic influence to conclude with its assistance and with its help the perforation of the Isthmus to trade and advance under its shadow and always remember that the road for future advancement of Spanish America does not lie in the direction of Europe but in the direction of the stars of the North” (1889, p.8).

Discussions of American control in Panama Canal Zone had started to occur in newspapers shortly after the arrival of the French on the isthmus, in some circumstances nearly twenty years prior to American occupation. Once the Panama Canal Zone was officially in the possession of the United States government in 1903, newspapers increasingly covered the decisions of the American government and progress in the Canal Zone. Initially, newspapers focused on the controversial manner of territorial obtainment by President Roosevelt. However, media attention then focused on the future of The Panama Canal Zone and its relevance to American imperial expansion.

Interestingly, the characterization of the American government in regard to Panama often differed depending on the origin of the newspaper. Although American writers frequently celebrated imperial expansion, Canadian and British periodicals were much more critical of the United States government than American media. In particular, newspapers from Britain and Canada were quick to condemn President Roosevelt’s interference in the succession of Panama from Colombia. The Globe and Mail wrote in 1903,

“The manner in which The United States has treated the republic of Colombia with regard to the Isthmus of Panama has startled many of their best citizens and evoked protests as high minded as any that history can furnish”(p.1).
In the British newspaper *The Guardian*, America’s progress at the Panama Canal was representative of the ‘deficiencies’ that the citizens and government of the United States possessed. Due to improper equipment, mudslides, and mosquito borne disease, the United States faced many of the same challenges as the French in the Canal Zone. For nearly four years the American government failed to make headway on the engineering project. The anxiety and disappointed during this period are reflected in the article appearing in Britain’s *The Guardian* in 1905,

“A good many Americans are beginning to wish that the Isthmus of Panama did not exist. There would then be no question of digging a canal across it and public exposure of some of their national deficiencies. They are a great people with some considerable political virtues but they have one grave political failing they are nearly always in a hurry. They are impatient of obstacles they incline towards instantaneous and annihilating remedies they rarely make allowance for the complexity of affairs and their anxiety to get results and obtain the millennium is such that their plans and policies are either makeshift or heroic. The business of constructing the Panama Canal very aptly illustrates these trifling defects.” (Brooke, 1905, p.5).

Although Britain and its colonies suggested American citizens were opposed to the idea of Panamanian occupation by the United States government, American newspapers focused positively on the future of the Canal Zone under new governance. In 1904 *The Boston Globe* wrote,

“Panama awaits Americanizing. The ruthless path of time leads away from the weeks and we look forward to the new isthmus to the new Panama under the stars and strips and forget these other scenes in the hopes and expectations of better ones to comes.” (1904, p.7.).
American newspapers such as the *Boston Globe* continued to characterize the governance of the United States in the Canal Zone as competent and welcomed leader, despite practical difficulties with infrastructure construction.

“Uncle Sam’s big stick will prevent revolutions, the natives are anxious that their resources be developed. Large areas will be thrown open to settlement and lands may be leased or bought at low prices” (Carpenter, 1905, p. SM3).

Faith in the United States governing ability was more apparent by American newspapers than the British empire and its colonies. In particular, American journalists supported a general level of optimism, despite little progress seen during the formative years of the American Canal Zone.
Commentary regarding the governing ability of the United States increased with the development of The Panama Canal. Despite a slow start, time had improved America’s chances of success due to significant technological and scientific advancements. Scientists had discovered mosquitos were the cause of malaria and yellow fever, allowing government officials to implement hygiene initiatives to reduce infection. By 1907, rates of disease had significantly decreased in populations of white Americans and proper sanitation systems were installed throughout the neighborhoods of the Canal (Sutter, 2016). Zone officials ensured that the houses of Americans were sprayed with insecticide, painted white, and contained screens on the porches and windows (Carse & Keiner, 2016).

After a slow start, the construction of the Panama Canal also progressed due to implementation of new methods by head project manager John Stevens. The engineer had discovered that the key to transporting earth, men, and supplies in large quantities was creating trains with heavier rails and strengthened bridges (McCullough, 1977, p. 471). Trains were suddenly able to dispose of dirt quickly and efficiently outside of the Canal. As a result of these technological and scientific advancements, newspapers celebrated the Panama Canal as a marvel of modern society and governance. In particular, the Canal was described as so successful that its effects resulted in, “such prosperity is as no Panamanian ever dreamed of before we came” (Palmer, 1909). In particular, newspapers characterized the United States’ involvement in constructing the Canal as a benefit to the Panamanian people,

“Panama signed a treaty with The United States, which immediately ended its troubles for all time. For then it became a protectorate of The United States when since then has assisted largely in choosing its presidents, cleaned up its cities, and constructed to pay enough money to make the most independent country, financially, in the world” (The New York Times, 1913).

As newspapers praised the recent accomplishments of American governance in the Canal Zone, news editors simultaneously allowed for the criticism of Panamanian authorities. In the New York Times, Panamanian officials were characterized as infantile and discourteous towards Americans while discussing the recent trial of an American workers in Panama, “Generally speaking the Panamanian is more likely to bulldoze the American than the other way around. The steadily improving conduct of the American employee toward the little
brown brother is above reproach” (Palmer, 1909). In the same year *The Atlanta Constitution* ran a story that stated,

“Panama bidding for a spanking, little republic not courteous to United States. Panamanians cry for more- more money! They would like operas the year round and circuses and roof gardens and everybody's brother, cousin and father in law in office. Natives want the easy life. As a result of the prosperity no original Panamanian wants to work. The little Republic is a spoiled child who knows how to play on his weak side. “You are hurting me cries the child!” (Palmer, 1909, p.2).

Figure 7: “Panama Bidding for a Spanking” (Palmer, 1909, p.2)

In many newspaper articles of the time, Panamanian authorities were represented as standing in opposition to the plans of the United States and ungrateful for the opportunities that America had provided. This narrative differed significantly from the general characterization of American leadership in the country, which was portrayed as
unequivocally interested in the progress of the Canal. In 1906 *National Geographic* author Peter Shonts described American leadership and workers to be as integral to the development of the Panama Canal as the material supplies for construction,

"In other works he (American) puts more brains into the product of his hands because he is a citizen of a free country and his mind has been enlarged and his ambition stimulated by active participation in the duties of citizenship". (Shonts, 1906, p.56)

Evident from this example, the characterization of American governance differs significantly from representations of Panamanian leadership in popular newspapers.

As the twentieth century progressed, the representation of American control in the Canal Zone as beneficial to both Panama and the United States helped in the development of self-celebratory narratives. Since the successful construction of Canal, discussions in American newspapers regarding Panama as “filthy”, “worthless”, and “exhausted” had been transformed to illustrate the value of the isthmus to American nation building (Palmer, 1909). Previous criticism of the United States military intervention in the region and discussions of ethical engagement also disappeared from popular narratives. Instead, negative commentary that had littered the pages of newspapers during French occupation and early American intervention had been replaced by positive interpretations of the Panama Canal Zone. By 1931 the *New York Times* described the Panamanian region as a “relegated dreamland” and “a lasting miracle” (Ybarra, 1931). The author continues by writing “Twenty five years ago it was only a dream, and visitors today still rubs his eyes in astonishment” (Ybarra, 1931). In 1946 the *Los Angeles Times* comments that, “The Canal Zone is still the aristocrat of our overseas outposts” (Harkins, 1946, p. D6). Despite early reservations toward the engineering project, many American newspapers printed celebratory commentary regarding the Panama Canal Zone later in the twentieth century. In particular, as more time passed between the initial issues experienced by the United States government in Panama and the completion of the project, newspapers increased the frequency and intensity of praise for American governance and nation building in the Panama Canal Zone.
3.3 Overcoming “The White Man’s Graveyard”: Hygiene and Infrastructure Initiatives in the Panama Canal Zone

In newspapers of the early twentieth century, narratives of exceptional American governance were often related to hygiene initiatives and infrastructure development. The changing condition of hygiene and sanitation in the Panama Canal Zone was a key component in transforming the American colony into a successful space of production. In addition to the commonality of tropical disease between 1881 and 1907, the poor quality and overcrowding of state rooming houses exacerbated the deficient living and safety standards already faced by migrant laborers from China, The West Indies, and Latin America in the Canal Zone (Franck, 1913). Unlike the houses of American workers, poorly built tenements allowed for the proliferation of mosquitos, which contributed to the rapid transmission of malaria and yellow fever among the blue-collar population (Cohen, 1971; Lasso, 2013). Ill health on the Isthmus was not only a result of mosquito borne disease but also improper sewage, garbage, and water systems. Similar to the experiences of the Societe Civile and Compagnie Nouvelle in Panama, the American government struggled to create the necessary sanitation systems needed to sustain a healthy workforce. As a result of these governing deficiencies, a significant portion of laborers died or became ill on the project. The poor reputation of the Canal Zone caused an author from the Boston Globe to comment “There is no doubt that the isthmus has a score of Americans under ground to every one who is now living upon it” (Carpenter, 1898, p. 28). Despite the dismal rates of disease, infection, and death in the Canal Zone, most newspapers remained optimistic
regarding the future of health initiatives and sanitation in Panama. The *National Geographic* writer Peter Shonts commented in 1905, “within a year it may be confidently predicted Panama will be a city well watered, well sewered, well paved, and clean and healthful.” In 1906 The *New York Times* writer Stephen Chalmers also followed suit and praised the American government for what could be achieved,

“It is true that at present the admirable sanitary improvements effected by The United States authorities have not succeeded in completely stamping out contagious diseases. But Americans did it in Cuba the English did it in the old fever trap Jamaica and the mortality rate would indicate the Americans are doing it here.” (Chalmers, 1906)

For the American media, the ability for the United States government to create a habitable settlement in Panama was also reflective of the establishment of civilization in the tropics. For this reason, hygiene and sanitation initiatives were key in the conversion of Panama to an American space. As illustrated by the *Chicago Tribune*, hygienic efforts in Panama, both inside and outside the Canal Zone, was considered as step in modernization efforts.” The modern missionary who founds little communities in foreign countries where the humanities and hygienic are taught is a spreader of civilization regardless of creed” (Palmer, 1909, p. 7). The author, Frederick Palmer, goes on to relate cleanliness with civility, “Barbarism... scenes of disgust I might repeat to the point of nausea; utter lack of sanitation, of care of body as well as mind, exposes a scrofulous people to all the tropical diseases, which keeps the death list pretty well balanced with the birth rate” (1909, p.7). This example illustrates the importance placed on hygiene in American imaginaries regarding the transformational factor of the Panama Canal Zone and surrounding territory.

The transformation of health infrastructure and thus positive changes to the physical well being of the Zone’s workers was considered a national triumph in leadership, organization, and technological advancement. In 1919 an author from The *New York Times* wrote, “particularly I want to tell about the cleanliness of the our zone, always impressive as a proof of what can be accomplished by American methods in the tropics.” The author continues, “While there might be controversy of the acquisitions of the Canal Zone there can be none about the material and sanitary results obtained” (New York Times, 1919). The Zone's new reputation as a success story of health and prosperity emphasized for many newspapers the capability of the American government abroad. This perspective on
the Zone’s hygiene was particularly apparent in comparisons to other urban areas of Panama with predominantly West Indian and Afro-Latino populations. For Colón and Panama City, American columnists negatively characterized different sanitation and hygiene practices implemented by the national Panamanian government. In 1927, The *New York Times* commented, “Then there is the Canal Zone by far the most picturesque sight on the isthmus. Where Colon is dirty and sordid Panama is clean, picturesque, beautiful and tinged with patina of romance that ever four more centuries could not rub out” (Lee, 1927). The positive representation of the Canal Zone as a space of health and comfort in news media, particularly in relation to other areas of Panama, was adopted as an important aspect of its character. In particular, newspapers commonly mentioned the sanitation and hygiene of the Canal Zone as an essential facet in the transformation of inhabitable Panamanian land to thriving American metropolis.

“...in the tropics there is land of inexhaustible fertility but death lurked on every hand. Hostile natives, wild beasts, and hug poisonous reptiles best the path insects helped to discourage population. Then came the sanitation of The Panama Canal Zone converting it from one of the most unhealthy places in the world to a region as safe as any.” (Globe and Mail, 1925, p.4).

Decades after the implementation of hygienic systems newspapers were still mentioning the accomplishment in their articles. In 1931 The *New York Times* described the Zone as the “spotless town set in the midst of a tropical landscape” and in 1946, the *Los Angeles* times commented that cleanliness is “what makes The Canal Zone a paradise (Harkins, p. D8)”.

The accomplishments of the United States government in terms of sanitary outcomes, was thus a considerable factor in the evolution of Canal Zone representation, as a space of danger to a space of paradise.

The American government also ensured that there was housing, recreational offices, and places of business for white inhabitants of The Zone. The construction of these buildings was considered essential to supporting the morale of white-collar workers by head supervisor, Major Goathels. The *New York Times* described The Canal Zone in 1914, “the laborers all receive confortable, furnished houses, shops, railways buildings, hotels, restaurants, clubhouses, and living quarters sprang up along the canal” (The New York Times, 1914). Major Goathels believed that by recreating a sense of place in the built form
of the Canal Zone, American workers would be more likely to settle in Panama. The implementation of leisure activities was also important in this regard, David McCullough tells the story of a clerk informing the Major that there were no funds allocated for a baseball team, with Goethals replying, "charge it to the sanitary expenses" (1977, p. 478). The attempt to create an American community in the tropics was commonly considered successful. As years passed, workers and journalists alike commented on the wholesome and picturesque impression of The Canal Zone. The physical transformation of infrastructure to suit American expectations, including baseball fields and dancehalls, was used as the primary example of bringing civilization to the tropics by the American government. In 1927 a writer commented in the New York Times,

"An investment in national prestige the canal pays most of all. Here is an intensely American community stretched across a zone from ocean to ocean in the very heart of Latin America. In this zone are reproduced in their varied forms the best from the institutions and the ideals of our own civilization" (Lee, 1927).

The manicured rows of orderly houses, paved streets, and quaint shops in Panama set an example for future American suburbs. The combination of successful infrastructure and sanitation and stylistically different housing was used to illustrate material and conceptual differences between the United States and Panama, “The lesson may not fit directly into the esthetic ideal of the Latin American. But it will supplement his cultural ideal with examples of material progress the formula of which he has never quite mastered” (Lee, 1927). The construction of infrastructure systems, buildings, and the Canal itself were commonly mentioned in American newspapers along with sanitary developments. In many articles, the progress made in construction was attributed to the personal characteristics of American workers. For some commentators, the success in the Canal Zone was a strong example of how the governance of the United States and values of the nation were superior to other countries. For this reason the progress illustrated through hygiene and infrastructure advancement were not only seen as an example of good governance by the United States, but also representative of superior qualities by the nation, its leaders, and its citizens.
Figure 9: A sketch from the *Boston Globe* of American homes in the Panama Canal Zone (Carpenter, 1905, p.SM3)
3.4 Governance in a Tropical Landscape

The successful development of the Panama Canal Zone from 1903-1914 supported narratives of American imperial superiority in the tropics (Salvatore, 1998; Moore, 2013). In particular, the implementations of hygiene, infrastructure, and technological initiatives transformed the geographic imaginary of the Panama Canal Zone from a place of “danger and discomfort” to an “idyllic colony” for white Americans (Frenkel, 1996, p. 324; McCullough, 1977, p. 610). Travel narratives represented the construction of the Panama Canal and improved sanitary conditions as the successful defeat of a notoriously difficult tropical environment (Frenkel, 1996; Moore, 2013, Salvatore, 1998). Moore explains the role of nature in discussions of American imperial superiority,

“The Panama Canal was heralded as the triumph of technology, national might, and sheer determination to subdue chaotic nature- that is the isthmian zone- that had prevented the realization of explorers and colonists centuries old desire for a passage between the seas” (Moore, 2013, p. 6).

Travel writers framed the transformation of Panama’s landscapes by the United States’ as a task that other colonial actors were unable to previously complete (McCullough, 1977). This narrative also facilitated the comparison of the United States’ Canal to monuments of other empires,

“The spoil from the canal prism, it was said, would be enough to build a Great Wall of China from San Francisco to New York. The spoil would be enough to build sixty-three pyramids the size of the great Pyramid of Cheops” (McCullough, 1977, p. 529).

Thus, the engineering and infrastructure initiatives implemented by the United States government in Panama was represented in travel narratives as an imperial achievement over nature, as well as the conceptual rise of the American empire. These narratives were used in American nation building discourse to illustrate the supremacy of the United States on the world stage.

3.5 “Linking the Americas”: The Development of US-Panama Tourism

In 1904, the *Panama Star and Herald* predicted that Panama “will be the most popular resort for visitors, tourists, and sightseers on the map of the world. Within a short
time Panama will have thousands and thousands of visitors to see the work on the canal” (Panama Star & Herald, 1904, p.1). The sheer enormity of the Panama Canal would attract visitors from around the globe starting in the early twentieth century. American newspapers contributed substantially to Panamanian tourism by helping craft imaginaries of the Panama Canal as an attractive and impressive site to visit. In conjunction with the establishment of sanitation initiatives and infrastructure development, the Panama Canal’s tourism industry grew rapidly from 1907 onwards (McCullough, 1977). Many American visitors were attracted to the Isthmus by descriptions of the “picturesque Canal Zone” and “sheer enormity of the waterway” (Boston Globe, 1912). In conjunction with the many articles printed in newspapers on sanitation, infrastructure, and urban planning of the Isthmus, tourism companies also used popular newspapers to place their advertisements. The platform that newspapers offered for tourism companies, in conjunction with frequent journalism articles, greatly increased the popularity of travel to Panama. The Panama Star and Herald comments on how American-Panamanian travel had been impacted by newspapers when it writes, “many are attracted also by the advertisement which Panama has received in the states as a winter resort through its freedom from the unhealthiness which makes so many beautiful tropical places undesirable” (Duque, 1912, p.6). The establishment of cruise lines by steamship companies also played an important role in the transportation of tourists. In particular, the frequency of departure, quality of accommodation, and competition among lines allowed consumers a less expensive and more comfortable trip to and from Panama. In 1910 the Panama Star and Herald author Carlos Duque wrote,

“The steamship companies are doing their part in bringing Panama into easy communication with other cities and if the attractions of the isthmus are exploited as they might be from the business point of view there should be a strong tide of tourists coming our way which would swell as the place gets better known (1910, p.6)”

The busiest ports of departure for American tourists were that of New York City and San Francisco. As mentioned, many travellers chose to go visit the West coast of the United States by going through the Panama Canal, rather than crossing by land. For this reason the development of steamships lines was important for both travel to Panama and mobility between the United States’ coasts. In 1913, the San Francisco Chronicle commented that,
“This season tourists will have the opportunity to cruise in the West Indies and the Isthmus of Panama on larger and more luxurious steamers than ever before. The volume of tourist travel next winter promises to pale all previous records, this remarkable winter migration” (1913, p.7). For Panama, steamship lines running from the United States to the Isthmus reflected the unique relationship of these two countries. No other nation pursued the opportunity of Panamanian tourism development like the United States. This is particularly clear in an excerpt from *The Observer*, where the author, Francis Hirst, reflects, “I received a letter describing the thrill of the Panama Canal which got me wondering again why there is no regular passenger service from great Britain to the Panama Coast” (1921, p. 5).

![Figure 10: (The New York Times, November 7, 1909)](image)

As the twentieth century progressed transportation between the United States and Panama continued to develop with the introduction of airline routes. In 1929 the *Atlanta Constitution* declared that the ability to “link the Americas by air” was implemented “with cooperation of national governments and private capital” (McIntosh, 1929, p.G8). For the American government and investors, creating a fast and efficient pathway between The United States and Panama was an essential service to increase business capitol and public interest in the Isthmus. The continual improvement of tourist infrastructure in Panama simultaneously created and supported demand for travel to the country. The *Boston Globe*
author commented on this action, “in the year just past it is doubtful if any country in the Americas has done so much to expand its service to the tourist to add to the ease and enjoyment and variety of travel within its borders as the republic of Panama” (1941, p. B25). The implementation of a federal tourism board, transportation networks, and tourism experiences in the region illustrates a purposeful departure from the uninvolved character of the national Panamanian government in the past (San Francisco Chronicle, 1913, p. 7; Scott, 2016; McIntosh, 1929, GB). In particular, the establishment of a tourism board demonstrates the growth and importance of the American tourism industry in Panama by the mid twentieth century (Guerron-Montero, 2014).

3.6 The importance of Tourism to American Nation Building

Travel narratives that represented the Panama Canal Zone as economically and ideologically important to the United States informed the mobility of American tourists to the isthmus. As explained by Scott (2016) tourism to the region “was born symbolically and materially in the crucible of US empire building” (p. 73). The successful sanitation initiatives employed in the Panama Canal Zone by the United States government transformed the geographic imaginary of Panama to a safe space for travel (Scott, 2016; McCullough, 1977; Sutter, 2016). Travel writers capitalized on these physical changes to the Panama Canal Zone, and recommended the territory as a “must see destination” for affluent tourists (McCarty, 1913, p.49). In particular, narratives that described the Zone as an “ideal place for American populations” and the Canal as a monument of “incomprehensible size” encouraged American mobility to Panama (McCullough, 1977, p. 613, 614).

Materially, tourists were able to easily travel from the Northeast coast of the United States and Southern tip of Florida as these regions had already established transportation routes to American colonies in the tropics (Salvatore, 1998; Martin, 2013, Scott, 2016). In particular, the tourism industry of the Caribbean was able to utilize the “imperial and capitalist infrastructure”, which initially carried workers and fruit products between Caribbean nations and the United States (Scott, 2016, p. 70). The relationship between American imperial enclaves and regional tourism is particularly clear in the development
of a passenger line by The United Fruit Company. Between 1908 and 1913 The United Fruit Company created luxury ships that allowed passengers to complete a round trip to Panama in two weeks time, which facilitated accessible travel for wealthy tourists (Scott, 2016, p. 71; McCullough, 1977). For this reason, Panama’s reputation as a sanitized zone, in combination with the economic mobility networks of American corporations, facilitated the development of the Canal Zone as a tourism destination for affluent travellers (Scott, 2016; McCullough 1977; Frenkel 2002).

3.7 “Taming” a New Frontier: Resource Development and Land Ownership in Panama’s Rural Countryside

The vast majority of American populations that migrated to the Isthmus resided in the Canal Zone and adjacent urban areas. These populations were predominantly attracted to the isthmus by the many employment opportunities available to white collar American men by the United States government. US interest in the form of investment and settlement was not only focused on the canal, but also Panama’s rural countryside. In particular, American migrants sought access to the natural resources commonly discussed in popular newspapers. There were often reports in North America that Panamanian landscapes possessed “inexhaustible fertility” and were in need of development, “until the last vacant acre of her rich lands is under cultivation and the crops are coming to our shores” (Los Angeles Times, 1922). Claims of riches laying deep within the hills and jungles of the Isthmus had long been an element of popular narratives in reference to Panama, and first appeared from Christopher Columbus who had assumed, “From the readiness with which the natives traded this metal for the trinkets and implements the Spaniards offered in exchange Columbus became convinced that so much gold existed in the country that the Indians attached no special value to it” (Craggs, 1926, p.2). Similar to the tales shared by Spanish conquistadores, American newspapers also proclaimed that rural areas of the country were “unexplored but reputed to be rich in gold and valuable minerals” (Boston Globe, 1913, p. SM9). In the twentieth century discussions concerning Panama’s resources was not only limited to gold but included other undeveloped resources such as “oil, coal, minerals, timber, great gold mines, and a fertile soil that grows in abundance, vegetables
grains and fruits besides the other tropical products” (The Panama Star and Herald, 1904). The Chicago Tribune continues the description of Panama as a land of resources when the newspaper writes, “Its hills are said to contain copper, silver, and gold. It has waters in which the pearl oysters live and islands there where are supposed to be buried treasures equal to those of the Peruvian Incas” (1914).

**MONEY-MAKING ON Isthmus.**

**Chances for Americans in Real Estate, Mines and Fat Canal Jobs.**

Figure 11: Headline from the Boston Globe (Carpenter, 1905, p.SM3)

Constructions of masculinity in media informed American discussions of Panamanian resource development. In particular, writers depicted Panama’s countryside as a space requiring the paternal guidance and responsibility exercised by American men (Bobrow-Strain, 2007, p. 37). The Los Angeles Times wrote in 1893,

“The fact remains that this continent of Central and South America is rich in fortunes for young men who dare to chase them here. The fever of the Isthmus is but an accentuation of the richness of the soil. There is an over richness. The richness overflows in nauseous fever” (Edmund, 1893, p.9).

Over a decade later the Panama Star and Herald offered a similar call to male tourists,

“The young American coming to this isthmus will never do as well at the start as he might have done at home and he will never do as well if he continues to work for a salary. But if he has health and energy to climb to an independent position and work out his own fortune then the materials for doing this are at hand. Indeed Panama has numerous and wonderful resources awaiting development and there are thousands of golden opportunities for the mining expert, electrical engineer, and architect” (Duque, 1904).

The Panamanian government also encouraged stories that reported on Panama’s bountiful resources. President Amador Guerrero stated to a Boston Globe reporter in 1905 when asked about opportunities for foreign investors, “the Republic is almost entirely undeveloped and in the evolution of the future I think there will be many chances for
Americans and others to make money” (Carpenter, 1905, p. SM3). In 1914 President Porras also stated to the Boston Globe that,

“Many have hunted for those treasures and a road to old Panama and it is probable that something may be discovered there. We have some gold mines working right here in the central part of the isthmus and there are others at Darien. We know that we have copper and other minerals but the country has not been thoroughly prospected” (Carpenter, 1914, p.SM11).

The interview illustrates that the future of Panama has centered on foreign investment in natural resource development and land. The Panamanian government also encouraged the settlement of rural land by American migrant populations by shaping regulation and policy. The Boston Globe comments upon these changes in 1914, “New land laws! It will bring in populations of land owners whose estates will be comparatively small and it will lead to the immediate and active development of the country” (Carpenter, 1914, p. SM11). The material contingencies of land regulation are reflected later in the same year in The Chicago Tribune, “President Porras tells me that Americans have begun to take up lands and set out coffee plantations in the Northern part of the republic, a number of American families that have coffee estates near David. There is now at Boquete a colony of about twenty American families and five English families” (Carpenter, 1914, p. A3). The implementation of new land owning regulation, in conjunction with publicity in American newspapers, illustrates the preliminary stages of American settlement outside of The Canal Zone and growth of expatriate enclaves in the early twentieth century.
Foreigners that occupied rural Panama were often characterized as adventurous, brave, and tireless in newspapers. The valiant representation of foreign personalities was strongly related to the portrayal of Panamanian landscapes as dangerous spaces. Writers frequently commented on the unknown topography, wildlife, and disease that comprised the habitat of rural Panama. For foreign settlers and prospectors, the strange character of tropical wilderness was often recounted in a treacherous manner. A poem anonymously submitted to the *Boston Globe* reveals such a perspective,

"Beyond the Chagres River, are paths that lead to death, to fevers deadly breezes, to malarials poisonous breath, beyond the tropic foliage, where the alligator waits, is the palace of the devil, his original state. Beyond the Chagres river, are paths foreigner unknown, with a spider neath each pebble and a scorpion near each stone, tis her a boa constrictor his fatal banquet holds, and to his slimy bosom his hapless victim holds. Beyond the Chagres River lurks the panther in his lair and two hundred thousand dangers are in the noxious air, behind the trembling leaflets beneath the fallen reeds are the ever-present perils of a million different breeds. Beyond the Chagres River tis said the story's old are the paths that lead to mountains of purest virgin gold, but tis my firm conviction whatever tales they tell that beyond the Chagres river all paths lead straight to hell" (Carpenter, 1898, p. 36).

The descriptions of danger in rural Panama and the Canal Zone augmented stories of exploration and settlement by expatriates throughout the Isthmus. In 1902, *The San
*Francisco Chronicle* described the living conditions of American prospectors in Panama, “White settlers when on their mining expeditions into the interior are compelled through lack of provisions to make a meal of monkey stew and alligator steak. It rains ten months in the year and a poisonous insect lurks under every stone” (1902, p. A9). The seemingly unpleasant conditions of exploration in the interior exemplified for many the necessity of American masculinity in mapping and taming the land (Bobrow-Wilson, 2007). The characterization of landscapes as dangerous and wild (Cronon, 1995) were important to this imaginary, “The region is wild, being virgin tropical jungle miles away from any white settlement and rarely visited by the white men” (Hall, 1922, p. X16).

Although rural Panama was characterized as largely uninhabited by popular newspapers, in fact the country’s ‘wilderness’ was full of Indigenous, Afro-Panamanian, and mestizo people that spanned the Panamanian countryside. The contradiction between the inhabited land of Panama and a “terra nullius” (nobody’s land) represented in American newspapers was revealed in some articles more than others. According to the *Atlanta Constitution*, Indigenous Panamanians occupied vast areas of the Darien province,

“Various surveying expeditions have met with terrible experiences and adventures with fierce Indians. The region between South America proper and the Panama railroad is still in possession of wild people who will permit no whites to sleep on their land. The country is almost as little known to geographers as any region on the face of the earth. They [Indigenous] number about 25,000, decorate themselves with feathers and strings of crocodile teeth, and live in queer houses of reeds built on stilts” (Hill, 1895, p.4).

Indigenous guides were incredibly common and assisted with navigation and traditional knowledge to assist American prospectors, scientists, and settlers in their exploration. Yet English language newspapers continued to represent Panamanian Indigenous peoples as primitive, dangerous, and savage (Hill, 1895, p.4). In 1895 The *Atlanta Constitution* describes relations between American prospectors and Indigenous populations in the Darien Province, “various surveying expeditions have met with terrible experiences and adventures with fierce Indians. The region between South America proper and the Panama railroad still in possession of wild people who will permit no whites to sleep on their land” (Hill, 1895, p.4). In 1904 the *Chicago Tribune* expresses a similar characterization of ‘indian savagery’ with a story of cannibalism in Panama, “these Indians whose savagery sometimes takes the form of eating their enemies use poisoned arrows and are expected to prove a
difficult enemy in the dense tropical growth that covers the country” (1904, p. 4). The Chicago Tribune characterizes Indigenous populations in the same manner, “these pygmies use poison bows and arrows for hunting and regard the rare aviator who descends upon them as an unexplainable but friendly bird from the sky” (1935, p.E6). Newspapers often reinforced the representations of Indigenous people as perpetually uncivilized (McClintock, 2000), “The Indian nation in Panama not yet touched by civilization. There dwells an Indian nation that is to all intents and purposes identically the same today as it was when Columbus first discovered the western hemisphere” (1903, p.10). The dangers of the Isthmus, in terms of wildlife and inhabitants were largely overstated as described by American ‘explorers’ and newspapers.

3.8 Frontier Constructions of the Panamanian Countryside

American travel narratives characterized Panama’s rural countryside as a new frontier for American settlement and resource development (Frenkel, 1996). Similar to the East-West expansion of settlers in the United States, the mobility of American populations to Panama’s countryside was informed by narratives of nation building. Overcoming nature and wilderness was essential to the imaginaries that inspired this mobility (Cronon, 1995; Frenkel, 1996). As explained by Cronon,

“In moving to the wild unsettled lands of the frontier, shed the trappings of civilization, rediscovered their primitive racial energies, reinvented direct democratic institutions, and by reinfused themselves with a vigor, an independence, and a creativity that the source of American democracy and national character” (Cronon, 1995, p.8).

Conquering ‘wild’ landscapes was ideologically important for American imperial actors. In particular, these populations conceptualized their mobility and settlement of the frontier as an expression of national values (Cronon, 1995). The domestication of the frontier was also economically important for the United States, as it transformed land into a viable commodity for agricultural production and other resource development (McCullough, 1977; Frenkel, 1996). For this reason, the United States government encouraged the settlement of white American citizens domestically and in colonies of the United States (Frenkel, 1996).
In the context of Panama, the establishment of American enterprise in the region also encouraged the migration of American populations to the isthmus. The United States government and American corporations frequently targeted rural spaces of Panama for the implementation of infrastructure projects and agriculture (Martin, 2013). Frenkel contends,

“Panama continually intersected with the development of the United States. The United States intervened militarily, signed treaties, built railroads, and dug the canal. In addition, private U.S. investors involved themselves in schemes ranging from railroads to plantations” (p.321, 1996). Due to these economic and political activities, American migrants and in particular men, conceptualized the wild landscapes of Panama as a space of prosperity and consumption (Frenkel, 1996). This is evident in the quotation by geographer Ellsworth Huntington, “The native has nothing to do except lie under the trees and wait for the fruit to drop into his mouth” (Frenkel, 1996, p. 323-324). Underpinning expansion initiatives in the United States and Panama were racial logics that positioned Indigenous and Panamanian populations as unable to properly “manage” wild landscapes (Mollett, 2016; Frenkel, 1996). Desirable agricultural practices and resource development for the United States and Panamanian governments were rooted in European processes and practices of land cultivation (Mollett, 2011; Mollett, 2016). For this reason, American resource development in the United States and Panama, was also understood as a civilizing project of natural landscapes and the Indigenous populations that lived within them.
4.1 Life in the Isthmus: The Representational Practices of Elite Migrants and Tourists

The following chapter provides an analysis of both historical and contemporary autobiographical travel narratives occurring in Panama from 1841 until 2017. Historical data collection was completed using autobiographical novels of Americans living and visiting Panama, from the initial survey for the Trans-Isthmian railroad in 1841 to the completion of the Panama Canal in 1914. For most of these authors, permanent residence in the Canal Zone during this period shaped each writer’s unique perspective. Accompanying travel narratives of Panama that focused on long-term habitation of the Canal Zone, were also stories written by short-term tourists who had recorded their travels on the isthmus. In both circumstances, these autobiographical novels also functioned as travel guides for tourists and potential migrants, who were most interested in visiting the Canal Zone from 1907-1914 during the largest phase of construction.

There are many reasons why Americans settled in Panama. The opportunity to work in well paid administrative positions was the main impetus for US-Panamanian migration among most American men in the Panama Canal Zone (McCullough, 1977). Due to enforced segregation in the Canal Zone, migrant populations from the West Indies, China, and Latin America were only able to work as physical laborers under the direction of white American men (Lasso, 2013). For this reason, a frequent topic of discussion among American populations was the management of migrant laborers in relation to the progression of the Canal Zone project. These discussions focused on the physical and mental aptitude of various labour populations, often determined by racial narratives. For instance, describing an interaction between American administrators and West Indian laborers, policeman Henry Franck uses language inscribed with animalistic discourse,

“We roused them by pencil-jabs in the ribs, and they started up with savage, animal like grunts and murderous glares which instantly subsided to sheepish grins and voiceless astonishment at a sight of a white face bending over them” (Franck, 1913, p.37).
Life in the Canal Zone for American migrants was characterized by limited involvement with “other” non-American populations (Said, 1978). Similar to the representations of migrant laborers, Panamanian Indigenous people were frequently represented as inferior to white Americans, who were able to control the livelihoods of Indigenous populations through American expansion (Franck, 1913). Although most Indigenous people lived outside of the Panama Canal Zone, the development of the canal required the destruction of surrounding physical landscapes. As a result of this development, Indigenous Panamanians were displaced from their villages due to flooding and urbanization (McCullough, 1977; Franck, 1913). Indigenous populations were represented as infantile and unknowledgeable, particularly in regard to the American imperial expansion that was affecting their communities. Franck describes a local Indigenous man passing by the Canal, “a native bushman on his way to market from his palm-thatched home generations old back in the bus, who has scarcely noticed yet that the canal is being dug” (1913, p.101). The characterization of Indigenous people as unbothered by, or alternatively reliant upon, the actions of American imperialists facilitated discussions of progress and modernity within the Panama Canal Zone by representing imperial subjugation as unproblematic to non-white populations.

Due to the physical and social segregation practiced between American migrants and other populations, many of the defining cultural features of the United States were common in the Panama Canal Zone. American populations continued to speak English, wear the latest American fashions, and socialize in Canal clubs and venues (McCullough, 1977). As a result, these populations were able to insulate themselves from other populations and cultures, producing a conceptual and material space distinct from Panama. This community environment was described as ideal for American migrants, with some authors’ prophesizing American enclaves would develop throughout Panama in the future,

“On the isthmus there was an esprit du corps a feeling of pride that manifested itself in a hundred ways, of which newcomer were speedily made aware. And it must be recorded, that while there was not the least extravagance, the officers, clerks and employees generally were paid generously for their services and the lives of themselves and families were made as comfortable as possible” (Robinson, 1911, p. 26).

Today, the enclaves of amenity migrants in Panama mimic Robinson’s descriptions of Americanized spaces. The discussions of race, labour, and cultural imperialism in archival
narratives also appear in the autobiographical texts of amenity migrants living in Panama. The similarity in discourse between the two populations is indicative of persistent imperial logics in the mobility and settlement of elite populations to Panama (Mollett, 2017; Guerron-Montero, 2014). Stoler contends that, “history is marked by the uneven, unsettled, contingent quality of histories, that fold back on themselves and in that refolding, reveal new surfaces and new planes” (2016, p.26). In particular, books written by amenity migrants discuss the inferior work ethic of Afro-Antillean and Indigenous populations, who were “less likely to show pride in their work” and “imagined as drunk and incapable of work” (McBride, 2011, p. 1338, 2352). Also, amenity migrant authors discuss the lack of assimilation of American populations in Panama, in regard to language acquisition and intolerance for Panamanian cultural practices. Amenity migrant Malcolm Henderson attests that a lack of cultural integration causes significant discord between local and foreign populations. Henderson states, “There is a group who should never venture into the third world” (2008; p. 4087). The continuity between autobiographical texts over a hundred year period, provides greater clarity to discussions of North-South migration patterns and the actions of expatriates in Panama. These narratives help inform geographic discussions regarding the conceptual imaginaries that influence expatriate migration, as well as the material contingencies of elite migrant settlement in Panama.
4.2 “Panama is Below the Mason Dixon Line”: the Racial Imaginaries of Labor in Panama Canal Zone

Labour narratives are strongly related to historical patterns of migration that extended from the 1821 until the construction of the Panama Canal. In particular, soon after Panama’s colonial emancipation from Spain in 1821, national infrastructure projects and regional economic growth spurred a wave of migration in the mid-nineteenth century (Lasso, 2013). Initially, economic migrants were needed to fulfill labour requirements for the construction of the Trans-Isthmian railroad (1850-1855). This sizable project attracted laborers from Southern Europe, China, the West Indies, and other areas of Latin America. However, by far the largest demographic of migrant laborers was from West Indies, with approximately 200,000 black West Indians arriving over the remainder of the nineteenth
century (Lasso, 2013). At this time, economic migration for working class West Indians had become increasingly common due to the growth of the mechanized sugar industry in the Caribbean. Specifically, technological advances in agriculture and crop production had caused widespread unemployment in the region (Sigler, 2014; Sigler et al, 2015).

Abundant migrant flows continued into the twentieth century with French and then American construction of the Panama Canal. Control of the Canal by the American government and separation from Columbia in 1903, also coincided with the implementation of a two tiered labour system. Similar to the Trans-Isthmian railroad, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, and West Indian economic migrants came to work as laborers on the infrastructure project. However, high paying jobs were reserved for the approximately 4,800 white American citizens that immigrated to Panama in the early part of the century. In order to prevent unionization and encourage infrastructure progress, project developers utilized the homogenous compositions of white-collar employees and heterogeneous composition of laborers (Lasso, 2013; Mckillen, 2011, p. 58, Sigler et al, 2015).

The diverse population of migrant laborers quickly became a topic of discussion among white American residents and travellers of the Canal Zone. In particular, government officials, gold role employees, and even tourists openly discussed the merits of migrant labor from different ethnic populations. Scientific racism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which used unscientific empirical evidence later support racial discrimination and defend white supremacy, influenced the popularity of these discussions within the Canal Zone (McCullough, 1977).

For instance, as the progress on the waterway slowed from 1903-1907, white American populations assumed migrant laborers from the Caribbean, Asia, and Latin America were to blame. In particular, discourses pertaining to the work ethic and intelligence of laborers circulated widely in regard to the Panama Canal project. Commentators suggested that by changing the racial demographic of manual laborers, that the quality of construction and time to completion would improve (Cohen, 1971; Lasso, 2013). The Canal Zone Pilot, a travel guide for tourists and newcomers to the Panama Canal Zone openly discusses the selection of migrant laborers based on their racial background.
“The commissions report for 1907 states, the labor problem is still an unsolved one, but the experiments of the past year with a diversity of races and nationalities has improved the efficiency of the force and promises to make the term of service longer. Tropical labor is migratory and notwithstanding superior wages, housing, and subsistence there will always be large periodical changes in the individual force. A regular recruiting organization, changed from one labor center to another, will always be necessary to keep a maximum force available” (1908, p. 327).

For authors of The Canal Zone Pilot, the short term of service by West Indian laborers was considered an effect of a racially inferior workforce. However, poor living and working conditions, including high rates of disease and injury, were the actual reason for a high turnover among laborers (McCullough, 1977). For white Americans, administrative positions in the Canal Zone and superior housing protected the population from the risks faced by the other migrants of the Canal Zone. The racial hierarchy imposed by the residential and labor policy of the American government was often likened to segregation in the Southern United States (McKillen, 2011). In the travel narrative Zone Policeman 88, the author comments on labor relations between black and white employees. He writes, “No negro janitor would venture to question a white American’s errand in a house; Panama is below the Mason and Dixon line” (1913, p. 165). Franck contends that the racial segregation of the Panama Canal Zone allows White Americans to exercise inordinate power over laborers and other silver-wage workers in a manner similar to the Southern
United States during this era. The inferior living and working conditions of migrant laborers is also discussed in *The Canal Zone Pilot*, although framed as a personal choice by West Indian migrants rather than a consequence of discriminatory regulation,

"Not only do they (West Indian migrants) seem to be disqualified by lack of actual vitality but their disposition to labor seems to be as frail as their bodily strength. Few of them are steady workers. The majority of them work just long enough to get money to supply their actual necessities, with the result that while commission is quartering and caring about 25,000 men the daily effective force is many thousands less. Many of them settle in the jungle building little shacks raising enough to keep them alive and working only a day or two occasionally as they see fit. In this way by getting away from the commissions quarters practical control over them is lost and it becomes very difficult for foremen to calculate on keeping their gangs filled" (1908, p. 326).

Scientific racism prevalent during the early twentieth century, informs travel narratives and opinions around the efficacy of laborers in relation to their race or ethnicity. For instance, West Indian workers were frequently described as the worst of all labour options, followed by Chinese migrants, then mestizo Panamanians, and finally migrants from Southern Europe as the preferable option for labour initiatives (McCullough, 1977). For American writers, the relation between race and work ethic operated on a spectrum, with migrants of African descent facing the greatest criticism. This is evident when contrasting the discourses of West Indian migrants to the representation of Spanish laborers in the Canal Zone Pilot,

"The experiment with laborers from northern Spain has proved very satisfactory. Their efficiency is not only more than double that of the negroes but they stand the climate much better. They have malaria in about the same degree as the white American, but not at all to the condition that the negroes have it. Their general conditions is about as good as it was at their homes in Spain. The chief engineer is convinced by this experiment that an white man so called, under the same conditions, will stand the climate on the isthmus much better than the negroes, who are supposed to be immune from practically everything, but who as a matter of fact are subject to almost everything." (1908, p. 326).

For the writers of the *Canal Zone Pilot*, the difference in physical health between West Indian and Spanish populations was considered to be an effect of biological inferiority, rather than a consequence of poor working and living conditions that left West Indian workers vulnerable to mosquito borne disease. In contrast, preferential treatment by the
United States government, illustrated through the unequal distribution of federal resources and health services to American workers and Spanish laborers, allowed white populations to thrive physically and professionally on the Isthmus (McKillen, 2011). The improved level of health among white populations was not considered a result of American policy, but rather a consequence of racial superiority.

During the early twentieth century, social and scientific prejudice impacted the characterization of diverse migrant labor populations of the Panama Canal. In particular, the literary representation for mestizo Panamanians also used narratives of inferiority when compared to the work ethic and health of “superior” American populations. However, the characterization of local Panamanian populations was less critical than the commentary faced by West Indian workers. In particular, Panamanians were often described as infantile in nature, causing the population to be reliant on the common sense and intelligence of the United States’ government. American author and administrative official Harry Franck, comments on the inferiority of Panamanians and their perspective on Canal Zone labor,

“None of these childish countries is man enough to see through the rough surface. Even with seven years of American example about him the Panamanian has not yet grasped the divinity of labor. Perhaps he will eons hence when he has grown nearer to true civilization. (1913, p.220)”

Criticism by American authors regarding the work ethic and reliability of local populations was common in Panamanian and Central American travel literature. For writers concerned with labor on the Panama Canal, discussions regarding race and ability were frequently discussed. However for travellers visiting the region, discussions of unreliable and incompetent servitude dominated the characterization of mestizo populations. In John Lloyd Stephens travels of Central America and Mexico, the author states that, “We had many preparations to make, and from the impossibility of getting servants upon whom we could rely, were obliged to attend to all the details ourselves” (1841, p.128). In discourses from both permanent residents of the Canal Zone and temporary travellers in the region, local populations described as substandard to the desires and expectations of white American writers.
4.3 “No Such Thing as a Good Indian Worker”: Narratives of Labour and Race in Amenity Migrant Enclaves

Modern discussions of labour and work ethic continue to inform relations between elite migrant populations and non-white Panamanians. In the autobiographical texts of amenity migrants living in Panama migrants expressed antipathy towards the perceived work ethic, morality, and intelligence of Panamanian people and practices. Although not particularly prominent in travel literature focused towards short-term visitors, authors discussing residential tourism freely disclosed criticism of West Indian, mestizo, and Indigenous Panamanians in regard to practices of labor and servitude. Paralleling the discourses seen in archival literature, many contemporary authors used comparative language to illustrate the deficiency of Panamanian work ethic in regard to other cultures and societies. In the *Gringo Guide to Panama* Julianne Murphy discusses what expatriate
populations from the Global North should expect from workers when living in Panama. She writes,

“Don’t expect productivity in Panama to be the same as productivity elsewhere in the world. Because its definitely not. Panama is, in fact, very unproductive generally. Its an interesting mix of Latin and Caribbean work ethics” (2008, p.12).

Evident from this statement is the author’s perspective that the work ethic of individuals from areas of the Global South is assumed to differ from the standards and practices that Murphy has experienced in The Global North. The author continues with an explanation for the substandard work ethic and productivity of laborers in Panama.

“Here’s food for thought. Panama was occupied (for the battleground of some war or another) for hundreds of years before it became its own sovereign nation in 1903. For many years Panama was part of Colombia. So the mindset of the natives for all of those years was one of the enslaved or conquered people. Free thinking was not encouraged or rewarded” (2008, p.14-15).

Similar to the narratives that appeared in archival literature, the author infers a relation between the history and values of a nation and the personal qualities of its citizens. As discussed in the section on American governance, archival writers believed that the United States’ political and economic separation from Britain created an American citizen that more greatly valued hard work and independence than a society based in monarchy (Miguez, 2007). As Julianne Murphy theorizes, Panama’s history as a region under colonial control, by Spain and Colombia, shaped the personalities of Panamanian citizens as obedient but unengaged. Interestingly, Murphy’s commentary may be alluding to racialized Panamanians, such as citizens of African or Indigenous descent, who were more likely to be enslaved than the white upper class of the country. The possible differentiation between white upper class Panamanians and lower class Panamanians of color is confirmed when the author discusses the development of intellectual and critical thinking skills in the country.

“Panamanians as a whole, are not critical thinkers. Many Panamanians are not innate problem solvers- that’s just the norm. There are a small percentage of upper class citizens who attend university and/or boarding school outside of the country. These individuals often have a different frame of reference, but they are the minority” (2008, p.13).
For Murphy, the quality of labor and servitude in Panama has been broadly shaped by histories of colonialism on the Isthmus, as well as the specific race and class identities of each worker. Among expatriate authors, criticism of Panamanian workers seems to be widely circulated in literature and daily life. This is especially prevalent for travel narratives emerging from the archipelago of Bocas del Toro. Situated on Panama’s Atlantic Coast, Bocas del Toro has been affected by unprecedented levels of residential and amenity migration following the implementation of national developmental and political strategies in the 1990s (Craine & Jackiewicz, 2010; Guerron Montero, 2011). Due to an influx in migrants over the past two decades, the economic and demographic composition of Bocas del Toro islands has changed rapidly (Dorosh & Klytchnikova, 2013; Guerron Montero, 2014). Formerly a plantation colony, Afro-Antillean and the Indigenous Ngobe-Bugle comprised the majority of Bocas del Toro’s populations. However, the popularity of Bocas del Toro as an amenity migrant destination has resulted in the growth of the real estate market and tourist businesses by North American and European migrants. This economic shift has resulted in the displacement of local populations through the development of an illegal land trade and a rising cost of living. Despite these emerging issues, Bocas del Toro is marketed by the Panamanian government and tourism literature as premiere destination for affluent migrants to live and work. As a result of this growth, expatriate populations rely on local workers to fulfill the labor requirements for the construction and service industries (Guerron Montero, 2011; Spalding, 2013).

Narratives pertaining to the local workforce in Bocas del Toro are very similar to representations that previously circulated in the Panama Canal Zone. In the autobiographical account, *Paradise Delayed* author Ian Usher describes the advice he received from a fellow expatriate in Bocas del Toro while seeking construction workers for his new home. “I told him I was looking for workers and asked his advice. He had plenty, much of it humorous and fairly cynical, based, he said, on many years experience” (2013, p. 303). Due to the demographic makeup of the archipelago, the majority of laborers in the region are of Afro-Antillean and Indigenous, often Ngobe or Guna. Members of the Ngobe-Bugle tribe often face the most criticism from expatriate populations. British expatriate Malcolm Henderson discusses tensions with an Indigenous employee on his farm when he
writes, "A feeling of depression came over me and I wondered if those Gringos who say there is no such thing as a good Indian worker are right (2004, page 2360) ". Narratives used in reference to Indigenous peoples by residential tourists also employed stereotypical tropes that inferred absentee parenting and substance abuse issues among the community. Henderson also recounts a conversation between himself and a friend about funding a remote Indigenous school in the archipelago,

“And have either the government or the parents done anything about it?”
“Well the parents are raising money to build a place for children to eat their meal.”
“You think so? I doubt it. Any money they collect will go on beer. They do sweet, fuck all and just wait for a sofithearted, evangelical gringo like you to drop out of the sky. You are causing more harm than good, buster. They will never learn if they think the likes of you are going to save them” (2004, p. 4293).

The exchange between Henderson and his friend openly disparages the character of the local Indigenous community. In particular, this passage alludes to the perception by the two expatriate speakers of a poor work ethic and alcoholism among Panamanian residents in the area. Although heavily prejudicial in nature, Henderson openly discusses these narratives with another resident and includes these narratives in his book for other expatriates to read. This example in conjunction with previous quotations discussed, illustrate the commonality in which work ethic, servitude, and race are linked and deliberated among the expatriate population of Bocas del Toro. Interestingly, author Connie McBride extends the conversation of the Panamanian workforce to the role of the federal government and labor regulations. McBride, a sailor that remained in Bocas del Toro for one year, shares a conversation regarding the labor laws during national holidays with a fellow expatriate. Her friend explains,

“See, Panamanian law says that workers get paid double time and a half for national holidays. They also get one month’s paid vacation a year and every quarter they get a free week’s salary as a bonus, so it is cheaper to lay off your employees and close the doors for the entire month of November than it is to pay them for all the hours they are not working. I could hear the resentment growing in jays voice as he explained the labor laws. But rather than allowing myself to get caught up in his indignation I reminded him, yes but they make $20 a day” (2012, p.146).
Critical narratives from North American and European populations concerning labor in Panama is not only limited to an individual scale but also extends to federal regulations. Mirroring archival discourses of incompetent Panamanian leadership, contemporary narratives regarding Panamanian labor laws by American migrants also condemn federal leadership in the country. In all temporal periods and scales, the antipathy towards Panamanians in residential tourism literature is reflective of antipathy by expatriate authors. In particular, this criticism towards the work ethic and labor practices of Panamanians occurs when local populations do not adhere to or act independently from the Eurocentric expectations of expatriate authors. From this example it is evident that critical narratives of labor perpetuated by residential tourists are implemented in regard to both local and elite Panamanian populations. Narratives critiquing the labour practices of non-white populations in Panama are not temporally or spatially isolated. As Stoler illustrates in a discussion of archival literature, “drawing our attention to their own scripted temporal and spatial designations of what is colonial and what is no longer, making it difficult to stretch beyond guarded frames (2016, p.5). In the context of affluent migration to the Isthmus, discourse related to race, servitude, and management have persisted in similar forms among the interpersonal relations of white, elite migrants and West Indian, mestizo, and Indigenous populations. Although these recursions emerge in the context of global tourism rather than American imperialism, the geographic imaginaries informing migration and power in regard to Panama result in similar material contingencies.

4.4 Laborers as “Other”: The Racial Imaginaries Informing Employment Practices in Panama

During the twentieth century constructions of white supremacy underpinned the labour policy of the United States government in the Panama Canal Zone. Frenkel asserts that,

“Simply put, the Americans, as subjects, viewed Panama and Panamanians as ‘Other’, as objects to be manipulated when determining policy and building practices. Stereotyped visions often took precedence over reality in guiding the formulation of these policies and practices” (2002, p. 86).
Racial discourse by American media and US government shaped public representations of migrant labourers as, “unhealthy, dirty, and immoral” (Lasso, 2013, p. 554, 559). Contrarily, white American men living in economic enclaves were depicted in American media as “hardworking, purposeful, and masculine” (Martin, 2013, p. 335). This binary naturalized a labor hierarchy that placed white American men in control of West Indian, Chinese, and Panamanian populations (Martin, 2013, p. 322). In addition, narratives of morality and utility facilitated the exclusion of migrant laborers from American nation building imaginaries, transforming the Zone back to a space of white American exceptionalism (Lasso, 2013; Frenkel, 2002).

Discourses of labour, servitude, and race are also prevalent among the practices and processes of tourism and amenity migration (McBride, 2012; Henderson, 2004; Murphy, 2008). Sheller (2004) contends that histories of slavery and racial inequality continue to influence the representations of Afro-Caribbean populations in travel narratives. Research on tourism marketing strategies underpin this assertion,

“Using the world-making power of tourism permitted the transformation of perilous “coastal blacks” into iconic figures of Caribbean beauty: welcoming, tranquil, attractive men and women ready to entertain the tourists’ wishes” (Guerron-Montero, 2014, p.428).

The geographic imaginary of black servitude has also been researched in Central America. On the Atlantic coast of Panama, Mollett (2017) states that, “dehumanizing narratives that target Afro-descendants are never just words, but render legitimate multiple kinds of material and violent embodied dispossessions” (p.5). Thus, racial narratives that frequently circulate in the tourism industry can influence the employment relations and conditions of Indigenous, mestizo, and Afro-Antillean populations within amenity migrant enclaves. For this reason, the perpetuations of colonial logics in Panama have been reconstituted to serve the labour hierarchies in the tourism industry (Stoler, 2016).

4.5 “The Bush Native”: The Indigenous Representations of White Zone Residents

American authors frequently romanticized or infantilized Indigenous Panamanians in autobiographical texts. Misrepresentative narratives about Indigenous people were informed by a variety of factors. Firstly, the confined spatiality of the Canal Zone limited
daily interaction between Americans and the Indigenous villagers that lived outside of the Ten Mile Zone (Franck, 1913). Secondly, popular newspapers often portrayed Indigenous Panamanians as primitive compared to white populations. For instance, *The Los Angeles Times* describes the crocodile-killing adventures of an American adventurer in Panama,

“To a white man slaying an old crocodile like Old Devil is but a minor event. To a bushman, it is occasion for celebration not untinged with a certain amount of religious frenzy, touching upon and appertaining to things very sacred to the bushman and his secret gods. He pays homage to the white man for those things he proudly considers an unsolvable mystery” (Los Angeles Times, 1922, p.X16).

![Illustration of “Old Devil”](Los Angeles Times, 1922, p.X16)

Autobiographer Henry Franck comments upon the popularity of sensationalized stories involving Indigenous populations, “but it need only a little time on the zone to make one laugh at the absurd stories of danger from the bush native that are even yet appearing in many US papers” (1913, p. 282). Descriptions of Indigenous populations were often placed along other dangerous elements of the Panamanian wilderness, “Hostile natives, wild beasts, and hug poisonous reptiles best the path insects helped to discourage population” (Globe & Mail, 1925). Lastly, the historical representations of Indigenous Panamanians by European colonial actors, as well as narratives from US domestic expansion, influenced the
perspectives of autobiographers through the continuity of racial logics (Stoler, 2016). Under these circumstances, American autobiographers were interested in providing descriptions of people and their conditions. In particular, the cultural, social, and historical divide between Indigenous Panamanians and foreign populations. Indigenous representations romanticized Indigenous cultures vis a vis Imperial powers of Spain and the US. Robinson states that previous to European colonization efforts in Panama, life for Indigenous Panamanians was generally ideal and encompassed a thriving society. Robinson writes,

"[...] that they were considerably advanced in the arts of civilized life. They lived in villages, each governed by a cacique or chief and without being what is called progressive, were generally and peace with each other, contented, and therefore happy. All this was rudely changed. These primitive homes were invaded, the wondering Indians robbed of their plentiful ornaments of virgin gold, and at the same time seized and made prisoners and slaves. They quickly vanished from the face of the earth, under the cruel Spaniards" (1911, p.172).

Franck also emphasizes the destruction and displacement of Indigenous life by The United States government. In particular, Franck is ardent when describing the process of removing Indigenous communities from the pathway of the Canal. He writes,

“Put yourself in his (Indigenous person) breech-clout. Suppose a throng of unsympathetic foreigners suddenly appeared resolved to turn all the world you knew into a lake, just because that absurd outside world wanted to float steamers you never knew the use of, from somewhere you never heard of, to somewhere you did not know. Suppose a representative of that unsympathetic government came snorting down upon you one day...and cried: “come on! Get out of here! We're going to burn your house and turn this country into a lake.” Flood the land which was your great-grand fathers, the spot where you used to play leap frog under the banana trees, the jungle land where your mothers courtship days were passed... The foreigners had cried, “take this money and go buy a farm somewhere else,” and you looked around you and saw all the world you had ever really known the existence of sinking beneath the rising waters. Where would you go, think you, to buy that new farm? Even if you fled and found another unknown land high and dry or a town what could you do, having not the remotest idea how to live in a town with only pieces of metal to get food out of instead of the mango tree that had stood behind the house your grandfather built ever since you were born and dropped mangoes whenever you were hungry? To say the least you would be some peeved” (1913, p.307-308).

Although Indigenous Panamanians were often represented negatively in popular American media, Franck illustrates the reasons why Indigenous people may be hesitant to engage in
relationships with workers from the United States. In addition, the representation of Americans in the passage as “unsympathetic” and “snorting down upon you” illustrates culpability by The United States government and its citizens for poor relations between Indigenous communities and the workers of the Canal Zone (Franck, 1913, p.307). Franck reiterates the responsibility that Americans have in creating a strained relationship between migrants and locals when he writes of his experience with an Indigenous community on the outskirts of the Panama Canal,

“...Somewhat frightened because their (Indigenous) experience of Americans is of a discourteous creature who shoots at them in a strong tongue and swears at them because they do not understand it. The moment they heard their own customary greetings they changed to children delighted to do anything to oblige” (1913, p.282).

Franck’s writing urges American readers to empathize with Indigenous populations through the representational lense of infantilism. In particular, Franck characterizes the behavioral disposition of Indigenous adults as similar to that of a child, by using language such as “frightened”, “delighted”, and an inference of obedience. The author also portrays the Indigenous populations as incapable of understanding the actions and behaviors of American imperialists. In Franck’s attempt to challenge the negative depictions of Indigenous Panamanians, the author also perpetuates notions of infantilism in regard to the group.

Fifty-year Panama Canal Zone resident, Tracy Robinson, also challenges the elite depictions of Indigenous people in Panama. He writes,

“It is difficult to understand fully, and express an intelligent opinion upon the social life of people of another race and language, other ideas and customs, other standards of action, unless families enable one to do so” (1911, p.232).

Robinson contends that white citizens of the Zone are incapable of producing an informed opinion on other racial and ethnic populations in Panama without possessing personal ties to the aforementioned community. Author John Stephens, who travelled extensively from Panama until reaching the Yucatan in 1841, shares the personal relationships he has developed with an Indigenous community during his time in Central America. Stephens
described the scene as the author prepared to leave an Indigenous village that had offered him hospitality,

“Every male inhabitant came to the house to bid us farewell and wish us to return; and before starting we rode round and exchanged adios with all their wives; good kind and quiet people, free from all agitating cares, and aiming only at an undisturbed existence in a place which I had been induced to believe the abode of savages and full of danger” (1841, p.365).

Stephens expresses that his preconceived notions of Indigenous people differed significantly from his personal experiences with residents of an Indigenous village.

4.6 “Like Disney’s Version of Pocahontas”: The Indigenous Representations by Amenity Migrants

Autobiographical literature written by amenity migrants and residential tourists in Panama from 1990-2017 often reduces the complexity of Indigenous Panamanian people to one dimensional and stereotypical depictions. In residential tourism and amenity migration scholarship, Indigenous peoples of Panama are characterized as an extension of the country’s natural landscapes. Historically, European colonizers emphasized a close relationship between Indigenous groups and the natural world as part of a primitive and animalistic conceptualization. Relatedly, amenity migrants distance Indigenous Panamanians from understandings of modernity through various discursive and material practices. These processes facilitate an interpersonal hierarchy between the representations of Indigenous Panamanians and amenity migrants in Panama.

For residential tourists Connie McBride and Malcolm Henderson in Bocas del Toro, indigenous populations were commonly described as part of the natural landscape. In the following passage McBride recounts a discussion with an acquaintance on what to expect in the archipelago of Bocas del Toro. The author writes,

“Unlike the arid islands of our sailing past, here was a land with real soil that supported trees of proportions and varieties that we had never seen so close to a sea. We bombarded them with questions and they provided all the right answers. They told us of monkeys, mountains, waterfalls, sandy beaches, and Indians (2012, p. 2). “
The placement of “Indians” in a list with the topographical features and animals of the Panamanian archipelago illustrates a conceptual link for the author between these elements. The McBride family considered the presence of indigenous communities similar to natural attractions in Bocas del Toro. For Malcolm Henderson, an expatriate that had resided in Panama for a number of years, indigenous populations were often described as part of the tropical scenery. While describing a view of the water Henderson writes, “In the distance, Indians fish from Cayucos in the shadows of the mangroves” (2004, Location 298). McBride also describes a similar scene, “We saw other Indians in dugouts throughout the bay, oblivious to the gawkers sailing through their backyard” (2012, p.24). McBride describes a local teenager when she writes,

“A beautiful girl of 16 with dark hair nearly to her waist stopped to pose, though she never made eye contact; her high cheek bones and café con leche skin reminded me of a Disney’s version of Pocahontas” (2012, p.150).

Similar to the tale of Disney’s Pocahontas, representations of Indigenous communities living close to nature and even possessing mysterious knowledge regarding the world, were reoccurring themes among travel writers. In Don’t’ Kill The Cow too Quick, Henderson describes the purpose of a sudden trip, “With an unexpected week to spare, we headed to Costa Rica to visit members of an Indigenous Indian tribe, hoping they would show us the path to a tranquil life” (2004, p. 125). Henderson’s fascination with Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices are not only limited to Costa Rican communities but also abundantly clear in regard to local Panamanian populations. In particular, Henderson employs the “idealized European vision” of Indigenous Panamanians by emphasizing their “conformity with nature” (Redford, 1991). Henderson states that, “Amongst the Indigenous people, the understandings of nature’s need and of mankind’s dependence on her bounty, remain both practical and spiritual” (2004, p.149). Henderson maintains Indigenous communities as nature, particularly in regard to spiritual worship and sustenance cultivation. Henderson furthers the “discursive tradition of nature conservation” by positioning “primitive” Indigenous populations as the only communities allowed to live with “pristine or natural” environments (De Bont, 2015). In addition, Henderson also speaks to his perception of a
stronger historical relationship between Indigenous populations and the environment than his own European forbearers,

“I had respect for Indian advice. Their knowledge carries the experience of their forefathers who lived in harmony with nature. Their survival was dependent on understanding nature’s ways and her cures” (2004, p. 2254).

Henderson replicates a perspective that characterizes Indigenous populations as possessing a more intimate relationship with the natural world. However, the conceptual relation between Indigeneity and the environment also functions to distinguish these populations from discourses of modernity and development. Throughout history, European colonizers emphasized a close relationship between Indigenous groups and the natural world as part of a primitive and animalistic conceptualization (Mollett 2017). Henderson’s comment on the local Indigenous populations illustrates the author’s perceptual binary between the Ngobe-Bugle tribe and other members of the Bocas del Toro community. Specifically, white and Afro-Antillean residents are not characterized as interacting with nature in such an intimate and extensive manner. In Eurisko Sails West McBride expresses a similar sentiment towards Indigenous people in Bocas del Toro. In particular, McBride positively represents members of the Ngobe and Guna tribes that live in the jungle, rather than families that live in the various town of the Bocas del Toro archipelago.

“We discovered during our stay in Panama that the farther into the jungle the Indians lived, the better off they were. The ones cut off from civilization lived in well built though simple homes with porches and yards that they keep swept and free of debris. Their children were clean, appropriately dressing and [sic] quick with a smile and a wave. But the Indians living close to towns were less likely to show any pride in their homes, their children, or themselves. There was not a jungle full of food surrounding them, no rich dirt in which to grow a garden, no clear stream from which to gather water, what they gained in access to modern conveniences they lost in the way of self-reliance and confidence” (2012, p. 55).

The binary presented by McBride mirrors the narratives frequently used by conservation groups and native spokespeople to characterize Indigenous life, “The Indian world - collective, communal, human respectful of nature, and wise - and the western world - greedy, destructive, individualist, and enemy of nature” (Redford, 1991). As mentioned in
the quote above, McBride negatively represents Indigenous people, who do not live close to
the jungle or adhere to other forms of “traditional” Indigeneity.

“In the meantime, we will keep filming locals in what middle class Americans
consider horrible living conditions. But our point is, which group of people is happiest? The
accountant slaving away from 9 to 5, chasing his tail, worried about mortgages, insurance,
and keeping up with his neighbors, or the Indian family living in a corrugated tin shack on
the water, worried about nothing but whether to have fish or rice for breakfast? Which
group do you hear laughing most often?” (2012, p.145)

McBride continues with this narrative in another part of her travel memoir, while
discussing an Indigenous family that lived close to her sailboat.

“A trail of laughter followed them as they paddled to shore: six little bodies in a
dugout canoe, rowing home to a shack in a mud flat, with no electricity, no running water,
and not a care in the world, taking a piece of our Christmas tree as a coveted gift” (2012,
p.38).

The Indigenous poverty described by McBride in the above passages is seen as a
normalized feature of Panamanian Indigenous life (Mollett, 2011). Academic discussions of
Indigenous populations in Central America assert that discussions of poverty and
inequality are shaped by understandings of difference. In particular, “processes are set
forth through cultural hierarchies and tropes of backwardness” that normalize
representations of Indigenous poverty (Mollett, 2011, p.45). McBride’s characterization of
Indigenous populations as unintelligent and unambitious is another invocation of this
backwardness.

4.7 Savage, Civilized, or Noble: Constructions of Indigeneity and Nature

Travel writers and tourists in Panama have used a variety of discursive practices to
shape Indigenous representations. In particular, narratives of infantilism were used to
describe the disposition and agency of Indigenous Panamanians by American
autobiographers. As Andrea Smith (2010) asserts, Euro-American discourse commonly
posit Indigenous populations in a binary of civilized or infantile,

“The Native is rendered permanently infantile or—as mostly commonly
understood—an innocent savage. She cannot mature into adult citizenship, she can only be
locked into a permanent state of infancy—degenerate into brutal savagery or disappear into “civilization” (Smith, 2010, p. 51).

Evident in the discussions by Franck (1913) and Robinson (1911), Indigenous Panamanians were depicted as the antithesis to American imperial expansionism. In particular, the authors represented Indigenous populations as inherently unable to understand the civilizing actions of the United States, due to their infantile nature and positioning outside of modern society.

Authors of autobiographical texts also romanticized the relationship of Indigenous people with the environment. These representations align with scholarship from the field of conservation that attests indigenous populations are commonly “ascribed elaborate ecological folk knowledge, while being represented as successful stewards of the Earth” (De Bont, 2015, p.215). In this colonial construction, native populations are understood as “Noble Savages” that live in harmony with their environment (Redford, 1991). As McBride (2012) and Henderson (2004) demonstrated, Indigenous persons are criticized if they do not fulfill the land use practices and qualities ascribed to the Noble Savage stereotype. McBride (2012) and Henderson’s (2004) discussion is informed by racial imaginaries that shape “conceptions of suitable and unsuitable land use practices” by Indigenous Panamanians (Mollett, 2011, p.45). Thus constructions of “real” Indigeneity intersect with narratives of modernity, civilization, and environmentalism.

4.8 The Making of American Space in Panama

Travel writers documenting life and tourism in Panama frequently commented on the processes of American space making in the Isthmus. The use of American fashion, language, and housing design by white Americans facilitated the cultural and physical likeness of the Panama Canal Zone to mainland United States. Segregated restaurants, bars, interest groups and the YMCA also shaped the social isolation of American residents from other populations in Panama. White residents frequently praised the United States government for transforming the Canal Zone into a space reminiscent of the United States. In particular, travel writers emphasized their personal opinion that previous to American occupation, Panama was an undesirable tropical location. Henry Franck writes,
“Uncle same surely makes life comfortable for his children wherever he takes hold. It is not enough that he shall clean up and set in order these tropical pest holes; he will have the employee fancy himself completely at home” (1913, p.27)

Figure 17: High Tea with Colonel and Mrs. David D. Gaillard (McCullough, 1977, p. 513)

The author purveys a similar sentiment when referring to American workers who have resided in the Canal Zone for a long period of time, “And none but those can in any degree realize what “Tio Sam” has done for the place” (Franck, 1913, p. 28). In both quotations Franck emphasizes a belief that the region of Panama was in need of transformation, as the previous condition of the Zone was unacceptable by American standards. The author also indicates that the Panama Canal Zone has become more than simply habitable, the space
has been molded to suit the preferences of American workers allowing the Canal Zone to feel like home.

Although the built form and design of the Canal Zone mimicked many of the physical features popular in American towns, a variety of differences were still prevalent between life in Panama and The United States. For employees of the Zone and visiting tourists, these differences were often a reoccurring topic of discussion. In particular, American residents in the Canal Zone were resistant to adopting the language, climate, and systems of Panamanian culture. Instead Americans insisted upon implementing practices from the United States in Panama. A multilingual employee, Henry Franck discusses his opinion on the refusal of Americans to learn Spanish when living in the isthmus,

"It comes back to our government and beyond that to the American people. With all our expanding over the surface of the earth in the past fourteen years there still hangs over us that old provincial back woods boogie, “English is good enough for me.” Child’s task as is the learning of a foreign language, provincial old uncle same just flat feet along the same old way, expecting to govern and judge and lead along the path of civilization his foreign colonies by bellowing at them in his own nasal draw and treating their tongue as if it were some purely animal sound” (1913, p.154).

Franck refers to the perspective of the American government and many citizens that due to the perceived superiority of American culture over other nations, foreign territories should adapt to the practices of the United States. The ethnocentric mind set among English speakers in Panama was so strong that Franck claims regardless of racial background, any bilingual American could receive a position among the administrative class, “How rare are Spanish speaking Americans on the zone has proved by the admittance of such complexions to the gold role” (1913, p.33). This statement regarding the demand for bilingual workers is especially revealing considering the wide variety of efforts implemented by the United States government to segregate workers of color from their white Americans counterparts in the Canal Zone.

The climate of Panama was another point of contention regarding the implementation of Panamanian methods and practices. In the early twentieth century the apparel worn by both American men and women was often inappropriate for a hot and humid climate. Layered clothing that was designed to cover a person’s limbs and neck was fashionable in the era, a style that was carried from the United States. In the homes of gold
star employees, sheets and comforters that were considered essential in the North were often used for bedding. Insistence upon unsuitable materials and fashions left white-collar workers uncomfortable in the tropical heat. Mary Louise Allen who spent time socializing with American women while travelling on the isthmus shared their experiences in her novel,

“When the climate gets on the nerves of the American women down there so that the begin to yarn for bracing winds and driving snow storms and frosted window panes, they have to go up to the states to get straightened out; otherwise, if they cant leave, they sometimes go to pieces under the strain” (1913, p.127).

Mary Louise Allen also discussed the Panamanian climate as one reason that the wives of gold role employees experienced homesickness,

“The only trouble with the married men seems to be in keeping their wives contented. Household labor is light and service is cheap, therefore the women are not so busy as the men and have time to get homesick. But the government tackled that problem too and imported an organizer of clubs to help the women find employment for the spare time which otherwise might use in thinking about the climate and far away god’s country” (1913, p.128).

The unwillingness of American migrants to adjust their customs to life in Panama often made life unnecessarily difficult, including the absence of appropriate dress and language skills. Luckily for the wives of gold role employees, the United States government provided a variety of opportunities to reduce the effects of homesickness and increase socialization among the women. Without entertainment, clubs, and pastime programs funded by the American government, populations in the Canal Zone would have few opportunities and spaces to connect with other white Americans. Due to the absence of Spanish language ability, an ethnocentric attitude by most white Canal families, and the propensity of segregation in social venues, upper class Americans rarely integrated into broader Panamanian society.

Despite the physical and social segregation of American citizens in Panama, and in some instances because of it, many writers considered the state of American life in the Canal Zone as ideal. The popularity of social and leisure activities, low crime rates, and generous income allowed white American migrants to sustain the level of comfort equal to or
surpassing conditions in the United States. In addition, American's were able to sustain their cultural practices in a foreign space. These circumstances were taken into account as travel writers looked forward to the possible future of Panama for American populations. For Tracy Robinson, the author believed the relaxed schedule of American tropical life would allow more time for intellectual endeavors and a better quality of life. Robinson argues,

“This kind of life might be found in the tropics now. The people of the tropics do not lead such a life; they pass their spare time in idleness and the pursuit of sensual joys, until ennuied to desperation they kick up a revolution. But if the people of the temperate regions, who are weary of their strife for a mere living, could realize the possibilities that await them on the highlands that extend from Chiriqui on the isthmus to the state of Oaxaca in Mexico, I fancy they would flock there in such numbers as to wipe out the traces of barbarism that still remain there and bring to pass the condition of affairs which bates foretold” (1911, p. 266).

Robinson prophesizes that the ideal living conditions experienced in the Canal Zone would attract a substantial number of residential migrants from North America and Europe to all areas of Panama. In Robinson’s imaginative future, the abundant migration of populations from the Global North would eradicate the cultural practices and customs of Panamanians, which are considered by the author inferior to that of other nations. Evident from this passage is Robinson’s assumption that American citizens would not integrate to Panamanian culture, but rather transform Panamanian society to reflect American cultural practices. The author continues with similar sentiments of American cultural expansion. Robinson writes,

“Nothing appears to have been created in vain the time will come when the wild region now included within the limits of the Panama Isthmus, as well as those immense solitudes North and South, shall be transformed into smiling summer lands where countless millions will find homes” (1911, p. 266).

Robinson’s description of foreign populations moving to and residing within Panama relates to discussions of amenity migration and residential literature. In particular, Robinson characterizes Panama as space primed for the future development of residential enclaves, specifically for American populations. This characterization aligns with Panama’s modern reputation as a safe and comfortable space to settle for affluent migrants (Mollett,
Robinson continues with a similar sentiment that speaks to the economic opportunity Panama will provide for many American migrants.

“Along both coasts are many bays and lovely islands which form shelter for vessels, and will some day be desirable for plantations for cocoa nuts and other tropical productions as well as for the delightful insular homes of a future populations” (1911, p.179).

Robinson’s discussion of “tropical productions” and “insular homes of a future population” relates strongly to representations of elite migrant enclaves in terms of economic and residential organization. In recent travel narratives, authors have described enclaves such as Boquete with an “American influence that is unmistakable” (Carpenter, 2010). Other writers have stated that the physical and social characteristics of amenity enclaves are “welcoming to Americans” and “where foreigners don’t feel out of place” (“Best Place to Retire in Panama”, International Living). American space making in the isthmus is also formed through community activities, such philanthropy. American migrant Malcolm Henderson asserts, “the contribution of Gringos to the good of the community is considerable” in areas with large amenity migrant populations (2004, p.4341). For these reasons, Robinson’s imaginary of American space making in Panama is very similar to the formation of amenity migrant and residential tourism enclaves throughout the country.
Figure 18: A photograph in *National Geographic* of American Zone residents shopping (Marden, 1941, p.599).

### 4.9 Community Space Making in American Enclaves

American space making in the Canal Zone was supported by federal planning and policy initiatives that focused on the development of an American community. In particular, the government of the United States considered the establishment of white-only leisure
spaces as an important initiative to “boosting morale” of American populations in the Canal Zone (McCullough, 1977, p. 478). In particular the American government, “had clubhouses built, arranged for weekly band concerts, established a baseball league” in an effort to support American migrant populations (McCullough, 1977, p. 478). For white American workers and their families, segregated spaces of leisure and community facilitated the perpetuation of American cultural practices in Panama, such as English language speaking and distinct fashion (McCullough, 1977). American corporations in Latin America, such as the United Fruit Company, also implemented social and community programs for white workers “to combat the effect of distance” (Martin, 2013, p. 320). In fact, American economic enclaves in Latin America often follow a similar model of cultural isolation, “foreign territories molded by US culture, tied into world markets, and with little connection to the countries in which they are located” (LeGrande, 1998, p. 335). For this reason, community place making for white Americans was considered an essential practice by employers and government officials.

Scholars of tourism have demonstrated that residential tourists and amenity migrants often make space through the implementation of North American and European cultural practices in foreign enclaves (Dorosh & Klytchnikova, 2013; Guerron-Montero, 2014; Mollett, 2017, Spalding 2013). In fact, research has indicated that amenity migrants from the Global North are attracted to areas that already have existing communities of North American and European residents (Benson, 2013; Van Noorloos, 2011). The development of amenity migrant enclaves is frequently characterized by the physical transformation to residential and business landscapes that mimic designs popular in the Global North (Dorosh & Klytchnikova, 2013; Benson, 2013). Benson describes this phenomenon in the growth of Boquete, a popular tourism enclave in the mountains of Panama,

“Each time I returned to Panama the change in the population was evident, whether in the supermarket, on the streets of Bajo Boquete, at the weekly Tuesday Morning Meeting and market catering for the increasing North American population in the area” (2013, p. 319).

Robinson’s (2011) imaginary of American enclaves throughout the isthmus are remarkably similar to the communities of amenity migrants and residential tourists in Panama today.
Warm weather, economic opportunity, and a booming real estate market has attracted elite migrant populations to Panama (Benson, 2013; Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). In both the Panama Canal Zone and amenity migrant enclaves, forming a community has been essential to the creation of American spaces.
Chapter Five: “Stepping Back into the Past”

The Geographic Imaginaries of Modern Panamanian Travel Literature: 1990-Present

5.1 Producing Imaginaries: The Practices and Process of Modern Tourism Literature

The representations of people and place that appear in tourism literature are informed by a variety of economic and social factors. Firstly, scholars of tourism contend that the common narratives and imagery appearing in travel literature is frequently shaped by consumer demand, rather than accurate and holistic depictions of travel destinations (Jenkins, 2003). For this reason, producers of tourism literature often employ familiar and repetitive imagery of the same locations (Jenkins, 2003). In 1986, Dilley found that the islands of the Caribbean are usually advertised with photographs of beaches and recreational water activities. Meanwhile in areas of Europe and Japan, tourism advertisements repeatedly employ historical images of heritage buildings and classic art. In addition, Scottish travel literature capitalized on images of castles and barren landscapes to entice tourism interest (Hughes, 1992). Editors of tourism literature may also select travel content that was designed to mimic iconic tourism images, such as the Eiffel tower or imagery of primitive Indigenous tribes (McWha et al, 2014). As a result, scholars have also found that tourists themselves recreate and circulate personal photography of a destination that mimics the imagery they have seen in travel literature (Jenkins, 2003).

The repeated use of images and narratives in relation to tourism destinations is due to “shared meanings” that develop in a culture to understand such imagery. Jenkins explains the concept of shared meaning as, “the idea that particular visual images circulate within a culture and become imbued with particular meanings, associations and values” (2003, p.307). In practice, shared meanings are used in tourism advertising to target specific markets and denote particular narratives for potential consumers. An oversimplified depiction of travel destinations in conjunction with misrepresentative marketing initiatives creates travel narratives that “mystify the mundane; amplify the exotic; minimize the misery; rationalize the disquietude; and romanticize the strange” (Weightman, 1987, p. 229).

The examination of Panamanian tourism literature has demonstrated the commonality of colonial and imperial logics underpinning the representations of
Panamanian landscapes and people (Guerron-Montero, 2014; Mollett, 2017). Scholars of tourism attest that Panamanian tourism images are similar to Caribbean nations, with an emphasis on racialized bodies and natural landscapes (Sheller, 2004; Guerron-Montero, 2014). In Panamanian travel literature appearing online and in print, travel writers’ focus on Panama’s past as space of Spanish conquest and American imperial control. This glorification of Panama’s history has been found to influence the mobility of travel writers and tourists, who contextualize their own mobility in regard to imperial actors.

5.2 “Discovering” Panama: Colonial Narratives of Exploration Among Tourists

![Tropical Eden Rich in Lore Dating From Columbus’ Time](image)

Figure 19: Headline from the *Washington Post* (November 19, 1933)

Contemporary travel writing remains limited to a narrow and repetitive combination of themes. In particular, the subject of colonial exploration and conquest is frequently used to contextualize travel to Panama among popular literature. In the vast majority of travel articles collected and analyzed, writers discuss the isthmus’ history as a location frequented by Spanish conquistadores such as Christopher Columbus, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, and Francisco Pizarro, as well as pirates such as Sir Henry Morgan. The fascination with these colonial actors among writers illustrates the central role of colonialism in contemporary understandings of Panama and its population as a travel destination. Although diverse environmental, topographic, social, and cultural features characterize Panama, each location discussed was consistently tied to the mobilities and settlement of colonial actors.
The repetitive descriptions and imaginaries seen in contemporary travel narratives regarding colonialism are illustrated in a variety of locations throughout the country. For instance, the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the Caribbean archipelago is the predominant narrative used in travel literature to contextualize the importance of Bocas del Toro for tourists. In particular, discussions of the archipelago represent Bocas as “untouched” previous to Columbus’ “discovery”, with little dialogue discussing the Ngobe-Bugle tribe that has resided in the region for centuries (Carpenter, 2010). In the context of Bocas del Toro, travel writers continue to represent the history of colonialism in Panama as a tourism attraction for the country.

Narratives of colonial romanticism also emerge in The Toronto Star’s coverage of the San Blas islands. Jabet Groene describes the Kuna Indigenous tribe of San Blas Islands, who have fought against colonial actors for their independence and sovereignty since the arrival of the Spanish. The Star writes,

“Not invaders, nor conquistadors, nor pirates, nor missionaries have been able to subdue or seduce the Cuna Indians of Panama. Life goes on in the San Blas islands today much as it did before Balboa” (Groene, 1986, p. H7).

Groene’s word choice of “subdue” in this passage not only diminishes the actions and methods of colonial forces towards Indigenous populations, but also infers the culture and lifestyle of the Kuna as excessive or wild. Alternatively, the use of “seduce” illustrates a conceptual understanding of European culture as tempting to the Kuna. In both contexts, the word choice by the author ignores the historical realities that occurred in the region at the hands of colonial actors. The author’s statement that “Life goes on in the San Blas island today much as it did before Balboa” demonstrates a conceptual understanding that the Kuna remain untouched by colonialism and modern society, rather than framing contemporary Kuna culture and practices as a choice made by the Indigenous community despite centuries of attempted modification by outside actors (Groene, 1986, p. H7). Thus, this depiction of the Kuna in the Toronto Star diminishes the possibility for an accurate understanding by readers of the tribe’s historical and contemporary agency.

Figure 20: Headline from the Toronto Star, (Groene, 1986, p.H7)
Even the island of Taboga, which is utilized by residents of Panama City as a nearby beach and park, was described in terms of its efficacy to historical conquest and “departure point for their exploits” (Moon, 2011). In many of the quotes mentioned, the language used to describe colonialism in Panama has been sanitized for a popular audience. While travel writers are describing conquistadores as “adventurers” and conquest as “exploits,” the violence and subjugation inherent in such endeavors has been consciously removed.

The representation of Panama City in travel literature has been influenced by the capitol’s strategic location to imperialists and economic history. Over the past two decades Panama City has experienced an economic boom, which has significantly changed the capitol’s urban landscapes (Sigler et al., 2015). Rural-urban migration as well as international investment has resulted in the growth of both low-income neighborhoods and skyscrapers, which hold the homes and businesses of affluent populations (Sigler, 2014). In other areas of the city, neighborhood restoration projects have forcefully removed squatters to create boutique hotels and trendy restaurants (Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2016). Like any other urban metropolis, Panama City has experienced significant demographic, economic, and political changes since the turn of the century. However, in most travel articles, writers prefer to focus on the city’s history as a trade center for the valuable goods and minerals of the Spanish empire rather than these contemporary changes. In particular, authors focused on the geographic importance Panama City had to Spanish powers, due to the strategic location of the isthmus and its proximity to South America. The Guardian wrote in 2003,

“Spanish explorers founded Old Panama, which became the natural jumping off point for further conquests, its renaissance style construction serving as a model for all other colonial South American cities. Swarms of adventurers sailed off with the stolen gold silver, pearls and other priceless treasure plundered from the Incas of Peru to unload at Old Panama. Fuelled with tropical decadence the area still buzzed with the filth and elegance of seventeenth century Spain but also vibrated with the sounds of revamping and restoring” (Marks, 2003, p. 119).

For travel writers, the colonial subjugation of the Incan empire and theft of cultural goods by conquistadores was a reoccurring theme among contemporary articles of Panama City. Similar to the passage above, in nearly every travel article that mentioned Panama City the
the author had included details referring to the capitol’s history as an area “rich in colonial history” and “rich in Peruvian gold” (Buehler, 2003, p. K14). Despite the significant changes Panama City has undergone in the modern era, writers continued to focus on the capitol’s importance in past centuries, rather than it’s contemporary features and characteristics. Descriptions of Panama City in a Chicago Tribune article as “once a hub of culture and civilization”, illustrates that despite Panama City’s transformation over the centuries, the importance of the urban center for travel writers is perceived as firmly rooted in the past (Vohr, 2013). The decision by authors to contextualize Panama City in terms of its historical characteristics is meant to attract the readers’ interest and tempt their imagination. For this reason, the mention of colonial actors such as “Henry Morgan and Francisco Pizarro” was used in conjunction with most tourist locations (Moon, 2011).

Moving beyond the historical contextualization of colonial actors in the region, many travel writers have also begun to frame their own contemporary experiences in Panama by envisioning themselves as explorers. Articles frequently described the emotions, imaginaries, and experiences of travel writers as they traverse the isthmus and discover new areas. By employing themselves in the role of conquistador, authors perpetuate narratives that characterize Panama as a modern space in need of colonization. Interestingly, the historical contextualization of colonialism in the region may have had an influence on the way these writers understand their own mobility and interactions in areas such as San Blas, Bocas del Toro, and Panama City. In particular, travel writers imagining or comparing themselves to historical or literary figures is an overwhelming common practice. Such an example is seen in James Yenckel’s piece for the Washington Post in 1995,

“With no effort at all I imagined we had stepped back into the past. Through the centuries, travelers from around the world have crossed the Isthmus of Panama en route from one sea to the other. I was pleased to be able now to count myself among them” (Yenckel, 1995, p. E1).

Evident in the author’s passage, the prominence of colonial discourses in travel writing have made it easy for tourists, including authors, to imagine themselves in the role of historical actors. In the article by The Washington Post, the conceptual relation that exists between Yenkel’s mobility in Panama and the material contingencies of colonial actors is overwhelmingly portrayed in a positive light. Spanish conquistadores, British pirates, and
American workers have overwhelming assumed the majority of descriptive discourses related to the isthmus. For this reason, the author’s imaginative presence in centuries past most likely pertains to the powerful European and American colonists rather than subjugated populations in Panama.

While visiting the San Blas islands, author Tim Neville describes his experience as similar to stranded adventurer *Robin Crusoe* (2013). The book written by Daniel Defoe in 1719 includes Robinson Crusoe’s life on a tropical island over a 28-year period, including encounters with pirates, cannibals, and mutineers. Unfortunately the comparison between the fictional life of Crusoe and the residents of San Blas is not particularly flattering. Neville’s characterization of the area as isolated and devoid of civilization, similar to the story of Robinson Crusoe, ignores the contemporary and historical realities of the San Blas islands. In 2012 a *Condé Nast* headline also compared the author Peter Stevenson to Christopher Columbus (“The Seductively Sleepy Islands of Bocas del Toro”, 2012).

Rather than simply perceiving travel to the area as an act of tourism, authors continue to characterize visitation to Panama for themselves and their readers as actions of “discovery” and “exploration”. In the *Lonely Planet* online guidebook, the author states that interacting with natural landscapes in Panama is “all about discovery.” The passage goes on to describe how if inspired, a traveller could also “explore Indigenous territories in a dugout canoe” (2017). Evidently the author has positioned the reader in an imagined situation that places Indigenous communities as outside of regular human contact. *Lonely Planet* continues by urging readers who would like to visit Panama to “go where the wild things are” including visiting waterfalls or “Panama’s seven indigenous groups” (2017). The *Lonely Planet* guidebook encourages readers to both envision themselves as explorers on the Panamanian isthmus and participate in specific activities with people and places that are characterized as predominantly untouched by modern society. Descriptions of Panama as “wild” follows colonial discourses that commonly disregarded the society and civilization of Panamanians. Interestingly, the guidebook states that the reality of a dynamic Indigenous society or managed environment is inconsequential to a reader’s experience, as “Panama is as wild as you want it to be” (2017). Narratives that portray rural areas of Panama as remaining unaffected by economic, political, and social facets of the contemporary world reoccur throughout travel literature. Illustrated in an article for the
Globe and Mail, the travel writer recounted that when the archipelago of Bocas del Toro entered his vision, “civilization disappeared” (Rivers, 2014). By characterizing natural landscapes or rural areas as untouched by tourists and residents, writers are able to more convincingly portray Panamanian spaces as primed for exploration and discovery. The Globe and Mail reaffirms the conceptual relations between natural spaces and colonial interest when the article continues. The author writes that Panama’s “size has nothing to do with the breadth of its bounty” (Rivers, 2014). As illustrated, the author of this passage creates a conceptual relation between the “untouched” landscapes of Panama and a wealth of the country’s resources. Interestingly, “bounty” in this context can be understood as the value of natural landscapes for Panama in terms of tourist attractions, as well as resource extraction. This relationship between territory and value is strongly related to Panama’s history of colonialism, with the Spanish empire utilizing the isthmus’ geographic position to attain power and control trade (Marrin, 1999). As with the other passages discussed, the contextualization of Panama as a space to enact colonial fantasies by writers and tourists alike, have been influenced by centuries of colonial narratives and celebration in popular discourse. Unfortunately, the perpetual use of colonial imaginaries in contemporary travel media continues to influence the perception of Panama for mass audiences around the world. In particular, discourses that characterize the isthmus as possessing boundless nature and little civilization reinforces the imaginary of Panama as a space where tourists can enact fantasies of discovery and conquest.

5.3 Reconstituted Imaginaries of The New World

Historical narratives of colonial travel to the “New World” have informed the geographic imaginaries of tourists in Panama. In particular, European mobility in Latin America has been framed as the ‘discovery’ and ‘exploration’ of new spaces in colonial texts. As discussed by Pratt, “travel books written by Europeans about non European parts of the world created the imperial order for Europeans at home and gave them their place in it” (1992). In modern contexts, scholars of tourism assert that tourists often mimic the discourse and representations of colonial actors while travelling (Jenkins, 2003). A common consequence of colonial travel narratives is the conceptualization of Latin America and the Caribbean as pre-modern, “it has nevertheless been spatially and
temporally eviscerated from the imaginary geographies of ‘Western modernity’ (Sheller, 2003, p. 1).

As tourists move through Panamanian spaces, histories of colonialism also inform what practices are acceptable or expected. In the context of the Caribbean, the historical interactions of conquistadores with Indigenous peoples and the environment have produced narratives of domination and consumption. Sheller (2003) attests that,

“The Caribbean has been repeatedly imagined and narrated as a tropical paradise in which the land, plants, resources, bodies, and cultures of its inhabitants are open to be invaded, occupied, bought, moved, used, viewed, and consumed in various ways” (Sheller, 2003, p. 13).

Due to geographical proximity and similar histories of colonialism, Panama is conceptualized in a similar manner to the Caribbean. In particular, the Atlantic coast of Panama is also imagined “as lands of plenty as never changing and timeless” (Guerron-Montero, 2011, p. 22). As McKintock (1995) illustrates, similar relations are found throughout the “New World” as imperial actors universally, “oriented themselves in space, as agents of power and agents of knowledge” (p.24). This cultural tradition has also been employed by tourists in Panama, who continue to frame their own travel in relation to colonial imaginaries.
5.4 Urban Imaginaries: The Comparison of The Panama Canal Zone to Panamanian Cities in Travel Literature

The history of American imperialism in Panama has long played an important role in popular travel literature. As illustrated in the analysis of archival newspapers at the turn of the twentieth century, The Panama Canal Zone was a popular topic of discussion among travel writers and journalists. In particular, tales from the isthmus published in American newspapers grabbed the public’s interest and created a burgeoning tourism industry in Panama. Nearly one hundred years later as the twenty first century came to a close, economic and political changes on the isthmus again influenced the travel discourses pertaining to Panama. In particular, the removal of General Manuel Noriega by the United States government and the looming annexation of the Panama Canal Zone became a
common topic of discussion in travel literature (Guerron-Montero, 2014). This temporal period of adjustment for Panama was accompanied by anxious commentary by travel writers, who warned of an uncertain future for the isthmus. In particular, travel writers were critical of the capacity for Panamanian leadership without American guidance. Nearly twenty years later, similar sentiment regarding American imperialism still occurs. Most commonly, American control in Panama has been represented in travel media as a charming and ideal time for the country. This characterization contrasts with the portrayal of Panama contemporarily, which is often described as a chaotic intermixture of people, places, and development. Narratives in travel media also celebrate American imperialism as the principal reason for Panama’s success as a tourism destination in the twenty first century. For these reasons, this chapter discusses the nostalgic discourses of American imperialism in Panama among contemporary travel literature.

Similar to archival newspaper articles appearing in the early twentieth century, the representation of the Panama Canal Zone and American imperialism in the contemporary era remains predominantly complementary. In particular, writers often provide lengthy descriptions for readers of what life in the Panama Canal Zone was like for white American citizens over the past century. Emphasis on the similarities between the Canal Zone and the United States proper is commonly to illicit emotive and nostalgic responses among readers. Writer Shelley Emling from The Atlanta Constitution in 1999 chronicles the suburban setting of the Canal in Panama. He writes,

“There are a lot of backyard barbecues here every weekend. We also play a lot of basketball and do a lot of running. Since the beginning, the Zone has been the jungle Mayberry, a place with virtually no crime or poverty. American flags adorn many of the dwellings set on neatly landscaped lawns filled with palm trees and iguanas. Two or three cars sit in each driveway. Spacious, well-groomed parks and even Popeyes and McDonalds are close by. The residents employ Panamanian maids, play bingo at night and listen to American music at a pub like bar called The Loop” (Emling, 1999, p. A23).

In this passage, Emling emphasizes the normalcy and Americanized characteristics of the Canal Zone. The author’s experience growing up in the territory provides greater detail to the article including the hobbies and neighborhood adornments popular for Americans. In particular, the author’s portrayal of the space as “Mayberry”, a fictitious neighborhood from The Andy Griffin Show, illustrates an effort to represent The Panama Canal as an
archetypal small American town. A similar narrative emerges a decade later in Travel and Leisure’s coverage of Panama regarding the polished appearance of the Zone’s design and residents. The magazine writes,

“Before this, the zone had always been a more or less pristine version of American suburbia, albeit in a tropical setting. US soldiers in crisp uniforms patrolled the nearby base, and on weekends, families living in beautiful two story wooden houses with screened terraces and porches frolicked on their lawns, drinking martinis and eating barbecue, the children gliding through the air on plank swings and playing with a cheerful plastic toy. Everything came from the commissary, shipped in by the US government” (Wilentz, 2009).

As with the article by Emling, Travel and Leisure’s description of the Canal Zone focuses on a picturesque suburban setting, devoid of crime or poverty. In particular, the imagery described in both articles construes an environment that replicates popular television shows of the mid twentieth century such as Father Knows Best and Leave it to Beaver. The authors of each article shape the perception of the Zone for readers by employing narratives and imagery that have a particular meaning in American society. Descriptions of “Two story houses”, “Plank swings”, “on neatly landscaped lawns” fulfills the physical description of suburbia that has been commonly idealized in modern American society (Wilentz, 2009). However, for areas of Panama described outside the Canal Zone, unflattering images of the nation proliferated. In particular, travel writers questioned how Panama would move forward after the United States annexed control of the Canal Zone back to the Panamanian government. Although the Panama Canal Zone had been consistently celebrated, control of the territory by non-American forces was understood as the potential destruction of such a space. In 1999, The New York Times frames Panama as a country that emerged after the establishment of American control in the Zone,

“For Americans and Panamanians alike it is the end of an era and moment for reflection and nostalgia. After nearly a century under American jurisdiction the big ditch finally is the property of the country that was created around it in 1903 and has yearned ever since to control it” (Rohter, 1999).

Although historically and geographically inaccurate, the quote above contextualizes the development of greater Panama as a result of American imperialism in the region. In particular, author Larry Rohter’s statement that the isthmus was “created around” the Panama Canal illustrates a perspective that maintains the American territory as the focus
and origination of Panama as a nation (Rohter, 1999). Narratives that emphasized American occupation in the country were common throughout travel literature, with writers ignoring other characteristics that shape Panama in order to reiterate that the country was defined in the public eye by its colonial history. In 1991, *The New York Times* stated,

“Panama has not changed since president Theodore Roosevelt seeking a subservient country in which to dig a transoceanic canal encouraged the rebellion that separated the isthmus from Colombia” (Krauss, 1991).

Over the hundred year period of American occupation, Panama has been considered to exist in a fixed state, unchanged by any factor other than the United States. Articles described Panama as a country “famously invaded by the Americans” and in a more morose tone a nation “born dead” assumed significant space in articles profiling the contemporary age (Atkinson, 1996, p.16; Fainaru, 1990, p.7). More interestingly, for all the narratives celebrating imperialism in the region, an equal amount of rhetoric was dedicated to portraying Panama’s cities, people, and government in a negative manner. An article in the *Atlanta Constitution* mused as to whether the Canal could be trusted in the control of another country and “especially one with Panama’s spotty record” (Williams, 1999, p.C5). A similar sentiment was written in *The Globe and Mail* in 1995,

“In fact since the Panamanian government took control of the railway which used to be an important transport route from the Atlantic to the Pacific across the Isthmus of Panama -nothing moves by train anymore” (Vincent, 1995, p.A13).

The negative portrayal of Panamanian governance, and more specifically the capacity for competent governance in the future was framed as a highly unlikely phenomenon by American media. This criticism directly mirrors narratives seen in archival literature that characterized Panamanian leadership as self-serving, incompetent, and unmotivated (Palmer, 1909). In both contemporary and archival contexts, discussions aimed at the federal government of Panama often employ narratives of imperialist management (Fanon, 1952). In particular, these narratives frame racialized populations as dependent upon the ideology, organization, and power of a colonizer. In the context of the Panama Canal Zone, American writers scoffed at the future of the isthmus, without guidance and control of the
United States. *The Boston Globe* succinctly expressed the anxiety surrounding the acquisition of the trade route and territory by the Panamanian federal government.

“Many experts see serious risk in the panama canal handover. Panama has no experience in managing such a huge and significant enterprise on its own. The United States has dominated the Panamanian scene throughout the country’s history” (Palmer, 1999, p. A19).

Although most criticism appearing in travel literature was aimed towards the bureaucratic officials and governmental structure of Panama, some narratives also emerged in regard to Panamanian citizens. In particular, authors jumped at the chance to compare the organized suburban appearance of the American run Canal Zone with chaotic spaces of urban Panama. In particular, writers inferred that the difference in appearance and organization between the two areas was influenced by the superiority of American cultural practices and bureaucratic organization. In extreme contexts, authors used conceptual and material comparisons between spaces to justify the temporal extension of American control in Panama. An article published in 1990 by *The Boston Globe* discussed the recent removal of General Noriega and the future of annexation for The Panama Canal Zone. The author, Steve Fainaru, writes,

“One year after the invasion the situation is so grave that Americans appear to be needed more than ever. Here is the difference said the Panamanian pointing to the well manicured grounds of Albrook air force base, then to a decaying stretch of railroad track on the other side of the road. “Gringos over here. Panama over here” (1990, p. 7).

Descriptions of unkempt or filthy spaces were often interwoven with discussions of Panamanian independence and capabilities. In particular, the built form and physical characteristics of urban Panama was understood as a reflection of disorganization by the Panamanian government. In certain instances, the environment of urban neighborhoods was also used to characterize the Panamanian residents. In both circumstances American writers inferred a negative representation of Panamanian spaces and people that resided outside of American control. Although travel writers unequivocally represented the Canal Zone as a space of pleasant order, Panamanian cities were portrayed as dismal spaces of
filth and anarchy. This included descriptions of the “steamy garbage strewn barrios of Colon” and the “littered squalor” of Panama City (Krauss, 1991; Emling, 1999, p. A23).

In conjunction with unflattering descriptions of Panamanian spaces, travel writers also perpetuated narratives of Panamanian dependency. Despite significant resistance to American imperialism in Panamanian history, most evidently seen in the student riots of 1964, journalist continue to overwhelmingly emphasize narratives that supported an extended American occupation by Panamanian citizens. In 1999 The National Geographic’s journalist Lewis Simons interviewed local residents regarding the annexation of the Canal. One Panamanian stated, “Everyday I pray to go that the gringo doesn’t leave.” Francisco continues, “[i]t’s very bad for our country that they’re going: the biggest mistake Panama has ever made” (Simons, 1999, p. 62). Building on this statement Lewis contends that, “For
people as poor as Francisco Mepaquito these twilight days of the American presence bring the worry that they will grow only poorer in the years ahead” (Simons, 1999, p. 78). By emphasizing the uncertainty regarding the future of the Panama Canal and departure of the American government from the Canal Zone, American travel writers perpetuate narratives of dependency by Panama since the arrival of the United States a century before. In broader terms, Panama's history as a colonized nation both by Spain and The United States has been used to justify assertions of infantilism. Simons continues,

“It struck me that the transformation to self reliance may depend less on Panamanians acquiring expertise than on their ability to stop thinking of themselves only as little brothers- of America for the past century, of Colombia before that, and earlier still of Spain (Simons, 1999, p. 71). “

Similar to discourses appearing in the early twentieth century, contemporary travel writers have emphasized the territory and people of Panama as reliant on foreign powers to manage and guide the country. In part, this is due to a geographic imaginary that conceptually represents the Panama Canal Zone as comprising the entirety of Panama. Although the ten square mile territory has enormous economic importance for the nation, Panama’s social, cultural, and geographic breadth extends far beyond the Zone. Travel literature's focus on the once-American territory is largely related to narratives of nation building and imperialism in the United States. In particular, by perpetuating discourses of infantile and paternal relations between The United States and Panama, travel literature resonates in the temporal period of American imperialism and power abroad. This is evident in excerpts from travel literature such as *National Geographic*, which frame relations between Panama and America as inherently unequal.

“Although Panama has existed as a country since 1903, the US involvement has been so overwhelming that people here have never learned to feel independent. Now for the first time Panamanians are on their own” (Lewis, 1999, p.64).

The *National Geographic* supports narratives of dependency in their article by providing quotations from a local Panamanian. The man states,
“We’re like a little boy in short pants who’s always run to daddy when he’s gotten into trouble. Now daddy’s gone and the little boy must put on his first pair of long trousers” (Lewis, 1999, p. 64).

It is clear from the quotations provided that leading up to the annexation a level of anxiety and hesitancy regarding Panama’s new role of governance in the Canal Zone existed among residence of the country. However, noticeably absent from popular travel literature was an alternative narrative of desired independence and freedom from the United States’ imperialist reign. Although both perspectives were prevalent in the Panama, travel writers from the Global North and the United States more specifically, continued to focus on statements of dependency, which perpetuated historical discourses from nearly a century prior (Palmer, 1909). The focus by American travel writers on the Panama Canal as well as infantile description of Panamanian people created a one-dimensional representation of Panama for general audiences. Unfortunately a lack of diversity among Panama’s representation in travel writing established a limited geographic imaginary of the country for potential visitors. As seen by writer Jim Minter from the Atlanta Constitution, the expectations by American tourists in the country were strongly shaped by these repetitive narratives. Minter writes of his visit to Panama,

“I had expected to find some degree of appreciation for the Carter administration’s agreement to surrender the canal. There was none- North Americans did not seem welcome. The dominant downtown landmark was a giant mural depicting an armed and helmeted American soldier as a beastly oppressor of the people” (Minter, 1988, p.D2).

The divergence in representation between travel literature and the personal experience of author Jim Minter illustrates a conceptual and material gap in the understanding of American imperialism. As stated in the passage, Minter’s expectation of imperialist celebration and gratitude was replaced, in the author’s view, with resistance to his presence in Panama. It is evident from this experience, that the descriptions, representations, and perspectives appearing in travel writing from the Global North, deviates significantly from the emotions and interactions of many Panamanians. Most importantly, travel literature influences the behavior of tourists in place, shaping the experiences and potential narratives that emerge from the isthmus (Mollett, 2017). For this reason, the theme of American imperialism in popular travel literature of the
contemporary era can be understood as functioning in a cyclical fashion, with many tourists re-creating narratives of celebration regarding American control in the isthmus.

5.5 Narratives of Management in Panama’s Urban Centers

Travel narratives of inferior Panamanian governance during the 1990s supported the common representation of the United States as an exceptional imperial force over the people and spaces of Panama. Since the arrival of American travel writers in Panama, commentators have described Panamanians in negative terms. In particular, these discourses have been informed by racial logics that represent Panamanians as inferior to white Americas (Frenkel, 2002). In the Traveler’s Guide and Business Man’s Handbook (1862), Panamanian people were described as, “composed of a mongrel race of Spaniards, Indians, and Negroes, were too indolent and unaccustomed to labor to be depended on to any great extent” (Frenkel, 2002, p. 88). The negative perception of Panamanian populations had a variety of material contingencies. Scholars of geography assert that historically “The negative nature of these [Panamanian] representations undergirded American perceptions of the Canal Zone” and supported physical segregation initiatives (Frenkel, 2002, p.85). In particular, white Americans rationalized the residential organization of Zone and labour hierarchy as necessary practices due to the negative perception of Panamanians and migrant labourers (McCullough, 1977; Frenkel, 2002, Lasso, 2013). Unfavourable descriptions of racialized Panamanians also shaped the representations of cities with significant populations of West Indian and Afro-colonial people,

“Americans also distanced themselves as much as possible from Panamanian cities. They perceived the cities as dirty, unhealthy places, and used them to justify the maintenance of a ‘safe haven’ (the Zone) for Canal employees. The image homogenized Panamanian cities as ‘pest holes of the tropics” (Frenkel, 2002, p. 94).

Criticism regarding Panamanian spaces has continued over the twentieth century and became increasingly evident after the American invasion of Panama City in 1989 and the Canal annexation in 1999. During this time period, narratives of “criminality and a wide ranging economic crisis” characterized descriptions of Panama’s governance (Guerron-Montero, 2014, p. 423). Despite attempts by the Panamanian government to “construct an
image of a peaceful demilitarized, nation, safe for tourists”, travel writers continued to represent Panamanians, cities, and government in negative terms (Guerron-Montero, 2014, p.420). In particular, critics used the aesthetic differences between the Canal Zone and other urban centers as evidence of improper governance by Panamanians. For this reason, the spatial characteristics of various urban landscapes were embedded with racial representations of inferiority and incompetency (Frenkel, 2002; Emling, 1999; Simons, 1999). Scholars of Panama assert that narratives of superior American management informed this perception (Lasso, 2013; McCullough, 1977).

5.6 Searching for Sanctuary: Narratives of Wilderness and Escape among Panamanian Travel Literature

Since the departure of the United States from the Panama Canal Zone territory, Panamanian travel narratives have changed considerably in the twenty first century. Starting in the 1990s the tourism agenda of the Panamanian federal government focused on the natural environment of the country as an attraction for foreign visitors after the removal General Noriega (Guerron-Montero, 2014). However, it was not until the annexation of the Panama Canal Zone in 1999 that travel writers also turned their attention natural landscapes of the isthmus. In the twenty-first century, Panama has followed the eco-tourism example of neighboring Costa Rica with great success. In fact, the isthmus has become known as a preferable alternative to Costa Rica, which has recently been characterized in travel literature as too commercialized. The travel blog Nomadic Matt published an article on Panama writing,

“Panama is still far from being overrun with tourists in the way that say Costa Rica is. It’s still easy to find beach or island you can have entirely to yourself or spend the night in a village that’s hardly ever seen a tourist, even Panamanian ones” (Kepnes, 2008).

Due to the positive publicity Panama has received over the past two decades, the tourism industry has grown significantly. Rather than described as a “price inflated eco-circus” like neighboring Costa Rica, Panama has been characterized as possessing a “rustic tranquility” in travel literature (Cristol, 2005, p. M1; Neville, 2013). The transformation of Panamanian travel narratives shortly after the withdrawal of the United States from the country created a consensus among writers that for Panama in the twenty first century, the “US is out and
tourism is in (Gedan, 2003, p.M1)”. In this context, the country’s success as a tourism destination was largely dependent on descriptions of Panama as a picturesque and perfect area of escape. These narratives combined with imagery of lush foliage and white sand beaches have facilitated comparisons of Panama to a real life “paradise” or “Eden” in popular travel literature (Neville, 2013; Carpenter, 2010). In other articles, authors emphasized Panama’s otherworldly qualities, describing the country as a “magical spot”, “like something out of a dream”, and “a sanctuary for the soul” (Victor, 2002, Ramesch, 2016, Bocas Breeze, 2013). Although Panama has always possessed beautiful landscapes and natural attractions, interest by travel literature in these qualities is in fact a response to public demand. Escape from modern society has become a growing desire for many tourists in the contemporary era. In 2006 The Boston Globe discussed the draw to Panama for American residential tourists stating that, “foreigners are looking for a haven from a world they perceive as unsafe because of crime at home and global terrorism” (Lakshmanan, 2006, p. A1). The perceived safety of expatriate enclaves and rural areas of the isthmus is a considerable draw for tourists who feel uncertain in everyday life due to the rapid and transformative geo-political factors of the twenty first century. For other travelers, Panama provides an opportunity to escape stressful and demanding occupations. In 2015, International Living advertisements for Bocas del Toro, Panama targeted audiences looking to escape from the obligations of contemporary society. The magazine wrote,

“Despite the bohemian types that trickle through, it’s still the kind of place I describe as “untouristy” and most definitely unspoiled. No big name resorts or concrete jungles here and there are no hurricanes ever. The beaches are never over crowded and you can often have stretches entirely to yourself. People go about their daily lives scarcely affected by the modern world. Sure they have cell phones and email accounts but they don’t spend every second checking them. The pace of life is blissfully languid- no rat race allowed. The motto you’ll hear most: cero estres (zero stress) (Ramesch, 2015).

The desire by tourists to temporarily eliminate stressful elements of their life is a repeated theme throughout Panamanian travel writing. After visiting the Isthmus, Conde Nast author Peter Stevenson discusses the longing for his own children to experience Panama as a space devoid of modern anxieties. He writes,
“Bocas still offers itself without adornment without the façade of vacation land and its very realness was acting on me as a de-stressor. I thought about coming back, with my kids they could experience a place which felt removed from time and concern” (Stevenson, 2012).

Figure 23: Dock in Isla Bastimentos, Bocas del Toro, Panama: Kyla Egan (March, 2018)

In travel literature advertisements offering tourists an escape from modern society are often used in conjunction with imagery of wilderness and solitude. Interaction with nature by travellers is largely understood as the temporal and spatial antithesis to modern life in the Global North. For this reason, travel writers often discuss in great detail the abundance of landscapes and wildlife that are present in Panama as a tourist attraction. In particular, travel literature often focuses on “opportunities to escape into untouched wilds” of Panama, in order to gain greater public interest (Gillcash, 2014). For this reason, Panama’s animals and landscapes have become as significant of an attraction as the Canal in the contemporary era. The Boston Globe describes the country’s biodiversity in 2014,
“The massive wilderness area is a wildlife watchers paradise feature red and green macaws, birds of paradise, monkeys, armadillos and thee toed sloths. Of course these are just a few of Panama’s wonders, the isthmus nation is rife with amazing coastline, deep jungles and a biodiversity that is mind boggling” (Vohr, 2014).

In the past two decades, Panama's tourism industry has used the country's natural biodiversity in conjunction with the development of eco-lodges and expatriate enclaves to attract foreign populations. As seen in narratives of short-term travel, immersion of tourists in Panama's natural attractions is considered a relief from the stressful and chaotic elements that characterize modern society in the Global North. Similar environmental narratives are also used to attract long-term residential tourists, who view migration to Panama as a form of escape. In the Los Angeles Times, the popular expatriate enclave of Boquete is described in terms of its fertile soil and abundant natural landscapes. The author Yvonne Horn writes,

“A contributor to the San Francisco chronicle wrote about a Panamanian Shangri-la in the cool highlands of Chiriqui where they were rushing trout filled streams, a lush mountain rain forest, abundant orange groves and coffee plantations, and a picture postcard town chockablock with flower gardens. This idyllic place, the writer went on to say, was known only to the well to-do of Panama looking to escape the mugginess and mosquitos of the lowlands” (Horn, 2002).

Boquete’s location in the mountainous highlands facilitates the growth of coffee plantations and orange farms in the region. Often described as the land of “eternal spring” in travel literature, the area’s expansive forests and gardens are often used in advertisements (Witmer, 2017). For Bocas del Toro, another prominent expatriate enclave, the “rings of tropical green water” and sand beaches of the archipelago is the predominant draw for residential tourists (Neville, 2013). Descriptions by travel writers that represent the area as “isolated” is also considered a positive characteristic for the islands (Neville, 2013). In The Guardian, travel writer Ian Usher describes life in the archipelago, including daily interaction with wild animals. The author writes,

“At first we felt like we’d achieved the perfect life- sunny days skimming across the water in our little boat watching dolphins, snorkeling in clear water through shoals of fish. We were living on fresh seafood, bananas, pineapples, coconuts and eggs from the chickens that roamed freely across the island” (Usher, 2015).
Narratives that celebrate greater interaction with natural elements of the world, including landscapes and animals, are also applied in this instance to the consumption of resources. As illustrated above, the use of fresh and sustainably farmed resources in Bocas del Toro is considered one aspect that contributes to the “perfect” existence acquired in the archipelago. In other articles, Bocas del Toro’s natural and isolated character is said to create “a deliciously slow and seductive pace” and “smiling laid back locals” (Stevenson, 2012; Mills, 2013). Common representations of life in Panama often discuss the positive effect that a simpler lifestyle and abundant wilderness have had on populations from the Global North. *International Living* discussed the personal transformation felt among residential migrant family in Bocas del Toro.

“Living in harmony with nature has really allowed our family to let our guard down from the energy of the city and be more sensitive to life. You have to be creative here to make things work out. Patience and being able to let go of expectations is a big lesson to learn” (Witmer, 2017).

Throughout contemporary travel narratives regarding Panama, a better quality of life is repeatedly stated as the main reason foreign migrants have moved to the isthmus. In fact in many travel articles, closeness to nature is portrayed as an important element in transforming the character of a person’s life. Idyllic descriptions of relaxing sand beaches, the chirping of birds in jungle treetops, and expansive gardens are commonly repeated images that shape the expectations of visiting tourists or residents. The purpose of these representations is to denote a simpler, less stressful, and easier life than what is offered in the Global North. Narratives of escapism, particularly to wild or isolated landscapes, are used to advertise Panama as a premier destination. In particular, claims by travel media that on the isthmus “every day is a vacation” for foreign residents supports these geographic imaginaries (Ramesch, 2015). For Panama, the principal message tourists are receiving from travel literature is that the combination of abundant wilderness, lifestyle changes, and warm climate, “should give you some picture of how happy people here are—homegrown and expat alike” (Newell, 2015). For this reason, the narratives of escapism that are common in Panamanian travel literature are representative of the antipathy that populations in Global North have towards aspects of modern society. Whether tourists are
interested in relaxation or adventure Panama’s reputation as a destination of escape facilitates North-South migration to the isthmus.

5.7 Constructing Value in ‘Wild’ Spaces

Panama’s representation in travel media as an ecological sanctuary is informed by a variety of conceptual understandings. Firstly, the importance of ‘wild’ and ‘virgin’ landscapes first emerged during the nineteenth century in the United States, as a variety of cultural and political actors claimed the resource of untouched lands were in short supply (Cronon, 1995). Cronon states that during this cultural moment, “The wastelands that had once seemed worthless had for some people come to seem almost beyond price” (Cronon, 1995, p.6). Sheller (2003) states that the importance of nature in the Caribbean also emerged during the nineteenth century but due to a different process, “This romantic vision of untamed tropical nature, which arose especially in the period following the abolition of slavery, was constructed around experiences of moving through Caribbean landscapes and of experiencing bodily what was already known imaginatively through literature and art” (Sheller, 2003, p. 38).

The transformation of nature and wilderness in popular imaginaries informs the growth of Panama’s ecotourism industry (Sheller, 2003; Van Noorloos, 2011. In particular, the emerging representation of nature as an important and disappearing element of the world, actually lead to greater consumption of ‘natural’ and ‘untouched’ landscapes by North Americans and Europeans (Cronon, 1995). In the United States, “elite urban tourists” and “the nation's wealthiest citizens” emerged as the principal consumers of wilderness through activities such as guided hiking tours and hunting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Cronon, 1995). These practices of tourism were the foundation for travel narratives that later glorified Panama’s tropical jungles and white sand beaches in tourism literature (Guerron Montero, 2011).

Historically, elite tourists conceptualized wilderness differently than rural populations, “wild land was not a site for productive labor and not a permanent home; rather, it was a place of recreation” (Cronon, 1995). A variety of similarities exist between the elite tourists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States and amenity
migrant populations in Panama. In particular, scholars have demonstrated that the mobility of amenity migrants is informed by pursuit for a “better way of life” (Benson, 2013, p. 501, Benson & O’Reilly, 2009, & Spalding, 2013). Benson (2013) discusses the appeal for amenity migrants of a tourism destination conceptually secluded from urban settings,

“ In many ways, the desire for the rural idyll embedded in the migrants’ lives parallels the quest for authenticity that is claimed to lie at the root of the tourist experience. Unlike tourists, however, the desire for authentic living- here encapsulated in the concept of the rural idyll- is ongoing in everyday life after migration” (Benson, 2013, p. 501).

For some amenity migrants, residing and working in ‘wild’ landscapes is perceived as providing a better quality of life, due to the positive conceptions of wilderness that first emerged in travel narratives of the United States.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis offers an analysis of how colonial-imperial logics of empire remained embedded in contemporary nation building agendas. In particular, this thesis demonstrates how hegemonic Euro-American geographic imaginations shape the past and present through themes of natural resource consumption, white supremacy, American exceptionalism, place making, and migration appearing in travel literature. These themes emerge through the use of historical geography and the discursive analysis of a variety of travel narratives, found in newspapers and autobiographical accounts. In particular, this thesis contends that such imaginaries are mobilized by tourists and affluent elite migrants from North America and Europe in ways that reproduces particular understandings of Panamanian space, place and people in Panama. For this reason, imperial narratives appearing in Panamanian travel literature inform the geographic imaginary of Panama and influence the perceptions and behavior of affluent populations on the isthmus from 1841 to present. The methodological approach of historical geography and historical data collection of travel materials demonstrates the congruity of imperial narratives in the contemporary tourism industry of Panama. In particular, discussions of migration and tourism to Panama were conceptually grounded in the United States’ expanding empire and forged through celebratory narratives of imperial superiority (Salvatore, 1998; Moore, 2013). Racial logics underpinned many of the relations on the isthmus, including residential organization, labour relations, and the development of rural land (McCullough 1977, Lasso, 2013, Frenkel 2002). The colonial history of Panama also informed the geographic imaginary of the country as a space of abundant and untold potential for Euro-American populations, a narrative that had persisted since the arrival of Spanish colonizers nearly four hundred years prior (Frenkel, 1996). Colonial constructions of Panama’s land and people in travel media informed popular discussions of resource development, wilderness, and Indigenous populations (Frenkel, 1995; Cronon, 1995; Mollett 2011; Mollett, 2016; Redman 1991).

The analysis of Panamanian travel narratives has revealed both substantial transformations and persistent congruities of discourse from 1880 to 2017. During the formation of the Panama Canal Zone by the United States, Panama’s attraction for tourists
and migrants was its potential as a fruitful American colony (Scott, 2016). In the modern context of amenity migrant and residential tourism enclaves, imperial and colonial logics continue to inform North-South patterns of mobility and settlement to the Isthmus (Benson, 2013; Mollett, 2017; Guerón-Monter, 2011; Spalding, 2013). In particular, Panama’s tourism industry utilizes geographic imaginaries of Panama as a space of consumption, sanctuary, and discovery (Mollett, 2017; Guerón-Monter, 2014; Sheller 2003; Spalding, 2013). Panama’s reputation as country where elite migrants are able to make place and establish communities continues to inform the isthmus’ appeal for amenity migrant populations (Benson, 2013; Guerón-Monter, 2014). The nation building imaginaries of American and European empires have shaped the geographic imaginaries for short-term and long-term elite migrants since the nineteenth century.

**Recommendations For Moving Forward and Future Research**

As discussed, the pervasive use of imperial travel narratives has influenced the mobilities, imaginaries, and behavior of tourists to Panama. By combining compelling travel narratives with the development agendas and international investment, Panama’s tourism industry will continue to prosper in the coming years. Plans to expand the international airport, transform Colón into a hub for cruise ships, and further develop residential tourism enclaves are all recent initiatives supported by the Panamanian government in an attempt to accommodate the growing demand for international tourism experienced in the country (Castellano, 2017; Ramirez, 2017). It is possible that Panama may also see another boom in residential tourist migration as the political environment of the United States and Europe becomes increasingly turbulent. The contemporary environment of the Panamanian tourism industry is characterized by fast paced and hurried development, which has been largely inspired by elite tourism actors. Moreover, the persuasive travel narratives appearing in tourism literature have facilitated these changes by encouraging tourists from the Global North to migrate, explore, and settle in the isthmus. For this reason, in order to negate the growing influence of travel narratives, a variety of recommendations have been developed. Firstly, public awareness regarding prejudicial or misleading travel narratives is the most important factor in shaping the
public’s geographic imaginary of tourist destinations. Travel writers and tourists are often unaware of the hegemonic power formations that influence the perception of other people and places. In particular, imperial narratives can be difficult to identify because they are frequently embedded in common discourse. For this reason, discussions regarding the historical and social relations underpinning the tourism industry need to be more widely circulated in travel discussions outside of the academic field. However, as alternative forms of tourism become more common and with the increased dissemination of academic material in the mainstream media, consumer decisions regarding tourism may start to change. This reconstruction will be seen more quickly if tourists become responsible and critical consumers of travel literature, rather than complicit in the dissemination of imperial narratives. Secondly, the publishers, editors, and writers responsible for the creation of travel literature need to be held accountable regarding the information and opinions shared in mainstream media. Although tourism is traditionally viewed as a leisure industry, writers sharing misrepresentative information should be compelled to adhere to the journalistic standards seen in other areas of the discipline. Work by scholars such as Iaquinto (2011), which examines the financial and social factors that influence decision making at tourism literature companies, is increasingly necessary in order to understand how best to approach this topic. Taking these recommendations into account, future research could expand to also include image-based media, which is becoming increasingly popular for the travel industry. This may include the depiction of Panamanian imagery in movies, travel shows, music videos, and social media platforms such as Instagram or YouTube. The analysis of media that is most commonly utilized by young adults, could illustrate how imperial narratives have penetrated digital imagery for a new generation.
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