

“I will let my art speak out”: Visual narrations of Youth Combating Intolerance

by

Jennifer Nicole Little
B.A., University of Victoria, 2001
M.A., University of Victoria, 2006

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the School of Child and Youth Care

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

This qualitative inquiry focuses on exploring youth subjectivities in relation to a curriculum focused on diversity issues. This curriculum is housed within a community camp called Youth Combating Intolerance. Using a unique methodology called *pedagartistry*, the youth visually narrated their experiences being young activists and the challenges that run alongside. Drawing on ideas of becoming, multiplicity and reflexivity, the youth described a spectrum of experiences relevant to youth, educators and those invested in practicing from an anti-oppressive praxis.

Key words: *youth, social justice, arts-based practice, pedagartistry*

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Although writing is often a solitary pursuit, it is not an endeavor of isolation. I would like to extend my gratitude to Constable Paul Brookes for inviting me into the Youth Combating Intolerance (YCI) community, to my youth consultants for their wise words and wisecracks, to my dissertation committee and Dr. Hedy Bach for their feedback and support, and to all members on the “unofficial” committee – you know who you are.

Chapter I - Introduction

Angelica - Something cool that happened after we last met is that I realized I had this poem that I wrote that totally fit all the requirements [of the research project].

I wrote it before YCI camp and at YCI camp and then after and it was totally my experience. I thought, oh my god! That's exactly how it was! She writes:

*I've lived in a house with goats on the roof,
and danced in fields of tulips bigger than my head.
I've sung the melodies of my soul to the fire-eaters in the street
and surfed the sound waves on life's current,
riding to the shore of paradise in my mind.*

*I've flown as a dragon through oceans of timeless thought,
traveling at the speed of light.
I've journeyed, invisible, through a galaxy of time,
and struck as lightening in a desert of glass.*

*I've shaken the hand of a holocaust survivor,
and wept under the stars for all the evil in the world.
I've felt the love of a complete stranger,
and been in a circle of 100 people who are going to make peace happen.*

*I've watched the stars, feeling the stillness of the night,
with someone who has never been there for me.
I've shared my dreams, and discovered my purpose in life.
I've danced on the beach with a new friend,
and made daisy chains in a field of clover.*

I've had a life changing experience.

*I have felt the finger tips of peace in my throat.
I've shaken uncontrollably, and played with the flame of hope.
I lit myself on fire, and people blew me out.*

I've been uplifted to create a new tomorrow.

*I've been blindfolded on a chain and pulled through life until now.
I've breathed in pure crisp air and felt peace in my lungs,
I've washed my soul in cold, fresh water and purified existence.
I've caught up with my thoughts after the chase of a lifetime,*

and found my path through the sky of life.

We begin our journey together as writer and readers through a poetic description provided by a member of Youth Combating Intolerance (YCI). YCI has been in existence for six years and in that time, has exposed hundreds of students from Victoria, B.C.'s School District 61 to a spectrum of diversity issues through an annual three day camp. YCI invites speakers who have directly experienced oppression to discuss issues such as residential schools, racism, homophobia, the Holocaust, bullying, and xenophobia with the hope of "exposing [youth] to these issues and moving it from the mind to the heart" (Derosa, April 20, 2010, Times Colonist on-line). YCI further supports the students' subsequent school projects focused on education and inclusiveness. What I offer the reader is my six month journey with five young people: Lily, 16, Tash, 15, Angelica, 17, Kyla, 18, and Sebastian, 18. During our time together we engaged in a series of arts-based research collaborations that included focus groups, individual and group art production, and a public art exhibition. During these collaborations, we discussed their evolving selves in relation to their participation in YCI and the impact that this has had on their actions in the world. Ginwright (2008) reflects that:

Making the world a more humane dwelling place, however, requires that our research and advocacy create space to foster a collective imagination among youth. While rare, these spaces hold the possibilities to reframe and re-imagine the type of world in which we choose to live. These spaces, however, are not open to the public and frequently hidden beneath the layers of the 'youth problem' tropes so frequently used to describe young folks'

lives. Unfortunately, research and public imagination of young people's lives remain restricted to static conceptualizations of development, rigid frames about work and family life, and distorted notions of behaviour, *which all fail to capture the mosaic of experiences and textured realities of young people's lives.* (p.14, emphasis added)

As such, I set out to co-create a visual mosaic of meanings with my youth consultants.¹ The consultants are introduced in more depth in Chapter IV, but I was interested in recruiting those who met the following criteria:

- For consultants to be in at least their second year of the camp
- Explicit preference for those youth in their last year of camp
- Youth who could provide parental/guardian consent for participation
- Youth who consented to *not* being anonymous

I explicitly sought out consultants who were in at least their second year of camp with the hope that there would be some time for them to have participated in both the camp and the subsequent school based project their YCI club would have chosen. I asked for students in their last year of camp to give a chance for those moving on to other endeavors to voice and visually narrate their experience. As it turns out, all consultants had attended at least three times. As per agreement with the YCI coordinator, I was requested to provide parental/guardian permission for participation. Most importantly, I sought youth who agreed not to be anonymous (although a pseudonym could be chosen). Lassiter (2005), in his review of when anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed and when the ethnographic attention

¹ I use the term consultant throughout this dissertation, as opposed to the traditional term, participant, to denote the youth's unique knowledge(s) and artistic contributions.

to detail supersedes that intention, comments that “it highlights how anonymity and confidentiality often do more to protect the researcher from direct and immediate criticism than it does to protect the researcher’s interlocutors” (p.89). In other words, having consultants concurrently visible through their creations *and* not anonymous through their verbal narrations rendered me much more accountable of their presentation. Given the artistic angle of the project, anonymity would have silenced their artistic merit and contributions. What was that expression again? Oh yes, “anonymous was a woman.”

Technically, this was a convenience sample given I have volunteered with YCI for the last few years. I prefer to frame it as a relational sample. This was a highly relational sample that grew out of community activism, including my being a speaker at YCI for several years, and was sustained through artistic creativity. By calling it a relational sample, I acknowledge the effort applied to sustaining relationships prior to initiating the research. Further, a relational sample is congruent to researching from a Child and Youth Care (CYC) perspective; valuing rapport, trust and consultant as expert.

In many ways, this is a standard dissertation. You will come away from this judging the merit of my scholarship, my ethical intentions, and my research rigor. You will be able to do this as I include the usual chapters on methods, methodology and existing literature exploring arts-based research with youth. And yet I longed for this to be a creative pursuit; a fusion of found poetry, collage and the poly-vocal choir of youth voices. It was important to me as an academic, a lay artist, and activist to create something beautiful and consistent with my methodological

approach of pedagartistry which is discussed in detail in Chapter III. As the reader, you will form a relationship with this dissertation depending on what resonates most. Depending on your training, you may find this dissertation too boring or too tangential. Depending on your academic grooming, you may find this too eccentric or too fragmented. To argue for creative methodologies and creative dissemination is a *de jour* trend in qualitative research (Denzin, 2007; Knowles & Cole, 2008); to balance such complexity, which I have attempted to do throughout this study, in a single text is substantially more difficult. And it is through the risk of vulnerability that my consultants demonstrated each time they brought an art piece to a focus group that I am able to take risks in this dissertation. One could argue a developmental propensity regarding youth and risk taking, but I think it is important to acknowledge their efforts to visually narrate (i.e. answer research questions through visual art) their experiences in a peer setting, with an adult YCI presenter. As Bach (2007) reminds us, “experience differs from person to person; each undergoes and acts and reacts differently. Each has a different ‘angle of vision’ that touches on a common world. This angle of vision is an important component of visual narrative inquiry. There are no static categories of understanding or static forms of perception –one perception leads to another perception” (p. 282). As you will also see, these youth also take risks that centre on social justice and equality and I am humbled by their tenacity. At the same time, I am startled at some of their disclosures and stories, as they shatter any romantic inclinations I held regarding participation in YCI.

The rhizome of the research

I resonate with Roy (2003) who comments:

Dissatisfied with the general thrust of mainstream teacher education [and associated theories] that rarely considers the complex ambiguities of irregular spaces, and prefers to raise issues in terms of limiting and worn out representations and categories...I reconstitute the spaces that I observed using a different cartography. My intention was to incite a plane of intensities and becomings rather than recuperation and representation, new relays and formations instead of the structure of categories and boundaries that has dominated mainstream practices. (p. 2-3)

My resonance with his work grows out of parallel frustration with some educational texts purporting to advance multi-cultural, inclusive and so-called progressive curriculum (see standard texts such as Corey, 2008; Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2001; and Santrock, 2007 who compliment the “add and stir approach” to diversity). Inherent in these texts is the concurrent tokenism of (singular) ethnicity and erasure of difference, essentially the dilution of both possibility and conflict. While I remain inspired by educators’ imperatives to make schools safe and remotely relevant to the lived experience of students, I concur with Olson (2003), who states “what is remarkable about the often-vehement criticism of the school is that no one seriously suggests that schooling is a failed social experiment and should be abolished” (p.15). That is what perhaps is so exciting to me as a researcher and long term presenter with YCI; I see in it the opportunity to create a “living” curriculum made up of personal narratives, relational interventions, and

most importantly, to mix ages and schools in a manner not made possible in the public school system. Although YCI camp is highly structured and its activities intentional, it is not standardized in the same way public education is, and I originally visualized it rhizomatically: “they implicate rather than replicate; they propagate, displace, join, circle back, fold...rhizomatic lines have no beginning or end; they are always in the process of *becoming*” (O’Riley, 2003, p.27, emphasis in original). As such, my overarching research question is: what *becomings* are undertaken or recognized as a result of participation in Youth Combating Intolerance (YCI) and *how might youth involved with YCI narrate their experience visually?*

The concept of becomings comes from Deleuzian philosophy and I borrow the term loosely so that the consultants can be considered from a less prescribed and pre-determined lens. Becomings in this inquiry refers to the expansions, contradictions and movement of consultants. It shifts me away from the temptation to conceptualize my consultants in binary fashion (before/after) and requires me to acknowledge that this project cannot fashion a finished subject. Sotirin (2005) reflects that “we might be tempted to think of becoming in terms of where or who we were and where or who we are when we end up. But becoming is not about origins, progressions and ends; rather, it is about lines and intensities” (p.100). This is a very difficult paradigm shift for many, including myself, to fully comprehend. Indeed, there are times within this text where I contradict Sotirin’s explanation and move within taken for granted conceptions like time and development. It is the idea that “becoming explodes the idea of about who we are and what we can be beyond

the categories that seem to contain us” (p.99) that is most salient to this inquiry. Although consultants were chosen from a very specific categorization (i.e. camp participation) I recognize that they are not limited to it and intersections of categories and discourses coalesce. This often becomes apparent when one attempts to describe consultants for the benefit of the reader. The defaulting language of gender, race and socio economic status imply static truths and run counter to fully embracing becoming as an orientation. At the same time, we are groomed to talk in certainties and not intensities. And in much qualitative research, we are groomed to use verbal and written language as our categories of expression. Turning to visual narration, then, is critical to expanding our relationships to the consultants. Visual means of expression are also congruent to thinking rhizomatically.

Further to the idea of visual, Bach (2007) said:

While at one level experience is an individual process, on another level experiences overlap. Our experiences are always our own, but they are shaped by the social, cultural, and institutional narratives in which individuals are embedded. We compose our own experiences, but others shape our experiences and so there is much that is shared. What individuals have in common is the basis of shared meaning. As individuals compose their lives, they tell stories of those experiences, and one of the ways in which individuals tell their stories is through the photographs that they take and through the photographs that others take of them. As photographs and stories are shared, resonance across stories becomes apparent, and what

might be seen as old common ground is revealed, even as new common ground among persons is created. (p.282)

Although this inquiry is not limited to photographs, I appreciate Bach's attention to "new common ground." Although all my consultants are repeat participants in YCI camp, this research offered a novel context to explore "old" ideas and to recycle art pieces and to fuse our artworks together. I am strongly convinced that visual narration assisted in this process.

Two Important Considerations

Truth

Given the turn to multiplicity, as a researcher, I am inclined to examine truths. Yet, simply tacking the letter s onto the word does not render it a-problematic as that would suggest a cultural relativism so pervasive in public education. Akin to Gallagher (2007) "the post-structuralist notions embedded in our methods reminded us that it would not be possible to 'know' the world through our participants, but that 'truths' would be local, temporal, and provisional. Rather than proceeding from classical notions of truth, our research methods observed instances of situated knowledges in deeply heterogeneous contexts" (p.55). While consultants may indeed believe themselves to be offering *a* truth, I will be taking their visual narratives and focus group conversations to be temporal; that is, this may be the truth right now. Conceptions of truth have marred the research project from the outset. For example, when speaking to educators and educational

advocates (i.e. GALE BC²), most were interested in my uncovering *the* truth³ about curriculum and did not appear as excited as I to explore ambiguous and potentially contradictory claims. In other words, if there is no truth, or if it was the wrong kind of truth, why bother?

It is the “why bother” question that has vexed me. It is precisely seeing and experiencing the world as fluid, despite institutional constraint, that I find exciting. For example, even if I feel boxed in by labels for women such as lesbian, bi-sexual or heterosexual, isn’t it marvelous that some of us can move between them (albeit not without consequences)? Or that “my truth” about “my/self” ten years ago has morphed into something less certain and less easily articulated yet infinitely more complicated? Butler (2004) states “identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression. This is not to say that I will not appear at political occasions under the sign of lesbian, but that I would like to have it permanently unclear what precisely that sign signifies” (as quoted in Salih, p.121). However, it is not all (multiple) roses. The lack of final or definitive claims to truth is unsettling for many readers, researchers and consultants. It “ruptures” replication of common sense and hopefully interrupts dominant discourses about “the” self. This brings us to a common term in CYC research and other qualitative research: identity.

² GALE BC stands for Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia and serves as an advocacy group for inclusive practices in public education. For more information, the reader is directed to <http://www.galebc.org/>.

³ Which, much like myself, was “the” truth that curriculum improves tolerance. In my capacity as an anti-homophobia advocate, I question this. Further, those I spoke to wanted “scientific” truth, meaning quantitative research to support diversity initiatives.

Identity, identities and subjects

I often resort to using the term identity when describing my research outside of my committee. Whether that communication is to colleagues, students or friends, there appears to be a short cut to understanding when I use this term. Not many people have retorted with: “well, what do you mean by identity”? When I look back to my MA research, which was focused on CYC practitioners’ feminist meaning making, I can now see I had an implicit understanding of identity that I assumed others would share. For example, although I appreciated that a feminist identity could and hopefully would, shift and expand, it was somewhat fixed (after all, once you were a feminist, how could you ever renounce? In other words, once you became aware of inequality, how could you return to *not* knowing it?) This was also framed at a time when I held some rigid conceptions of identity; I was surrounded by Queer individuals who openly spewed their hatred of transgendered people and I was not immune to my own transphobia. I viewed “hasbians” as traitors to gay and lesbian liberation (choice of preceding words intended) and was mired in an education that was striving to not only be a profession, but an ontological orientation. As Bloustien (2003) reflects “identity refuses to be static so we attempt to contain something that is continually in the process of *becoming*, continually in flux” (p.32, emphasis in original). But I did not want flux because flux would deconstruct my choices, my theories and that elusive “self.”

Yet, I have experienced my own ruptures, and owe gratitude to third wave feminist writings to push “the old guard” into new ways of thinking (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Berger, 2006; Jervis & Zeisler, 2006; Valenti, 2007, to name just

a few, although credit should be given to the Riot Grrrl movement for their contribution to feminist pop/political culture⁴). I also owe gratitude to my circle of friends who live multiplicity and do not necessarily theorize it. For this particular project, then, especially working with youth, I was required to shift from identity to subjectivities. In the temporal sense, I understand subjectivities as “always the incomplete sum of its discursive practices” (Denzin, 1997, p.38). In approaching my youth consultants, then, I approach them as partial articulations of a variety of discourses, including educational curriculum. I aim less to capture their developmental trajectories than to invite them to be reflexive about their experiences.

How the dissertation is organized

This text is purposely fragmented in an attempt to mimic collage, whereby contradictory materials are brought together to produce a larger picture. Like Briggs (1992), I acknowledge that many of us do not read in a linear manner, yet standard context demands we do. Likewise, my guess is that few of us write in a linear manner, yet we are required to produce as though we do. This is especially complicated in constructing an academic dissertation where issues of coherence and dare I say, rigor, are most important. Yet collage is not intentionally chaotic, and it is not my intention to intentionally confuse the reader or produce postmodern nonsense. So this dissertation is framed throughout by data poetry, postcards, paradoxical invitations, and song lyrics and punctuated by forays into “grafted” (Denzin, 2003, p.43) conversations. As with my experience with collage, fragments

⁴ Special thanks to Janna McKenzie and Chrissey Farwell who introduced me to some of these readings while doing directed studies in feminist reading with me.

throughout this text are those that resonated with my research consultants and me. And while I have attempted to make explicit the choices herein, I think it is a prudent reminder that there are implicit meanings and subjective viewings outside of my control. Sontag (1977), when speaking to photography, reflected:

Although photography generates work that can be called art – it requires subjectivity, it can lie, it gives aesthetic pleasure- photography is not, to begin with, an art form at all. Like language, it is a medium in which works of art (among other things) are made. Out of language, one can make scientific discourse, bureaucratic memoranda, love letters, grocery lists, and Balzac's Paris. Out of photography, one can make passport pictures, weather photographs, pornographic pictures, x-rays, wedding pictures, and Atget's Paris. (p.148)

What you are holding right now, or gazing via a screen at, is multiple, and each reading will produce something new and potentially contradictory.

It is also important to note that throughout this text, I have included quotations from consultants that are, at times, lengthy and this may be construed as cumbersome to some readers. I have done this for several reasons. First, data collection was done in focus groups, creating a layered effect on singular questions. At times, to amputate pieces would be to render the quote in question a-contextual. Secondly, consultants, quite bluntly, had a lot to say that was relevant to the conversations and queries at hand. I think this speaks to the fact that there are few spaces created specifically for youth to articulate their thoughts, opinions and reactions. As such, it was important for me to honour that. I want to stress that this

“honouring” is in no way free of critical analysis; rather this inquiry invited youth voices and I feel they deserve equal space within the dissertation. Lastly, just as one cannot uproot a rhizomatic plant without a tangle of interconnected root mass, singular quotes could not be understood without the holistic inclusion. I have, however, omitted various colloquial space fillers such as “um” and “like” and taken creative license with punctuation to better invite the reader to read consultants’ quotes in their entirety.

From this chapter, I invite the reader into the next chapter to consider some of the literature that has shaped and influenced this inquiry. Specifically, this chapter is constructed as a conversation between myself and various authors and is designed to explore questions related to arts-based methodology, youth, curriculum, and framing inquiry. I then discuss the methodology-pedagogy- created for this dissertation. In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed introduction to my five consultants. I then orientate the reader to the consultants’ definitions of social justice, which provide a foundation for subsequent discussion. I will then present the metaphors and themes arising from our work together, which included coming from the dark to the light/how I beat gravity, shedding social skins, authenticity, polite activists need only apply, and fractal emergence. I will highlight in the following chapter how consultants conceptualize themselves in the future, based on their exposure to YCI. I then discuss the public art exhibition that we organized as a key component to the research process. I conclude our journey with thoughts on arts-based practice with youth and future directions. In the words of John Mayer,

“this is the beautiful disaster piece I’ve made” (*This will all make sense some day*, unreleased single).

Write in This Space

Do Not Write in This Space

Chapter II – Literature Party or: A Conversation With Authors

Oh, it's another social casualty

Score one more for me

And I could see clearly

An indelible line was drawn

Between what was good

What just slipped out and what went wrong

Oh, I'm never speaking up again

Starting now

(Mayer, 2001, track 3)

It is interesting to note that I had a dream while doing data collection where a voice said to me, “you will find your truth through fiction and not theory.” For each research project I have had such seemingly uninvited yet illuminating dreams. McNiff (2008) is one of few researchers I have read who explicitly addresses the role of dreams as a layer of review: “the dream is a way of knowing, and it stimulates responses and attempts to understand it that collaborate with other modes of cognition” (p.26). Another dream I had pictured me holding Zigrosser’s (1969) selected works of Kathe Kollwitz and me saying “I need this.” And while I did read the book in its entirety, I was left wondering what value it had for my research until I began to consider other influential female artists. For example, another key turning point in my conception of art and feminism was my learning about Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party* as an adolescent. And so, dreams mingled with memories

that mingled with research reading and “recreational reading.” Unraveling this matrix for readers was a daunting task. What I have created to highlight the inter-conversational aspects of reviewing the literature is to present the authors in conversation with one another, and I have included myself as a guest in these conversations. Sadly, the American Psychological Association’s (APA) writing guidelines have not caught up with creative writing in many respects, so for clarity, direct quotations are noted within traditional quotation marks with page numbers at the end. I have also created the character of Doubt, which effectively is my alter-ego to trouble some of the directions suggested and contested. Like Naidus (2009):

I write this book with daily ambivalence. An internalized judge sits worrying that my examination of the issues will be perceived as being too parochial, too self-absorbed and will, at its core, disappoint readers.

Knowing as much as I do about the perils of creating a new work of art, I am developing compassion for that inner judge as she lurks, taking me to task and away from task, waiting for the passion to overcome the self-doubts. Mindfully and persistently wrestling with that voice is helping me develop the compassion necessary to teach others-and to teach myself. (p.5)

So in this spirit, I have invited those writers, created characters, and you the reader, to a dinner party of sorts, a mad hatter’s pizza party. You are welcome to sit anywhere at the metaphorical table.

Chicago – I am not sure I’ve set enough places! Do we need a seating plan? I’m not in the mood for petty arguments.

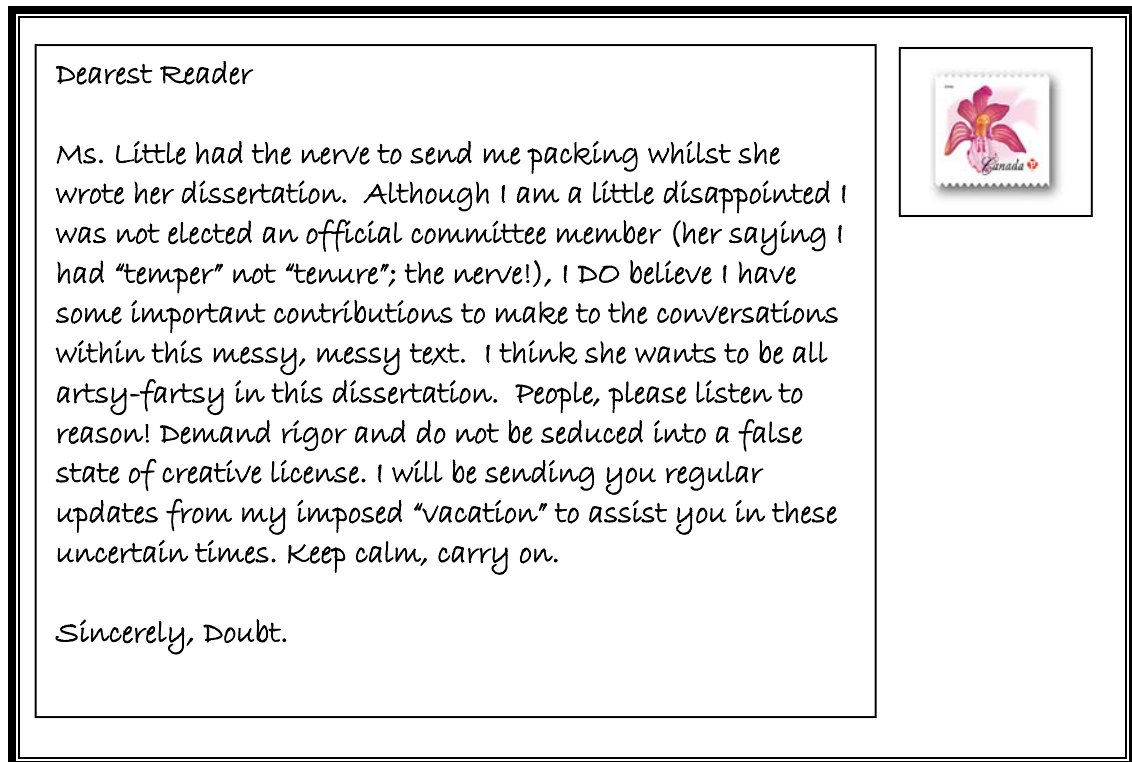
M. Gergen – Shall we set up an appreciative inquiry session instead?

Little – No worries, guests will come and go, we can't be seated all at once.

Besides, some will be coming via memory.

Chicago – And some by mail apparently – who is this postcard from?

Little – Postcard? That's strange. Hand it over.



Little – Oh great, Doubt has hijacked the show already. Doubt hasn't even written a dissertation and she has the nerve to demand input!

Chicago – How did she know we were here? There isn't even an address on the card.

Little – Well, Doubt *is* sneaky. Let's just ignore it. The good thing is that Doubt often hangs out with her cousins Procrastination and Pessimism; hopefully they are meddling in someone else's academic life.

Lather – Ok, then, who wants to start?

Little – I guess I will. I am often accused of being a self centred researcher, might as well play it up! I want to start by saying lots of you don't know each other and it makes a motley crew to see you all here together. I appreciate the feminists sitting with the dead white males, and the activists sitting with the theoreticians. Oh, some of you white guys are still kicking, eh Denzin? And I want to especially welcome the artists, especially Harold Fletcher and Linda Barry. Gosh, I don't think I would have got this far without you. And to think we met almost accidentally! That I met you, Linda, in the recreational reading time for my art work, and you, Harold, through your presentation at the University of Victoria. It is amazing who you meet when you step outside of your discipline!

hooks - Can we get to the heart of the matter? I have a class to teach in less than an hour.

Little – Sure, I know you are all busy with other people's dissertations right now; honestly it blows my mind that you can be in so many places at once. Ok, so I asked you all for dinner tonight to review the literature, to have a conversation about how each of you have influenced my writing and research and to hear any concerns you might have about being grouped together. Why don't we start with Bach, Bloustien and Pink? You were all big influences in my early research conception. Dr. Hedy Bach, why don't you begin? Your study was particularly influential in how I approached the actual writing of the dissertation.

Bach – “The visual narratives in this research help me remember my own fierce inner-girl. I also experienced the loss of this fierceness with a stormy entry to womanhood. Throughout my work, I found, through my senses, that fierceness, the

means to watch and see what matters. For me, ‘the experience of pleasure and pain is what gives life meaning and gives moral questions their terrible weight. It is the reason everything matters’ (Bach, Kennedy, & Mickelson, 1997, p.16)” (1998, p. 8).

Little – Your comment regarding “fierce” struck me. I too would like to think I am fierce, but often I feel less-than. And I know my consultants embody a fierceness that I am afraid will be institutionally erased if they are not mindful. Or is that being a romantic when it comes to conceptualizing youth? Do you have thoughts on that?

Bach – “As a researcher and student of curriculum, I think about my limited position in the institution. I question what frames my knowing and who I am in this search. I am mindful to having my eyes turned in and that studying myself has meant learning to turn my eyes in by turning the lens on myself. Looking back is difficult. These reflections layer and layer my frames of knowing as I listen and understand what the girls show me in their camera-work. Turning the lens on self is a way to seriously play, imagine and trouble self-reflexivity. When I see photographs, I see what matters and learn to see anew. I learn to tell my stories in different ways.” (1998, p.14)

Little – Thanks Dr. Bach. I invited Naidus (2009) who speaks to “a sweet ball of a girl” (p.xi) that links to your conception of a fierce inner girl. And although Gilligan is exempted from this discussion for her penchant for developmentalist theory, it is prudent to consider a *folding in, a loss of fierceness* that may face our

adolescents. And we, as researchers of youth, hope that something calls that out.

Naidus, would you please stand and share part of your poem narrative?

Naidus - *“The folded-in girl/woman pushed her into the room alone with a view of horizon lines expanding in all directions, and she watched balls of energy bounce off the walls. She didn’t know how to understand them. She lived above the neck in that room, and couldn’t recognize the sweet ball of a girl or her folded-in twin, although the two began to fight. She dived below the neck in all sorts of counterculture ways, where she the sweet ball of a girl standing alone in dark corners, and occasionally was able to nudge her out to stand in the sun”* (p.xiv, original italics). [Applause]

Little -That also reminds me of some of Bloustien’s reflections. Dr. Bloustien, how would you describe your study?

Bloustien – “I am exploring how the attempt at image-making-the recording process- and the final product- the result of the recording process-blur the lines between representation and what is being represented; signifier and signified integrate and mesh within the everyday experience. The central concept underlying this process is that of mimesis, the blurring of self and ‘other’” (2003, p. 31).

Little – That is actually a key point, isn’t it? That we are using images not to “represent” any truth from the youth, but rather to move toward multiple ways of seeing and interpreting. This seems to be a trend in qualitative research’s move toward popularizing arts-based methodology.

Dearest Reader

Do not be swayed by Ms. Little's fancy words. What she means is that the respective works of Bach, Bloustien and Naidus were cornerstone literatures in conceptualizing her study. Although they hail from different disciplines, they appear to share an epistemology that privileges creative ways of knowing. Both Bach and Bloustien worked with photoethnography with young girls, which Ms. Little found hopeful for her own study. Naidus's work, focused on art, politics, change and self, was instrumental in allowing Ms. Little to see beyond the borders of qualitative inquiry and potential sites of research. This particular book, coupled with her committee's recommendation, pushed her inquiry out of the confines of "mere" photoethnography to embrace a multitude of media in relation to understanding youth. That said, she had a clear understanding of the influence of photoethnography on contemporary arts-based practice, and despite her concern for potentially colonizing research practices, Pink's work is particularly significant and discussed next.

Sincerely, Doubt

p.s. please tell Ms. Little to deposit \$500 in my account.



Pink – Well, it is important to remember that “however conscious ethnographers are of the arbitrary nature of photographic meanings, ethnographic images are still likely to be treated as ‘truthful recordings’ or ‘evidence’ by non-academic viewers” (2007, p.52).

Little – But that suggests that non-academic viewers, as you call them, are somehow less self-reflexive than academics. Although I appreciate your point that our research intentions are not always translated, I actually think a lay audience

would have multiple ways of viewing images whereas an academic would be constrained by her theoretical training.

Spivak – Not to mention theoretical legacies. “I [also] have no objection to conscientious ethnography, although I am a bit frightened by its relationship to the history of the discipline of anthropology” (1993, p.61).

Little – Good point Spivak. I really wrestled with ideas of using methods that have been used as colonizing practices in the past, and most likely, in the present. That’s why I really shied away from calling this participatory action research. And in my mind, it is not ethnography, although I gained much from your writings, Dr. Pink.

Butler – Your habit of explaining things through dis-identification gets quite tiresome. Wasn’t that a criticism in your Master’s thesis?

Little – I know! I was so busy explaining what it was *not* that I think I might have done a poor job explaining what it actually *was*. But in my opinion, all qualitative research begins with an idea of what it could, should and would be and some of the actual writing is mourning of what did not come to fruition. But if I am to be creating original research, or at least collaged methodology, I think it is equally important to explain what it isn’t as much as what it is.

Cammarota & Fine – What do you mean it’s not participatory action research?

“PAR knowledge is active and not passive...research findings become launching pads for ideas, actions, plans, and strategies to initiate social change. This final difference distinguishes PAR from traditional research by pointing to a critical epistemology that redefines knowledge as actions in pursuit of social justice”

(2008, p.6). Isn't that what you accomplished with Team Ranch⁵? And besides, we thought you *liked* our book!

Little – Well, yes, I *did* like your book. It was actually really inspiring, especially Ginwright's assertion that "making the world a more humane dwelling place...requires that our research and advocacy create space to foster a collective imagination among youth. While rare, these spaces hold the possibilities to reframe and re-imagine the type of world in which we choose to live" (p.14). I think I did manage to do that, facilitate space for imagination and forging just relationships that eventually transcended the competitive "nature" of production. At the same time, this inquiry lacks some of the fundamental PAR elements as I understand it. For example, many PAR projects are initiated by the interests of the stakeholders and not the singular researcher. Further, I sense that true PAR endeavors include the participants to a more involved degree, two things I have not done. As well, I am tired of people claiming to be PAR researchers but their participants remain on the periphery. It raises questions of power, status, gain and reciprocity. And goodness knows I have done several presentations already where the consultants were not present. And, I might add that this was not done through intentional exclusion, but in response to my repeated invitations, my consultants indicated that they were busy with other things. It makes me think about how bloody important I think my research is and, quite frankly, how it is so yesterday to the consultants. Does that mean it is still collaborative or reciprocal or even worth presenting on?

⁵ Team Ranch is the nickname given to the consultant group for our shared love of Ranch dressing with pizza.

Lassiter – Well, “folklorist and ethnographer Elaine Lawless calls this collaborative approach... ‘reciprocal ethnography’”(2005, p.8). So, do you think it could be that?

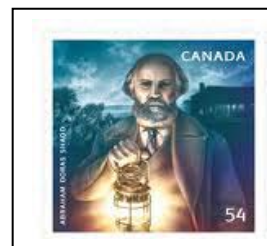
Little – That seems closer to the spirit of the project. But I think you have to acknowledge that if the Latin root is *reciprocus*, meaning altering and if the definition of reciprocity is “the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit” (Barber, Fitzgerald, Howell, & Pontisso, 2005, p.694), then I must recognize that what gets exchanged is not always of equal value or simultaneous in timing. For example, I get my dissertation data; my consultants get an art exhibition. We all get fodder for our resumes, but our resumes are at very different points in terms of influence. So, I think it is important not to confuse reciprocity with equality.

Cannella & Lincoln – It is “the paradox of attempting to investigate and deconstruct power relations even as we are ourselves engaged in a project that creates and re-creates power accruing primarily to us” (2009, p.57).

Dearest Reader

It is indeed challenging to work from a CYC orientation yet not quite be pure PAR. What Ms. Little is suggesting, in my humble opinion, is that naming the research has political, social and moral implications. When drawing from multiple and diverse research literature, it is important to reflect on what resonated from each. It is also important to recognize that some literature resonates more at particular times in the research process, such as her prior contact with the collaborative ethnographer Lassiter. But such is the search – from ethnography to its various branches, to PAR research in educational contexts, to questioning what might simply be “trendy” research.

Sincerely, Doubt



Little – Exactly, I think some researchers pick up methodologies that would appear to erase power differentials rather than address them in their complexity. For example, Lassiter also told me that for any research to be truly collaborative, “ethnographers and their interlocutors regularly and consciously assess not only how their collaborative work together engenders the dialogic emergence of culture and the variety of their co-understandings, but also the goals, purposes, and audiences of the ethnographic products these collaborative relationships engender” (2005, p.70). While I naively believed I could do just that, it was pretty clear that power was not equal, even if it was shared.

hooks – So how did you address power in this process? After all, you often quote me at the beginning of academic terms to explain your position in the classroom as privileged in terms of position, class location and the colour of your skin and your

ability to pass as heterosexual. But you also speak to creating learning communities as a means to address this. How has this influenced your research?

Little – That’s a complicated question. Being out to my consultants, I think, allowed for at least two of them to discuss gender and sexual orientation more explicitly and for all to use homophobia as a repository to explicate their social justice actions. As I state further in the text, I should have addressed my position as an YCI speaker more explicitly. If I had done so, I think it would have opened up more varied conversation earlier and we could have discussed the power dynamics between us in the room as opposed to somewhere out there with other adults in positions of authority. And I think I erroneously assumed I would be trusted as an adult researcher by virtue of my position in the camp, and not vice-versa. And from my reading of varied research literature, these issues of accidental yet systemic omissions are not always “fessed” up to.

Lassiter – I agree. “Many of us often give our ethnographies-whether written as student papers, dissertations, or monographs-back to our consultants after we’ve finished writing them, hoping that our texts will be liked and appreciated, and our consultants sometimes respond with comments. Positive or negative, however, their interpretations of our interpretations have little bearing on the shape of the final ethnographic product, which is immutable at this stage” (2005, p. 8-9).

Little – Good point. After all, my consultants know how they will be described in Chapter IV, because they or their friends wrote the artists’ biographies. However, they did not have much say in how I talk about them elsewhere in the text. This is

related to my clinical work writing case notes and assessments⁶. For particularly vulnerable clients, I will let them co-author to a certain extent. But for both the clinical and research contexts, I am plagued with questions such as: “Would I change anything if someone disagreed with my analysis? Am I afraid they will question my authority? Am I manipulating their words? Am I abusing their experience?” This brings up not only issues of reciprocity but also ownership in collaborative endeavors.

Skott-Myer and Skott-Myer – You speak to research collaboration as an either/or endeavor. I am specifically concerned with how you uphold PAR as an ideal. “It would warrant our considered opinion that any term that consistently holds a positive connotation ought to be investigated very carefully. The reason for this is that our ideas of what is positive are saturated with logic and rationality of our current historical moment, with all of its regimes of domination and power” (2007, p.48). This would also apply to the term youth.

Little – Fair enough, just as my thoughts above were rambling on about the disjuncture between PAR and my actual research, I have omitted the discussion of youth. It’s such a convoluted topic, really, as we say “youth” as though we all have a shared meaning of that term.

Harre – Well, my take on it is that “when young people are active in their communities, they not only help create a thriving society but also help create themselves” (2007, p.711).

⁶ At the time of writing, my clinical work is based in the Ministry of Children and Family Development in the Eating Disorder Program. In my capacity as a mental health clinician, I work with both youth and adults.

Little – I agree, but that is so romantic, and essentialist. I *want* to believe that, I *think* I have seen what you are referring to, but it seems so simplistic. On the one hand, Harre, you speak in a social constructionist way with the idea that youth are formed through relational interaction and meaning making. On the other hand, your comment creates the very problematic connotation of a category, in this case, youth, which the Skott Myhres so vehemently oppose.

Tsolidis – Exactly. “How do we study a group of students without naming them as a group and in the process risking essentialism” (2001, p.111)?

Little – Does anyone else have an answer to this? I am feeling pretty stuck in my developmentalist training. I don’t want to rein my consultants in by virtue of their participation in YCI, but it becomes the common denominator. And while they all offer “individual” perspectives of identity and social justice, these reflect a discourse groomed through both public education and YCI.

Dearest Reader

Throughout this inquiry, Ms. Little has struggled with the concept of "youth" and the associated definitions, connotations and assumptions. On the one hand, it is common to speak of adolescence in a linear and developmental manner. Yet, this belies a social constructionist and feminist perspective. On the other hand, it is difficult to speak outside of the former discourses without romanticizing or essentializing the youth based on their association with YCI. As the reader will be privy, these youth consultants are complex, multiple and often contradictory in their becoming trajectory. As such, how can she speak of youth when the term and experience shifts and stutters? And how can she do this with the overlapping literatures that dismiss categorization based on difference but champion the same? If youth is a socially constructed category, why do so many insist on its reality? Perhaps we can take our cue from Shapiro...Love, Doubt



Shapiro – “There is a fundamental dilemma raised in trying to fit both developmental and liberation within the same conceptual pot, and it is a dilemma that radical educators for the most part have not gotten to the root of” (1995, p.3).

Lather – “Such questioning does not take place in some academic vacuum apart from the outside world. Curriculum, research methods, pedagogy; all are much contested cultural terrain” (1991, p. xvi).

Bruner – I concur. “Education is not an island, but a part of the continent of culture” (1996, p.11).

Little – Yes, yes, I *get* that. Trust me, as an aspiring academic, I totally get the relationship between culture and curriculum. From the heteronormative and

Euronormative theories I teach, to fundamental ideas about human change and identity that are infused with bootstrappism and classist and racialized notions. I *get* it. But I don't know what to do with it, if that makes sense. I don't know how to talk about youth without slipping into developmentalist assumptions that run counter to my proposed idea that youth are in flux.

Roy – We can look at other options of radical education that do not take place in traditional pedagogical walls. “The curriculum seen more like a rhizome, that is, in terms of connectivities and relationalities rather than as a pre-given structure, has many advantages. It foregrounds precisely those aspects of exchange that are filtered out in the regular curriculum processes, affirming intensities that are unaccounted for within mainstream discourses” (2003, p. 91).

Little – So, if I view YCI more as a rhizome that would suggest it is created through the relationships formed? I am also worried that I would be superimposing a Deleuzian concept on YCI, which in my opinion *is* a pre-given structure.

Although I think YCI does allow for intensities censored in a public classroom, and it uses a literally breathing curriculum to do so, it is also very much structured on a traditional Western classroom.

Messer – Davidow – “But the very moment the practitioners use the academic system to build the field it's already structured organizations and venues act to format their activities” (2002, p. 129).

Shapiro – And “as long as the theoretical formulations of radical movements become incorporated within the global establishment they will be subject to co-optation” (1995, p.11).

Little – All good points, but it makes me wonder what the hell I am doing in academia researching alternative educational means and the development of subjectivities within.

Dearest Reader –

Ms. Little has been struggling for some time to critique conceptions of curriculum and education within the confines of the same language. Inscribed by CYC and public education discourses, she wonders if this can be spoken of at all in any new or revolutionary manner (which I TOLD her it could not, and Messer-Davidow only backs my claim). I wonder how Ms. Little can study a concept that she concurrently hates and loves? And what IS alternative education anyway? As the reader will see, despite measures to deliver information differently, it still can result in an unforeseen grooming. Despite her rally for the rhizome, my guess is she might be very disappointed. Sincerely, Doubt.



Gisner – Maybe you need to reach beyond the standard tools, because “if we indeed know more than we can tell, then we should try telling what we know with anything that will carry the message forward” (2008, p.9). So what I am saying is this: you have something important to say regarding your consultants, so find a way to say it and quit complaining about the constrictions of academic tradition!

Little – I agree with the Gergens that our realities are relationally constructed, and stand as “common sense” social constructs, and it is my responsibility to question those. For example, I really do want to see the youth consultants outside the tunnel vision of developmental theory, imaginary audiences and personal fables and all, yet I witnessed what might be considered stereotypical teen behaviours. I will also

discuss further in the text issues of dominant discourses around social justice that fall within a liberal education framework. Not to mention it would be easier to discuss the youth from within developmental theory, or from a purely emancipatory perspective, as that is such a common language for CYC practitioners. I think it scares people when we talk about youth as somewhere in between static stages of development and untainted agentic voice.

O'Brien Hallstein – I've referred to that dilemma as "constrained agency" (1999).

Little – Yes, I know, and that is such a great concept, because it speaks to both feminist theory and social constructionist theory. When I apply that to my youth consultants, I can think of several examples where their choices around speaking up were constrained or informed by either context or discourse. For example, one consultant, Lily, spoke about the tension between calling out a violent gesture by a classmate toward a teacher and being assured anonymity for identifying the perpetrator. But because of the context of school and the physicality of the vice principal's office, this policy is impossible to uphold. Another example is the consultant Kyla, who would often say things like: "I know I'm not supposed to say this because I'm in YCI, *but...*" and then follow up with a blatant stereotype about American tourists. So, they are constrained by issues of power, but they are also restrained in the limited availability of discourses. Bloustien, didn't you write about that?

Bloustien – "Young people need to be seen both as agents in their own right, cultural producers (not simply reproducers of adult cultures) and yet simultaneously *not* totally independent individuals, divorced from social structures and emotional

investments. This in turn leads to a closer look at the complex relationship between personal agency and social structure, an exploration of the social and cultural constraints in the young people's perceptions of their developing sense of self" (2003, p.18-19, emphasis in original).

Little – But you have also argued for “normal processes” and does that not imply a hegemonic view of youth?

Bloustien – No, what I meant by that was “so often, writing about adolescence pathologizes fantasy and play, seeing it in terms of deception or confusion, as addiction or delusion, as rituals of resistance rather than as part of the normal processes by which we come towards an understanding of ourselves and our place in the world” (2003, p.x-xi).

Little – I am particularly interested in the idea of rituals of resistance. Specifically, because I work with self-identified young activists, I think there is the assumption that we will mostly be dialoguing about resistance as opposed to reification of what it means to resist. I am wondering if youth are concurrently demonized and romanticized based on their social location.

Dearest Reader –

Ah, the vexing issue of agency and resistance! I believe that Ms. Little is trying to argue that “pure” agency cannot be attained due to our relational enmeshment. We are not “free” to make choices outside those that are offered to us. Hence, while YCI is a site of resistance to a certain degree, and other authors support this conception, it cannot be isolated from dominant ways of knowing, being and doing that permeate our ways of indoctrinating youth. What does it mean to resist in this context? And what consequences does a schisis bring?

Sincerely, Doubt



Bruner – “For it is surely the case that schooling is only one small part of how a culture inducts the young into its canonical ways. Indeed, schooling may even be at odds with a culture’s other ways of inducting the young into the requirements of communal living” (1996, p.ix).

Little –I think that is a very important point Bruner. Although school may be a small part, as you say, in my opinion it is unequally weighted in its induction of young people. This is because it is legally required and provincially standardized. So even if a culture was at odds with the education system, which is more valued? Further, it suggests that resistance is possible if the two are somehow separated. And then there is the assumption that any resistance is “good.” Right, Roy?

Roy – “I do not mean to celebrate or fetishize the notion of schisis or rupture for its own sake. Each schisis can lead to a new capture” (2003, p.32).

Little – Ah, we can't seem to shake Deleuze. Can you explain that in plain structuralist lingo?

Roy – Well, like so much criticism regarding deconstruction, I am arguing that we don't deconstruct for the sake of deconstruction. All acts of resistance, or rupture, can be reified and cease to be meaningful in a novel or arresting sense. I think it is also important to remember that “smaller acts of rupture have greater possibility of escaping capture” (2003, p.174).

Little – That brings me back to my candidacy papers discussing educational reform and how most diversity initiatives inadvertently re-created the dominant power structures, resulting in a lack of overall systemic change.

Loubardeas – I thought you said your candidacies were *done, outdated, and done*.

Little – Well, true that I could not take a hell of a lot from my candidacies; such is the nature of emergent research design in the face of institutional procedure. Yet, the more I think about the whole idea of what constitutes “curriculum,” the more I return to ideas of radical education and the idea of re-visioning it within community contexts.

Popkewitz and Brennan – “Dominant and liberal educational reform discourses tend to instrumentally organize change as logical and sequential” (1998, p.7).

Little – That's right. And in some ways, I have fallen prey to this by framing my foci group questions on a time line that spans past, present and future. How do I get more radical?

Burbules and Berk – “Giroux points to what he sees as the failure of the radical critics of the new sociology of education because, in his view, they offered a language of critique, but not a language of possibility” (1999, p. 51).

Little – So let’s talk possibility. So much of the literature speaks to how this cannot be done in traditional institutions, yet most of us reside there. Where I am stuck in my theorizing is how this comes full circle to my dissertation?

Knowles – This is why arts-based qualitative research is gaining momentum. It moves beyond dusty rhetoric and opens space to not only to view the possibilities but participate in them.

Denzin – “As an interventionist ideology, the critical imagination is hopeful of change” (2003, p.229).

Little – But don’t all researchers claim to offer hope and possibility?

Cannella and Lincoln – “Although many contemporary researchers claim to use critical qualitative research methods (and we are among those), these inquiry practices often do not transform, or even appear to challenge the dominant or mainstream constructions” (2009, p.53).

Little – So the issue is not the method but the result, or as Lather would say, catalytic validity?

Lather – I didn’t say that, Habermas did.

Little – Whatever. But then what do we employ to reach a transformative place?

How can art-based methodology help us?

Cole and Knowles – “The central purposes of arts-informed research are to enhance understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional)

processes and representational forms of inquiry, and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible” (2008, p.59).

Naidus – Yes, but “if art is knowing more than a symbol of one’s own individual freedom to play the violin while the planet burns, then we have lost a key means for sounding the alarm” (2009, p.25).

Dearest Reader –

Ah, I knew it would come to this! Arguments about the process of arts-based methodology and what constitutes possibility. In the time I have known Ms. Little, she has been committed to bringing arts-based processes into her pedagogical, social and clinical spheres. So I am not surprised she does so in her research. At the same time, will art really save us here? Is it not a fancy way of doing the same thing other researchers do with words? I am not sure about you, dear reader, but I think Ms. Little has made more of a mess than she intended. I will leave her to referee and be there forthwith to clear up this travesty of a “literature review”!

Sincerely, Doubt. Cell – 250- she-smad.



Little – Listen, no fighting. Let me make sure I understand. On the one hand, if we as researchers are to create potentialities and illuminate the intersections between researcher/researched, theory/performance and academic/activist spheres we need an edgy way to do this so as not to “foreclose on the capacity of the human spirit” as Mahoney would say. On the other hand, there is a danger of drawing uncritically on the arts-based literature, so despite the intention it serves the purpose of reification rather than transformation. Oh shit, here comes Doubt – and not just a postcard either! Hide the beer. And open that window; it is super smoky in here.

Doubt – What the hell is going on here? I thought you were writing your dissertation, not sitting around waxing theoretical. You'd better get your riff raff friends out of here and get to work.

Little – And I thought you were on vacation!

Doubt – No one sent me a postcard to update, so I thought I'd better get down here and see what progress you had made. Not much, I surmise. Do I smell smoke? I thought you quit ages ago!

Little – We were burning incense. Never mind the smoke, I thought you would appreciate conversing with texts and authors who have influenced my current ontology.

Doubt – Well, there's *talking* and then there's *writing*.

Little – But you said you were fine with me being more creative and really living my methodology!

Doubt –Ha! Your so-called methodology - there is a difference between creativity and convoluted collaging of quotations out of context.

Wooldridge – “Is this play, poetry, art or silliness? Who cares?” (1996, p.16).

Little – Not now, Wooldridge, I invited you to the methodology party which isn't until tomorrow [looking back at Doubt]. So what do you suggest I do?

Doubt – You need to get more linear. Your literature review is all over the map!

How is a reader possibly expected to follow your thread of argument? It's too messy to untangle!

Denzin – “These [messy] texts...are not just subjective accounts of experience; they attempt to reflexively map multiple discourses that occur in a given social space” (1997, p.xvii).

Little – Thanks, Norm. I wanted to present it as messy because that has been my experience. Picking up one book which leads to the next, emailing these folks and having them recommend a colleague. It hasn’t *been* a linear process and I wouldn’t have been able to get them all into one space if it wasn’t for this party. And we have covered some important ideas such as PAR, possibility and hope, power in research and we were getting to becomings and subjectivities before you barged in.

Doubt – You have raised some good questions, but most dissertations outline similar projects or undertakings – you know – sketching a topography of sorts.

Little – Good point, and I don’t want to look like I haven’t done the work. Actually I think that’s what might keep people away from arts-based methods is that they imply a lack of rigor or the V-word [validity]. In some ways, the plethora of projects out there is overwhelming. I especially felt that reading Naidus’s book. But I think it is fair to focus on Bloustien and Bach as two seminal works, especially Bach’s “experimental” writing style.

Doubt – But surely there are some Child and Youth Care (CYC) examples you could find and share? How can you call yourself a CYC scholar and ignore CYC writing?

Little – Well, I can think of de Finney’s work with Antidote. That was pretty groundbreaking in terms of CYC dissertations. But I also think it is important to acknowledge that CYC doctoral dissertations are relatively new as a disciplinary

focus. So, that said, I think it important to shake things up because it hasn't been pre-determined. Uh-oh, I see Messer-Davidow raising her hand.

Messer-Davidow- I think it is important to name that project and to situate your dissertation in larger political conversations. In my experience, “feminist studies, like other flourishing disciplines fueled by the expanding higher-education system and the corporatized publishing industry, was able to proliferate objects, knowledges, and specialisms within its domain and to breed hybrids along its borders with other fields. But its axes of specialization and rules of discourse volatilized these processes. Having limned a knowledge object, feminists then worked on specifying it according to their positioning on the disciplinary, identity, and political axes. The specifications of an object invited criticisms by differently positioned feminists, the criticisms motivated theorizations of the object, and the theorizations pushed the debates to a more abstract level, which in turn sent us spinning through another (re) formulation process and spiraling into the metadiscursive stratosphere” (2002, p.213).

Little – Do you think that's what happening in CYC? herising (unpublished) is writing something similar about social work, the idea that we are captured by the very thing we are trying to resist.

Shapiro – It's about time we came back to pedagogical theory. After all, your main focus is a group of youth exposed to an alternative curriculum regarding diversity.

Little – Well I think Messer-Davidow's comments work on multiple levels for this inquiry. For me as the researcher and CYC practitioner, there is a tension between forwarding a CYC “identity” that may not be congruent with dominant CYC

discourse and being mindful not to replicate “common sense” notions of adolescents. My consultants are operating within competing discourses of diversity and inclusion, but both are meta-narratives superimposed on their subjective realities. And given their participation in YCI, I can see how they are groomed, just as any academic discipline. In other words, we are all struggling with what it means to be good subjects in each of these contexts.

Doubt – It might be prudent to point out that this is an example of your tangential style that knocks you off course. Do you really think it is necessary to include this in your dissertation?

Little – Come on, I am just knocking ideas around. I’ll tell you what, why don’t you head back on vacation? There are a few more things we need to discuss here.

Linnell, Bansel, Ellwood, and Gannon – Like identity.

Wooldridge – And poetry!

Cammarota and Fine – And youth.

Doubt – Well don’t take all day; you have some serious work to do. [exit]

Little – Phew, where were we? We’ll never get done at this rate, but I guess that is the point, right? Emergence, becomings, etc. Maybe we should have had an agenda when we started; no wait, that’s Doubt’s style, not mine. So let’s see, what have we covered...representation, PAR, reciprocity, power, the dilemma of developmental theory and social justice, constrained agency, and arts-based methodology. Ok, so that still leaves out important questions of youth and identity, er, subjectivities.

Chicago – Speaking of subjectivities, where is Deleuze?

Little – Ok, don't tell him, but I didn't invite him.

Roy – Why not?

Little – He's too long winded and difficult to understand and I have this sneaking suspicion that he was just playing a big theoretical joke on us.

Roy – But several accomplished feminist scholars have taken up his work; you can't just fling it out the window!

Little – Yes, granted several smart people I know are using Deleuzian concepts, especially the rhizome. And if I could remind you, I did talk about that in my introduction.

Roy – “The use of Deleuzian concepts is to help pry open reified boundaries that exist not just in thought, but as affective investments that secure those territorialities. The effort is to loosen them so that new modes of transformation become available that can enhance our affective capacities” (2003, p.13).

Little – “And learning things valuable to students' becomings, blah, blah, blah.”

Roy – But you can't discount becomings, it was part of your original research question!

Little – [sigh] – Well, *that* I can't *uninvite*, I suppose. And for a while I was avoiding the whole identity versus subjectivity and just plain sorry I had ever used the term becomings! On the one hand, it is just language; on the other hand, we are constituted by language so I'd better be pretty damn clear. In fact, I have recently “met” Anna Hickey-Moody who said “[Deleuze] would contend that we are overly occupied with proving our imaginings of ‘the way things are’ and that, because of this, we lose the capacity to pay attention to *what things are becoming*” (2010,

p.204, emphasis in original). She goes on to say that “because reality is primarily in flux, a creative affirmation of this becoming is a resistance to our acceptance of a determined world around us” (p.204). And I think both align with my approach to my research inquiry. As one committee member pointed out, we as researchers have a certain responsibility for the pieces we gather in our research and dissemination of it. And while I do not disagree with that, I think it is ethical to play around with concepts and language and refashion them for the context you are working in. Sotirin, do you have anything to add?

Sotirin – I do. “With the concept of becomings, Deleuze counters our fascination with being and power. Being is about those questions that have engaged philosophers, scientists and theologians alike for centuries: what is the essence of life, and who are we, biologically, culturally, historically, and spiritually? What does it mean to exist? Our fascination with power engages us in questions of control, possession, and order: how is life, organic and inorganic, but especially human life, ordered classified, distributed and managed?...Becoming explodes the ideas about what we are and what we can be beyond the categories that contain us...For Deleuze, becomings are about passages, propagations and expansions” (2005, p. 98-99).

Little – Thanks for that. In ways, YCI is a passage and an expansion. But because this is not a purely Deleuzian inquiry, does anyone have other suggestions about self, identities, subjectivities, relations?

Denzin – “The self, a constantly shifting process, is always the incomplete sum of its discursive parts” (1997, p.38).

Little – Must you always jump the queue to contribute? You are making it look like I never got further than my Master’s thesis citations. But I liked what you said.

Denzin, you are like low fat pudding; I could eat it all day and never feel full.

Chicago, order some pizza, all this thinking is making me hungry! Anyone else on this quagmaric question?

Bloustien – I think “ultimately identities are narratives – stories we tell about ourselves- and they are fictional” (2003, p. 51).

Little – Are you *sure* you’re not a social constructionist? I think you would make a very good one. Essentially what you are suggesting is that our personal fictions are created through what cultural tools we are given and maintained through processes of socialization. Our fictions are then tested against the social milieu we operate in.

Zipin, you’ve been awfully quiet.

Zipin – I suggest that “more or less unconsciously, each person actively embodies subjective dispositions for sensing (1) ‘self’ as distinct from ‘others’ within a complex identity nexus; (2) one’s centrality or marginality in relation to rules of ethics and perception that define a ‘normal’ self – norms that are partial historical constructions of ‘truth,’ passed off as timeless universal verities; and (3) styles of behavior that is one’s distinctive ‘nature’ as raced, sexed, classed, or otherwise identified subject, to perform in relation to dominant norms” (1998, p. 316).

Roy – But “the trajectory of becomings of any composite cannot be known in advance, and therefore adherence to a priori categories become problematic” (2003, p.36).

Little – Settle down Roy, we are just talking about how we might see ourselves, how we become, in relation to social constructs. After all, you also said, “there are clear outlines and categories that one must fit, or fall into an alternative category” (2003, p.106), so you recognize this in your own work; that becomings can’t be neutral.

Bruner – If that is the case, you need to move away from speaking about subjectivities as it implies an individualist *reacting* and *responding* to pre-conceived social constructions of self and speak about *intersubjectivity*.

Little – Gosh, are you a social constructionist in disguise, too? What do you mean by intersubjectivity?

Bruner – “*Intersubjectivity* – how humans come to know ‘each other’s minds’” (1996, p.12, emphasis in original).

Little – How is that different from empathy? Doesn’t it mean the same thing? And how can we “know each other’s minds” if we just discussed that reality is in continual flux, and hence, I would imagine minds (which is a construct) are as well?

Linnell et al – We think he means that “performances of self, as speech and act, emerge from our impacted biography – which is always constituted relationally” (2008, p. 303).

Little – Oh great, so now we are talking intersubjective biography. Did anyone email Davies to come?

Chicago – No, she got recalled at the last minute.

Little – Hmm. What about the Gergens? All this intersubjectivity stuff reminds me of social constructionism and appreciative inquiry paradigms.

K. Gergen – “Movement toward a relational understanding of human action is now gaining momentum, and new practices are emerging from many quarters. On the conceptual level, theorists from many different perspectives are attempting to articulate a vision of a *relational self*...from this perspective there are no strictly independent thought processes, as all such processes are fashioned within particular cultural settings [and] in the educational sphere, we find a growing investment in collaboratively orientated classrooms, relational bonds between teacher and student, collective performance, and dialogic forms of pedagogy” (2006, 26-27, emphasis in original).

Little – I concur Ken that there is a movement toward relational conceptions but if those are not offered in public high schools, I wonder if students seek it out elsewhere, and why YCI is so popular? After all, the camp is based on a dialogic form of pedagogy as you describe. And where I struggle is with the idea that there is a promotion of relational and collective undertakings set against a backdrop of individualistic discourse. This is akin to speaking with a postmodern tongue housed within a modern body! God, why is this so complicated?

Tsolidis – I think it is important to consider “what we teach and how we teach it is fundamentally about politics –what knowledges and methods of constructing these have dominance. How then do we provide students, alienated from mainstream constructions of such knowledges, with affirmation for their existing knowledges? How do we do this without establishing a toothless pluralism or a form of equity

which creates a strait [*sic*] jacket in order to discipline difference?" (2001, p.104-105)

Little – Agreed. We can even look at what the categories and topics are at YCI to appreciate what gets foregrounded as diversity issues. When I was speaking to my supervisor from the Ministry of Children and Family Development about the camp, she wanted to know if we included sizism as a topic. When I thought about how eating disorders cut across racialized, classed and gendered lines in my clinical practice, I was wondering, geesh, why don't we talk about body size? And so you're right Tsolodis, it is about politics and which "alternative" stories are deemed authentic. And since some of the consultants spoke to kids dropping out of camp because they were tired of hearing the same speakers every year, it makes me wonder how these narratives of oppression and emancipation become reified. It certainly made me think of what lens I bring forth when I speak about homophobia at the camp. But one year, Constable Paul Brookes⁷ had invited a panel of youth speakers to present on homophobia, which of course I thought was great, but who broke all the rules of convention. For example, when the camp was held on Thetis Island, the rental was Camp Columbia, which is an Anglican site⁸. As such, there is evidence of Christian observance in the buildings from crosses to Our Father's prayer on the dining room walls. Apparently, the invited youth panel covered all the crosses at the camp citing that they oppressed them, used the word "cunt" several times in their presentation and according to all accounts, made a pretty

⁷ Constable Paul Brookes is the founder and continuing coordinator of YCI.

⁸ My understanding is that due to financial reorganization, Camp Columbia was sold by the Anglican Church. YCI has most recently rented the Camp Thunderbird facility operated by the YM/YWCA.

shocking presentation for the adults present. But no one talked about the youths' reaction to other youth stepping outside unspoken boundaries!

Popkewitz and Brennan – “We can think of educational studies, then, as a social mapping of the region and its inscribed boundaries. The notion of region embodies a varied notion of time to account for different patterns of ideas and social practices that come together to produce the subject” (1998, p. 13).

Little – In other words, YCI produces its own patterns and practices to produce a subject as much as other educational institutions? Wow, in some ways that is just depressing. In other ways, it makes a lot of sense.

Denzin – Maybe we need to accept the partial and trust the meaning made by the reader here will leak into other chapters?

Lather – Or put more bluntly, “in an era of rampant reflexivity, just getting on with it may be the most radical action one can make” (1991, p. 20).

Little – Ok, ok, let's move on then. God knows enough graduate students get caught up with conversing with you egg heads, and I mean that fondly, resulting in Ph.D paralysis. But guys, what am I supposed to do? You've already covered everything I wanted to say in your various texts, performances and work.

Sontag – Well, consider a parallel to photography, which “does not simply reproduce the real, it recycles it – a key procedure of a modern society” (1977, p.174). So, just as you argue praxis is collage, life is an ever shifting and every changing collaging of experience; likewise your dissertation does the same.

Language and image are not new, but the meaning you draw from it, the new ways *you* fashion *our* theories, may be, albeit temporarily.

McNiff – Look at it this way, Little: “when difficulties in human experience become deeply lodged within individuals and groups, this is usually a sign that we are stuck in our current ways of dealing with them. A shift in methodology can bring tremendous insight and relief” (2008, p.33).

Little – Maybe you’re right. Don’t forget the methodology party tomorrow [collective sigh]. No, really, it will be fun!

Dearest Reader-

Perhaps more a post-script than a post-card. Ms. Little is attempting to create a conversation amongst all involved (writers, authors, readers) so as to create questions, queries and an intentional sense of disequilibrium. What you have read does not read like a traditional literature review where certainties are set out and backed up; where disciplines are neatly delineated. What you have been introduced to is a sense of becoming-researcher. And as much as it pains me to admit this, I think this chapter met its objective.

Sincerely, Doubt.

P.S. Now that my work is officially done, I will be lengthening my paid vacation in the Kootenay’s where life is less theoretical and more magical. Or a combination of the two!



Chapter III – Methodology

Who says I can't be free

From all of the things that I used to be

Rewrite my history

Who says I can't be free?

(Mayer, 2009, track 4)

The most challenging aspect of my Ph.D research was formulating the methodology which frames it. I assume those who work from a mono-theoretical perspective have an easier, or at least more linear, time constructing their methodological argument. My epistemological position, however, tells me that nothing is new, true or pure. By this I mean that all research inquiry is built upon multiple texts, temporary truths and both of these are convoluted by the social context in which I locate them. Just as collage and poetry are my preferred expressions, I see writing this dissertation as collaging theories and poetic expression. The turn to creative qualitative methods is not new, and from my October 2009 experience attending the Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference hosted by the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM)⁹, gaining in popularity. As Knowles and Cole (2008) reflect,

Seeing methodology through an artful eye reflects a way of being in the world as a researcher that is paradigmatically different from other ways of thinking and designing research. And, as with any other significant undertaking, it behooved researchers to understand the many levels and

⁹ For more information on IIQM, the reader is directed to <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/iiqm/index.cfm>

implications of such a methodological commitment. Drawing from linguistic analysis, we argue that understanding the deep structure of any methodology is a necessary starting point. (p.1)

This chapter serves to elucidate key ideas in my methodological articulation of this “deep structure,” including collage and poetry. I will tease out some assumptions of art-based practice, and share with the reader what I have developed as a collaged methodology called pedagartistry. It was within this emergent methodological framing that my five youth research consultants produced visual work in relation to questions regarding their participation in YCI. As will be discussed, this methodology was especially relevant to conducting focus groups as well as hosting a public art exhibition.

Arts-based methodology

A question that has been raised several times in the execution of this research is why visual methods? How might visual narration be the best choice for this particular inquiry? After all, I could align myself with Kvale (1996), do some interviews, choose an analysis method, and be done with it. And while I do not discount Kvale’s intentions and influence on how I have and will continue to conduct interviews, I also recognize that something *more* is needed to incite, question and compliment the complexity that my youth consultants bring forth. It is then an epistemological imperative alongside a very practical consideration of how to attract consultants and maintain the research momentum (at least for the researcher) to the very last dissertation draft. Pink (2007) comments:

This [visual] approach recognizes the interwovenness of objects, texts, images and technologies in people's everyday lives and identities. It aims not simply to study people's social practices or to read cultural objects or performances as if they were texts, but to explore how all types of material, intangible, spoken, performed narratives and discourses are interwoven with and made meaningful in relation to social relationships, practices and individual experiences. (p.7)

I want to be clear that choosing a visual arts-based methodology is not a commentary on linguistic or cognitive deficiency of my youth research consultants. On the contrary, I sustain hope that this approach: a) builds on a CYC orientation toward a strengths capacity; b) creates data generation that is meaningful and resonant to the consultants; and c) creates a Barthian pensivity¹⁰ of creating more questions than certainty. An arts-based methodology also has the unique ability to "reach" other people not directly involved in the research inquiry. Sontag (1977), for example, describes photography as deeply problematic but equally accessible. Arts-based methodology, then, invites others into the conversation, for however brief a time.

McNiff (2008) suggests:

We are discovering how these art-based methods, making use of larger spectrum of creative intelligence and communications, generate important information that often feels more accurate, original, and intelligent than more conventional descriptions. (p.30)

¹⁰ Barthes (1981) says, "ultimately, photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes, but when it is *pensive*" (p. 38, emphasis in original).

McNiff is not alone in this assertion, and several other scholars concur that a merging of art and theory can and needs to be done for ethical, collaborative research and impactful and socially just dissemination (Denzin, 2003; Fletcher, 2009; Gaudelius & Garoian, 2007; Ginwright, 2008; Newbury & Hoskins, 2008; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Naidus, 2009; amongst others). For example, Bachman (2009) reflects: “both art and theory are transformative cultural practices. Artists are often creating and illuminating new theories in the process of making. We are all engaged with theory –we negotiate theoretical models constantly in our daily lives –some are simply more invisible than others” (as quoted in Naidus, p.6). Likewise, we are producing art all the time, and the artistic and performative processes of research have perhaps always existed, but now are being named for their ethical and political intentions.

What I once thought of as radical qualitative writing (Lather & Smithies, 1997) has certainly shaped my writing style, but my academic world became unstuck when I heard of amazing performative and artistic inquiries that resided in academic and public spheres, and at times concurrently in both (Wack! Art and the feminist revolution, 2009; Bechdal, 2006; Barry, 2008; and Art and Social Change Symposium, 2009 being seminal turning points). At one point I asked myself, what if I am really an artist trapped in an academic’s body? How had I limited myself in assuming qualitative research was inherently creative? Or, as Lather (1991) would ask, “how have I policed the boundaries of what can be imagined?”(p.84) Embarking on an arts based route was like waking up – the creation of a coherent collage of several passions – social justice, art, and the academy. And much like

Ginwright (2008), it “forces researchers to re-examine what constitutes research, and shatters the brittle barriers that separate the scholar and artist in each of us” (p.15). I want to be clear that it is not that I think arts based methodology to be superior to more traditional means of qualitative research, such as ethnography, but rather stress that it fit with my consultants and my own ontological lenses. And because of this congruence, we were able to form a collective, albeit a temporary and emergent one.

Part of creating a resonance for consultants was allowing them to choose what creative medium they would like for any of the given focus group questions. Originally, this was to be a photoethnography. This was based on several interesting projects using this approach (Carlson, Engebretson & Chamberlain, 2006; Newbury & Hoskins, 2008; Prosser, 2007) and erroneously in retrospect, an attempt to “clean up” the inherent messiness of emergent research. In my attempt to reduce my own anxiety, I thought it would be easier and more efficient to provide the same medium for each consultant. Thankfully, my committee thought otherwise and at their suggestion I opened up the creative process. This allowed for consultants to draw on their artistic gifts (whether photography or painting) but also allow them to take risks in the research, producing everything from social justice fortune telling cards to postcards and poetry. Leggo (2008) cautions us that “we have lost our creative energy for living poetically” (p.170) and I believe this is because we are not encouraged to step out of the status quo in our educational and vocational pursuits unless we primarily identify as an “artist.” The unanswered question for me, is how to live poetically, and thus with integrity, as I continue in

the academy. As for my consultants, they have no question that they are artists although they may be uncertain about other aspects of themselves.

Weber (2008) argues there are “ten good reasons for art based research”:

1. Images can be used to capture the ineffable, the hard-to-put-into words.
2. Images can make us pay attention to things in new ways.
3. Images are likely to be memorable.
4. Images can be used to communicate more holistically, incorporating multiple layers, and evoking stories or questions.
5. Images can enhance empathetic understanding and generalizability.
6. Through metaphor and symbol, artistic images can carry theory elegantly and eloquently.
7. Images encourage embodied knowledge.
8. Images can be more accessible than most forms of academic discourse.
9. Images can facilitate reflexivity in research design.
10. Images provoke action for social justice. (p. 44-47)

Now I am certain this list will show up in more than one thesis, dissertation and book chapter because despite our postmodern assertions that we, as qualitative researchers, embrace chaos, there is something seductive about a *list*. Given Weber’s impressive and varied CV, I doubt that this was her intention. However, her list does distill some important elements for consideration, including how arts-based research can transcend traditional discourse, and open a new stage with which to view and interact with the phenomenon we have chosen to study. I do not agree with all her points, particularly concerns regarding generalizability in

qualitative inquiry. For me, to generalize from qualitative projects has minimal imperative and is ethically problematic. However, I would like to pay particular attention to points six and ten.

Through metaphor and symbol, artistic images can carry theory elegantly and eloquently.

This is an essential point for me. Metaphor is key in my clinical practice, my teaching and my research. Perhaps it is because I am metaphorically inclined, but Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 1999) also support that all language is metaphorical, and I would argue visual language is as well. As the reader will see, the analysis of social justice themes in this inquiry is based both on the metaphors within the images created, but also through the discussion of them. In this sense, there can be no reference point in the absence of metaphor, and hence theory cannot be constructed without it either. Olds (1992) refers to metaphors as “smuggling extra dimensions” (p.24) and this is exactly what my consultants have achieved. Further, this metaphorical presentation collages itself with participatory dissemination as the viewer sees new metaphors or constructs new meaning of blatant ones and superimposes that on her/his experiences. For example, one consultant Tash used a rainbow fist in her future identity conception. According to her, this was based on her historical knowledge of the Black Panthers, but the rainbow application could indicate either a commitment to environmental issues or Queer pride depending on your interpretative lens. As Barthes (1981) reflects, “the reading of public photographs [and, I would argue, other visual images/installations] is always, at bottom, a private reading” (p.97). Yet, according to social constructionists (Gergen

& Gergen, 2006), there can be no “private” outside of cultural messages and textual negotiation; we co-create the metaphorical meaning, no matter how contradictory that might be.

There is a power in metaphors that is not replicated in plain speech or academic discourse. And, like images, metaphor is everywhere (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999). Since metaphor does not stand outside of language, but *is* language, a pedagogical approach is then explicitly playing with and layering metaphor. The goal of the linguistic device is not to peel back layers or to de-fog the territory, but rather to complexify meanings and their communications. Although hooks (2003) would not be happy with what she might consider an academic and intentionally convoluted claim, I contend that because there is no singular truth, there is no traditional standard to adhere to.

Yet even metaphor needs to be expanded within a visual arts paradigm. Given that metaphors are linguistic currency, they tend to draw either novel excitement or become, in and of themselves, “dead limbs” of the linguistic tree. So what lay one step ahead of metaphor? Briggs (1992) comments:

Artists are artists for their ability to make reflectaphors that capture their vision – that is, for their ability to project into a concrete form (painting, poem, music) their unique perspective on the whole (and each of us has a unique perspective on the whole, though we don’t all make reflectaphors to express it.) Each great work of art is a kind of microcosm or mirror of the universe. That means that each great artist’s personal vision must also

reflect the whole, which means reflecting the mysterious chaos and order of life itself. (p. 176)

As will become abundantly clear, if it has not already, is that as a researcher I love the play of language and hence my attraction to Brigg's use of reflectaphors. For what he suggests is that the visual production stretches beyond our conception of metaphorical understanding and asks us to consider what an artist might communicate. Where I diverge from his perspective is the idea that we have a "unique" view of the world. I argue that this is impossible from a feminist and social constructionist perspective; as such, it may be more prudent that a personal vision reflects the "whole" of the person's experiences thus far. Whole should not be convoluted with complete.

Images provoke action for social change

Finely (2008) supports Weber's claim, stating:

Arts-based researchers must focus on the inherent promise that artful representations have the capacity to provoke both reflective dialogue and meaningful action, and, thereby, to change the world in positive ways that contribute to progressive, participatory, and ethical social action. (p.75)

Yet, we live in an image saturated world, whether those images exist on billboards or in our email inbox in chain emails. So the reader may be asking *what* images involve provocation, and what *actions* they produce and what *counts* as ethical social action.

Like Barthes (1981),

I see photographs everywhere, like everyone else, nowadays; they come from the world to me, without my asking; they are only 'images', their mode of appearance is heterogeneous. Yet, among those which have been selected, evaluated, approved, collected in albums or magazines and which had thereby passed through the filter of culture, I realized that some provoked tiny jubilations, as if they referred to a stilled center, an erotic or lacerating value buried in myself (however harmless the subject may have appeared). (p. 16)

In this sense, Barthes is referring to a resonance we experience with some images. Pink (2007) articulates this in more postmodern language, saying "images are 'everywhere' ...they are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, space and truth" (p.21). Using the visual works produced in this inquiry, for example, some "spoke" more loudly to me than others. It was less about which ones I "liked," but rather the meaning I made from them. As Sontag (1977) says, "photographs do not explain; they acknowledge" (p.111) and that is a critical component to discussing and disseminating arts-based work. If I am clear that what is viewed is at best, a temporary understanding it can create more movement than if I insist it is a static and singular truth. And perhaps this is the challenge of arts based methodology, new meanings can be made so quickly it can leave you dizzy.

Collage

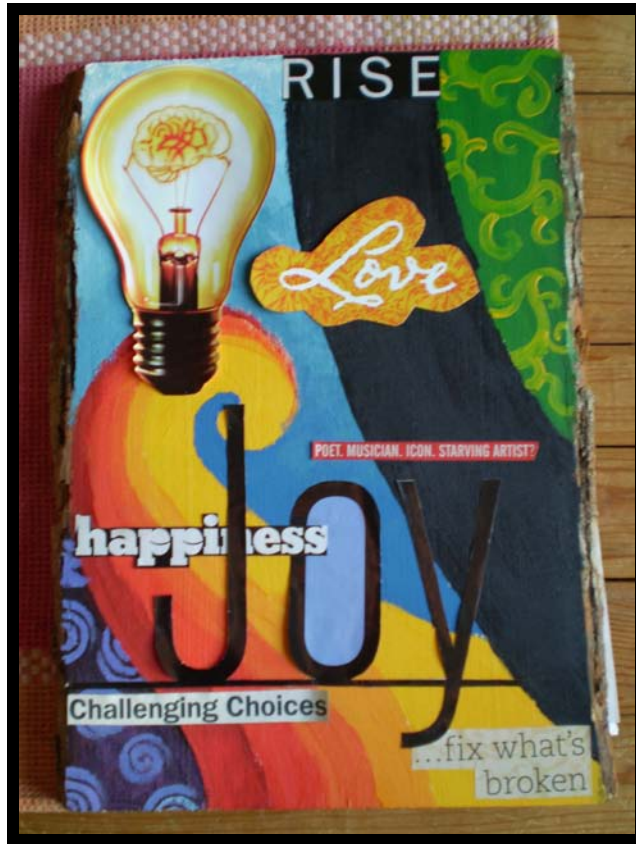


Figure 1 – Tash’s contribution to the collective collage (wood, paper, and acrylic).

Collage is an important lens with which the research process is filtered, both in the metaphorical and literal sense. When I realized that all writing and all research is essentially a collaging of ideas, texts, theories and dialogues, I was able to ground my work in a more congruent manner. Some may argue congruence is antithetic to collage, which literally glues together different textured materials, recycles images and often juxtaposes objects or words. On the contrary, I would accord that the collaboration of difference to produce an overall product is a journey in both sense making and sensory culture jamming. It visually reflects the recycling of ideas, discourses and conceptions of common sense, turning these upside down and creating new, but not necessarily original, works. While culture

jamming conjures for me billboard images credited to Jill Posner (see some examples at <http://www.jillposener.com/photoview.cfm?category=graffiti>) and Adbuster's magazine (see sample copies at <https://www.adbusters.org/>), jamming exists in other aesthetic spaces, including jazz improvisation, poetry slams, and "fan fiction" (see McCracken, 2008). Regardless of the context or venue, culture jamming takes pre-existing story lines, products and/or mediums (for example, Fox, 2006) and re-assembles them in different, and sometimes jarring, ways.



Figure 2 – Lily's contribution to the collective collage (silk, cotton and rayon).

Feminist collage reflects, in my opinion, an underestimated medium with powerful political implications. For example, feminist artist Mary Beth Edelson created collages based on famous and Euro-patriarchal paintings of founding

fathers and manipulated the outcome to be famous and not so famous women taking their places (see, for example, *Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper*, 1971; *Death of Patriarchy/Heresies*, 1978, among many others). While much of the original formulation of space, characters, and size remain the same, the image that she creates sparks a juxtaposition that questions “the” art canon, ownership of images and the absurd idea of truth and so-called accurate representation. Other marginalized groups have done their cultural critique in a similar vein, such as Ryan’s (1999) *The Trickster’s Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*. These works strike me as “palimpsest, which means a text written over an earlier text that was erased, with a few traces showing” (Wooldridge, 1996, p. 154). Not a tracing of words, although tracing all the same. As a qualitative researcher, I too postmodernly trace over modernist assumptions, creating new pictures of what it means to understand my consultants and their relationship to themselves and the world.



Figure 3 – Cole’s contribution to the collective collage (paper and found images).

Butler-Lisber (2008) has written a thoughtful chapter on the potential of collage in qualitative work. She comments that,

there is a burgeoning interest in using arts-informed research to counteract the hegemony and linearity in written texts, increase voice and reflexivity in the research process, and expand the possibilities of multiple and diverse realities and understandings. The search for more embodied and alternative representational forms where meaning is understood to be a construction of what the text represents and what the reader/viewer brings to it, and the realization that we live an increasingly visual/nonlinear world, have naturally led researchers to explore the potential of visual texts, collage being one possibility. (p. 268)

I have used collage for what she refers to as “memoing” (what others might call a visual audit trail), and agree that it has vast potential. But I do not think it is new – we have been mashing texts and quotes together in written work much longer. So, collage is a tool in this inquiry, but it is also a metaphor for the entire process.

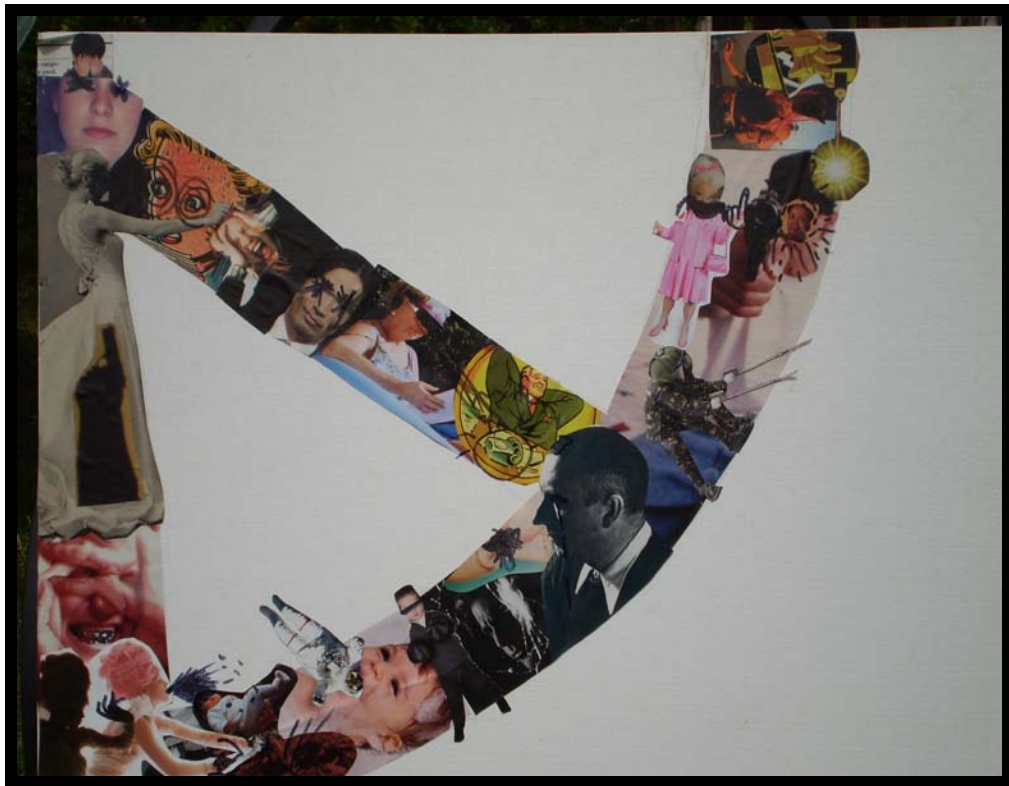


Figure 4 – Sebastian’s contribution to the collective collage (paper and found images).

Poetry

Akin to visual collage, poetry affords a medium to play with language outside of traditional academic discourses. I have successfully employed the use of poetry previously in research (Little, 2004; 2006) and my own poetic creations became an audit trail/audit echo of my process. In retrospect, my M.A. was a cautious use of poetry in that the poems were intended to be part of a linear thesis. As such, the poems were poorly (or at least, conventionally) integrated and acted as

bookends to academic discourse and not a legitimate academic discourse in and of itself. Perhaps it is a matter of training; I had not been exposed to any arts-based methodologies at that point in my career. But it is also a trusting of voice that has developed over time. I concur with Wooldridge (1996) who says “poetry takes us places we might never have imagined we would go. Poetry can be incendiary, revolutionary, outside bounds and rules and systems. Poetry is uncontainable and, therefore, dangerous, ignoring the established order” (p.180). The more I come to trust my voice, the more I distrust established orders of data dissemination. I am not pulling a don’t-trust-anyone-over-thirty, but rather to illuminate that my voice and that of my consultants is just as valid as the strange, socially constructed and sanctioned tongue of academic theory. And although Wooldridge refers to poetry as dangerous, for those of us for whom it is our mother tongue, it is paradoxically safe. She says, “I feel safe because poems take me to a place out of normal time and thought, dipping me below the surface of where we all meet. And there, as if we’re in silent collusion, it’s safe to say whatever we want” (p.75). Although somewhat romantic with its reference to silent collusion, it runs parallel to how consultants referred to their experience of camp; a stepping out of normal that allowed them to see and think and speak differently.

Leggo (2008) reminds us that “like all language use, poetry is epistemological and ontological. Poetry reminds me that everything is constructed in language; our experiences are all epistemologically and ontologically understood in words, our words and others’ words” (p.166). And because this inquiry is as much written as it is visual, this is important to pay attention to. While attending a

conference, I heard a presentation speaking to the concern for rigor in datum poetry. The authors had created a flow chart of sorts to describe what would make a datum poem “good” and my impression was that they were attempting to legitimize its use and were open to audience feedback. Not *all* feedback, however, as I asked how such a tool might limit the potential of poetics in qualitative research. Their answer? Poetry could not be reified, but method could be explicit. Like any arts-based method, there is a caution against the creative free-for-all without adequate critique and reflexivity. However, I lean more to Leggo (2008) who says “poetry creates textual spaces that invite and create ways of knowing and becoming in the world” (p.167) and such becoming cannot be pre-determined by a flow chart. Further, Leggo comments “poetry is a way of knowing and living, a way of examining lived experience by attending to issues of identity, relationship and community” (p.171). For this inquiry, the found data poems within this dissertation contribute to further community building in meshing all consultants’ reflections into a whole. Yet, whole does not imply singular truth and the poems stand as invitations to the reader to interpret the conversations following the poems.

Pedagartistry (say PEDDA-GART-istree)

Given my long discussion of the importance and potentialities of arts-based methods and the critical foundation of collage and poetry, it is time to turn to what methodology has developed from these forays. As discussed at my literature party, this involved a long process of disidentifying what this might be. There were also several points of theoretical and experiential resonance. The term pedagartistry is an intentional play on words that draws from pedagogy and art. Barber, Fitzgerald,

Howell, and Pontisso (2005) define pedagogy as “the science of teaching” (p. 611) and art as “1 human creative skill or its application. 2 (the arts) the various branches of creative activity, e.g. painting, music, writing, etc. considered collectively. 3 creative activity resulting in visual representation. 4 human workmanship as opposed to the work of nature. 5 a skill, aptitude, or knack. 6 (arts) certain branches of (esp. university) study, esp. the fine arts and humanities” (p.37). Pedagogy has its roots in the Greek prefix *pedi*, meaning child, while art comes from the Latin *ars* or *artis*, meaning practical skill. I find the etiology fascinating, as I see teaching less as a science and more of an art, and art more as expression than practical skill. Thus, to combine them creates a fusion of lenses with which to view this collaborative undertaking.

Transtheoretical or collaged methodologies are precarious as they can imply a breadth of understanding, a superficial survey, or a contradictory collusion. As an educator who teaches theories of change, I often caution students not to mix and match their theories without consideration to the theories’ underlying assumptions about human behaviour. For example, a student might like elements of choice theory but argue that social constructionist theory also fits. These two theories share some aspects, especially their attention to language, but little else. Likewise, in developing a methodology, it was important for me to ensure that the pieces drawn together could create a congruent container for the work.

An interesting, but important aside in the development of this methodology came from a presentation to the Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference in October 2009. As an aspiring full time academic, I am sure you expect a story of

scholarly glory but that was hardly the case. Slotted for a 4:30 presentation on a Friday afternoon, I swallowed my pride and practiced my presentation for hours. Given this conference has historically been a friendly site for my developing ideas and the focus of my paper was on methodological development, I anticipated at least one or two questions post presentation. It may also be important to know that the barometer is less than kind on Vancouver Island and in Vancouver, and as such, I was on the precipice of a migraine so the lighting, smells and heat of the room were especially palpable. But Girl Guides had trained me well, *be prepared*. The methodology I had created/collaged, which I named pedartistry, left me with a sea of sympathetic smiles and one request for my reference list. Other arts-based researchers were interested in questions of the art exhibition, but my carefully laid plans suddenly did not seem planned at all. This takes us back to the idea of trusting the poetic voice and emergent research designs. Or in this case, trusting the conference voice; one that was not recognizable to others. In all honesty, this particular conference was a turning point for me and promoted learning from its fledgling presentation. And you, dear reader, are invited into these new and improved insights. McNiff (2008) reminds us that,

Within contemporary artistic training [and I would argue research training] there is an assumption that one studies various traditions, but then builds upon them to create a new and personal method of inquiry. The search for a method, in art and research, is invariably characterized by a crucible of tensions, struggles, a certain degree of chaos, and even the destruction of cherished assumptions. I encourage 'creating outside the lines' as

contrasted to following the circumscribed procedures of a textbook approach¹¹ to research. Invariably the encounter with this experience is the transformative engine that carries the researcher to significant new discoveries. (p.39)

So what is meant by pedagartistry and how might it merge and counter-merge with contemporary canonical arts-based methodologies? For the purpose of clarity, the definition of pedagartistry is *concurrent learning and teaching through artistic collaboration with an action orientation*. Naming one's methodology is a retrospective process, as it emerged through snippets of consultant conversations that focused on the learning and teaching components. For example, Tash commented that, "*I've just learned so much about you guys [other consultants]*" through the process of sharing art pieces. And Lily felt that each "individual" art piece produced was part of a larger process of dialogue:

Lily - Because I think that part of the process, even individually, is we come here and we bounce things back and forth and then a lot of ideas come out of [it].

Angelica- But all of our art has just been individual.

Lily – But we have worked so much as a group.

It is important to stress the collaged aspect of this methodology and so you will find infused in it flavours of feminism, social constructionism and PAR. Just as Lily honors the connection between the works produced in the research group, so too do I acknowledge that this "individual" piece could not have been rendered possible in the absence of other "individual" pieces of writing by other theorists.

¹¹ Somewhat ironic given this quote came from the *Handbook of Arts in Qualitative Research*, the next probable "bible" of methodology.

It is important to consider how pedagogistry differs from other qualitative methodologies such as visual ethnography and a/r/tography. In the visual ethnography realm, there is work being done that addresses social change via visual methods (Carlson, Engebreston & Chamberlain, 2006; Wang, 2006; Wilson et al., 2007) and ethnographies that address youth in both schools (Gallagher, 2007; McKenzie, 2008; Prosser, 2007) and communities (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). What all of this work holds in common is a commitment to engaging research participants in creative and meaningful ways. My forays into visual ethnography were heavily influenced by Pink (2007) who states,

Attention to the meanings that people create when they combine images and words can create exciting new knowledge. Indeed, what is also curious about this process is that our first interpretations of the images people show us are not necessarily those we leave our interviews with. (p.86)

Further, my conceptions for this inquiry were also greatly influenced by Bach (2006) and Bloustien (2003) because they focused on youth. And yet, as illustrated in Chapter II, what I had done did not neatly fit into a visual ethnography toolbox. Specifically, I was not in the consultants' milieu(s). Although I am "in" YCI as a presenter and considered a member of the YCI "family,"¹² I did not consciously take field notes while presenting at YCI. Instead, I invited consultants into *my* milieu of the university and I think this is an important distinction. So while

¹² "Hello Cole, On October 24th YCI students are organizing a one day event to motivate them for the upcoming school year. As a speaker at the YCI camps we feel you are an important part of the YCI family and as such we would like to invite you to attend for lunch at the event at Mt. Douglas Secondary. Please let me know if you are able to attend. Paul" (October 15th, 2008, personal communication)

influenced by the work of visual ethnographers, the structure of the inquiry was such that a different methodological development was needed.

A parallel universe can also be found in a/r/tography. Irwin (2005) explains a/r/tography thusly:

To be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making in any art form and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create additional and/or enhanced meanings. A/r/tographical work is rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. A/r/tography is inherently about self as artist/researcher/teacher yet it is also social when groups or communities of a/r/tographers come together to engage in shared inquiries, act as critical friends, articulate an evolution of research questions, and present their collective evocative/provocative works to others. (retrieved August 29, 2010 from <http://m1.cust.educ.ubc.ca/Artography/>)

What I appreciate about a/r/tography is its focus on the researcher's multiple identities and how those merge with social and shared priorities. Housed within the tradition of education, I believe this is an excellent way with which to reconceptualize educational research. Where a/r/tography and pedagogy merge

is through attention to metaphor and the interplay of visual and text. Where a/r/tography and pedagogy splinter, however, is in the conditions for methodological undertakings which are designed for research with youth. It was through my consultants that this particular approach was refined, paying particular attention to relational collaboration and an action orientation.

Elements of pedagogy

There are five elements that are involved in this methodology. These include:

- Choice
- Emergence
- Relational collaboration
- Uncensored
- Orientation to action and public participation

While they are listed in a linear and singular manner, the reader is reminded that these fragments, or elements, collage together to create the larger vision.

Choice / de-stabilizing subject positions

*Choice * n. 1a an act of selecting or deciding between two or more possibilities. b something chosen. 2 a range from which to choose. 3 the best or preferred item. 4 the power or right to choose (Barber et al., 2005, p.135).*

Destabilize v 1 upset the stability of 2 make politically unstable (Barber et al., 2005, p. 214-215).

It seems very privileged to begin a description of methodology with the concept of choice. So, I want to be very clear in the meaning I assign this polysemiotic word and how it operates in the research. It is reflective of opening spaces and projects that do not assume *a priori* what “youth” means and how they should express themselves. All of the research consultants were involved with an academic institution, whether high school or university, and ensconced in curriculum and school cultures that offered little choice in how they expressed themselves as subjects. As Tsolidis (2001) reflects:

Teachers have an obligation to assist in the construction of schools as spaces which allow students to contest, negotiate and recreate cultural identifications. We should not expect these cultural identifications to be familiar to us. Indeed if they were familiar, they would not be new. (p. 126)

Yet, of course, this is not always the case. As discussed further in Chapter VI, identities tend to get fixed through normalizing practices and contexts, and there is little choice or opportunity to step outside of this without consequence. By offering a sense of choice within the research design, I am modeling a sense of faith in my research consultants’ capacity that does not seem to be offered elsewhere. And because these consultants were recruited through YCI, I was aiming for a parallel space that would offer structured and intentional choices. I believe popular conceptions of youth are a double edged sword – they are either romanticized or demonized. They are neither totally agentic beings nor are they miniature adults or blank slates. They are neither victims of developmental theory nor immature. Roy (2003) reflects:

There are clear outlines and categories that one must fit, or fall into an alternative category. Such spaces thickened into strata by repetition demand clear and constant reinforcement of boundaries for the purpose of not losing control, for lines of delineation are also borders that control possibilities of movement. (p.106)

At the same time, because of how the consultants had been socialized through public education, the concept of choice can prove overwhelming. Sebastian comments on the overwhelming sense of responsibility when offered free reign to create a project. He also spoke to the value of having an active and consistent adult in the role of a hands-off facilitator:

I find that a lot of times the [YCI school] groups have failed because of poor administration, by teachers who seek to let the children, students not children, have complete control. Personally I proved I couldn't run a group very effectively in high school, I don't think many people could. I think that's why a lot of times the group collapses and we talked about it at [regional YCI] committee, because a lot of the YCI teachers are involved in so many things. They'll go to a new school, or have leadership, or football and so they'll have to find a replacement teacher who hasn't gone to camp and this other teacher kind of pops in once in a while. Generally the teachers who go to YCI are very involved with their schools. So they're busy, they don't always have time, so it's the secondary teachers who don't do so well. The group survives a lot better when the YCI teacher stays, that's happened at Spectrum, that's happened at Mt Doug. I know Spectrum had a good

group; it actually grew throughout the year, which is a big thing; a lot people drop off, dead limbs.

Kyla was especially critical of teachers who did not display commitment to student groups. When Lily was speaking to the conflict her women's studies teacher was encountering with administration, she replied:

At least you have a women's studies class! Claremont was just so frustrating; we tried Gay/straight alliance and that didn't work out, YCI died, my new sponsor teacher said 'I saw no passion in the students so I just dropped it.' I was thinking you can't do that as a teacher, if it's just student council and sports, there's nothing. Even our global perspectives class is very wishy-washy.

Corson (1996) reflects:

In other words, these dominant people are trying to work out in advance, from their own interests as dominant individuals, what arrangement would be chosen by other people whose interests may not be readily understood by anyone who is not from the relevant class, gender, race or culture. Of course this point is very relevant to present-day schools, which are filled with students from diverse backgrounds, but are rarely in a position to understand the real interests of the diverse communities they serve. (p.11)

In this regard, the dominant people cited in the above examples (teachers and administrators) make most of the decisions for students (i.e. will a club run or not) resulting in a paralysis when students are expected to fill that role. Of course, issues of power and dominance are not absent from student meetings and YCI camp. In viewing my own subject position alongside my consultants, what they

needed was a compromise. To use the metaphor of a house, I provide the site and tools, and they do the construction. And yes, a few thumbs will get hammered, but that's the way it goes. For the purposes of this project, choice was also practical – consultants could choose their medium, withdraw their pieces, re-do their art pieces or not do one at all if the question did not inspire them. The questions themselves were open to interpretation, and it was interesting to note in emails how such ambiguity created anxiety. I see much of the same reaction in my own post secondary classrooms where linear learning objectives are listed and any written assignment that leaves an iota of room for creativity and self directed learning is met with panic from the majority of students. Shapiro (1995) says “recognizing that knowledge is a form of power, this will to knowledge is at the same time a will to power, to empowerment, or the ability to recreate oneself while at the same time redefining one's relations to others” (p.22). While this sounds exciting to me, it creates a different form of being than is espoused in the public school system. As such, we cannot take up Shapiro's challenge to will to power if we do not address the context in which this may happen. hooks (1994) describes this dilemma when discussing multiculturalism in the schools:

Despite the contemporary focus on multiculturalism in our society, particularly in education, there is not nearly enough practical discussion of ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning is inclusive. If the effort to respect and honor the social reality and experiences of groups in this society who are nonwhite is to be reflected in a pedagogical process, then as teachers-on all levels, from elementary to university settings-we

must acknowledge that our styles of teaching may need to change. Let's face it: most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teachings reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal. This has been as true for nonwhite teachers as for white teachers. Most of us learned to teach emulating this model. As a consequence, many teachers are disturbed by the political implications of a multicultural education because they fear losing control in a classroom *where there is no one way to approach a subject-only multiple ways and multiple references*. (p. 35-36, emphasis added)

Yet despite inviting multiplicity, there was a palpable fear of being wrong, as demonstrated in the following snippet of conversation about interpretation of the emailed questions:

Tash – That's my second [art piece], and I don't know if it's social activism, but I thought the email said social justice? So I did mine on social justice.

Lily – Mine was social justice, too, it's all good.

The above two sentences do not do justice to the physical reaction Tash was having as people spoke about social “activism” as opposed to social “justice.” This was particularly ironic given her history as the girl who marches to the beat of her own drummer in the educational system. In retrospect, this would have been an excellent opportunity to tease apart what the consultants considered the difference, but according to Lily, the terms were interchangeable. Groomed to be good students they had not been groomed to trust in themselves and to trust their interpretations.

While I have been discussing *individual* choices, as often is the connotation with the words choice and agency, there were also *relational* choices offered and negotiated. A good example of this would be when we decided to host an art exhibition. I was tasked in finding a space we could use at the University of Victoria. When I look back at this negotiation, I see two prominent areas where I snatched the idea of choice from the consultants. One was in the actual date. Repeated requests to hold the show in October or November were voiced by the consultants. I was advocating for a September date so I would have enough material to present at a conference. In this moment I ceased to be a facilitator, co-researcher or approachable adult; I had turned into Dr. My Agenda. In terms of room choice, one area I could get at no cost and when I showed the consultants they were visibly disappointed. Instead of listening to their verbal and non verbal communication, I *insisted* we could make it work. In looking back on both these experiences, I am struck with a sense of shame in my unconscious privilege and power. In the end, we negotiated both date and place and after listening to the consultants' preferences and choices. Because of this negotiation they became much more energized in creating the show. Likewise, when I suggested a series of art works based on their experiences in the research, hoping to write at least ten pages on catalytic validity (Lather, 1991), Angelica simply said, "*I don't think I can work with that.*" Perhaps I should have been more focused on Latherian "paralogical legitimation [which] foregrounds dissensus, heterogeneity, and multiple discourses that destabilize the researcher's position as the master of truth and knowledge" (Denzin, 1997, p.14). Looking back at the process, however, I am

surprised at how seductive efficiency and progress were despite my theoretical claims.

Emergence

Emerge v. (emerges, emerged, emerging) 1 come into view. 2 (of facts, circumstances, etc.) come to light. 3 become recognized; become apparent. 4 survive an ordeal etc. emergence n. (Barber et al., 2005, p. 257).

The idea of viewing qualitative inquiry as emergent has become almost “common sense” in the eyes of many qualitative researchers. Indeed it is the very paradox of qualitative inquiries that require a foregrounding of design; it is possible to anticipate issues, it is impossible to identify which ones will surface at what time. And while some applaud emergent design as open, fluid and filled with potentials, I think it needs to be acknowledged it can be very frustrating not having a sense of where you are going. Emergence might be an uncertain place for the researcher, but it also produced some ironic comments from consultants. Given that the original commitment from the consultants was three focus groups, and that morphed to four meetings and then meetings to plan the art show, what they had originally consented to had grown considerably. In our last focus group I commented, “*I can’t believe this is our last data meeting*” to which Angelica humorously responded, “*it’s not sounding like it is!*” Hence, the idea of emergence needs to be articulated early on alongside conceptions of informed consent.

Emergence, in the context of pedagogy refers to the uncertain construction of meanings created through visual narrations. It requires expecting

the unexpected and being able to work in the moment. I think two things have prepared me especially well for this. The first is being a long term contract worker in both non-profit organizations and massive institutions. This “real world” uncertainty I am no stranger to and find myself attempting to view employment uncertainty not as potential foreclosures but rather opportune exits. The second is my training in Child and Youth Care, where there is an emphasis of meeting youth where they are at, ideally working within their social and cultural milieu, and not assuming an ideal trajectory based on Euro western norms. At the same time, there is an intentionality to this approach that takes into account varied theoretical lenses and ecological aims. And because I recruited youth consultants, this was especially important as a facilitative tool. I do not perceive my “researcher” self as distinct from my practitioner self and many of the skills are present in both. Further, the use of “art can provide a means for processing paradox in this moment, this present moment” (Naidus, 2009, p. xvi) and I believe this can be extended to emergent design. The very construction of visual work, as well, creates a paradox of tangible and intangible: “whatever it is that the painter, poet, or musician depicts-whether abstract or realistic-the artist’s final product implied worlds within worlds. Within art there is always something more there than meets the eye, the mind, or the ear” (Briggs, 1992, p.28).

To ensure ethical vigilance and congruence in my research methodology, the idea of emergence was critical. But reminding myself to be open to emergence in relationship with my youth consultants was another story. For example, moments of certainty were akin to migraine auras predicting some sort of painful disaster.

As stated above, this was evident in my certainty that the art show should happen in September 2009, that my question regarding catalytic validity was important and essential, and more than once through the writing of this dissertation. To be able to yield to emergence is necessary for the reflexive turn qualitative inquiry should, in my opinion, take.

Relational Collaboration

Relation n 1. *the way in which one person or thing is related to another. 2 a relative. 3 (in pl.) dealings, rapport. b sexual intercourse. 4 =RELATIONSHIP 5 a narration. b a narrative.[] In relation to as regards. []relational adj.* (Barber et al., 2005, p.703).

Collaborate v. (collaborates, collaborative, collaborating) 1. *work jointly. 2 cooperate traitorously with an enemy. [] collaboration n* (Barber et al., 2005, p.150).

Dhruvarajan (2005) tells us that,

It is important for all of us to move beyond liberal indifference and make a sincere effort to know one another's way of life. When we interact as equals to explore our experiences, we often discover that we have many things in common along with our differences. Exploring these issues requires different ways of thinking and acting. It is only when we engage in such dialogue that we are able to develop solidarity across difference.
(p.143)

In some respects, the above quote reads like diversity policy – great on paper, vague in actual practice. And I am cautious to congratulate myself on collaboration

since I did not always do it well in this inquiry. However, what Dhruvarajan speaks to is modeled both in social constructionist epistemology and appreciative inquiry ontology. Had I done individual interviews, dyadic *co-operation* would have been sufficient. However, since I chose to organize focus groups and create a public art exhibition with the consultants, mere co-operation is insufficient. Gergen (2006) speaks to the concept of collaboration in educational pursuits, stating “in the educational sphere, we find growing investment in collaboratively orientated classrooms, relational bonds between teacher and student, collective performance, and dialogic forms of pedagogy” (p.26). While my inquiry is not based in traditional educational contexts, the aforementioned quote speaks to the larger goal of pedagogistry addressing concurrent teaching and learning. In any given focus group, consultants are expected to “perform” their piece via narrative presentation and we, as the audience, collectively add to the meaning(s). As Linnel et al. (2008) state, “in destabilizing the autonomous subject, we emphasize intersubjectivity as an emergent and productive intellectual and affective space” (p. 286).

Yet, like many of the words used in this dissertation thus far, there is an assumption of what values are embedded in such use of language. For example, many researchers who employ a participatory framework may take collaboration as an essential ingredient for their work. Likewise, in CYC, we often use the word collaboration as a description of how we are with children, youth, families and communities. But it is a romanticized word; just as I can call my classroom a learning community and rename my students as peers and colleagues to each other, we are still left with the material reality of what happens in these spaces despite the

wording. As such, I have often questioned whether this was truly a collaborative process or simply named as such. In the terrain of ethnography, Lassiter (2005) writes that to speak to collaboration, a researcher must “*deliberately and explicitly* emphasize collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it-from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and especially, through the writing process” (p.16, emphasis in original). As I did not invite my consultants to co-write or edit, I began to question what was meant as collaboration. In the spirit of this methodology, I think it is important to acknowledge that collaboration does not mean equal responsibility for the finished product. Instead, I believe that relational collaboration speaks to pedagogy’s emphasis on concurrent learning and teaching.

Uncensored / Rupturing dominant discourse

Censor * *n.* an official authorized to examine material to be published and to suppress anything considered obscene, a threat to security, etc. * *v* **1** act as a censor of. **2** to make deletions of changes in [] **ensorial** *adj.* (Barber et al., 2005, p.124).

Rupture * *n* **1** a sudden and complete breaking or bursting. **2** an ending of good relations between people. **3** an abdominal hernia. * *v.* (ruptures, ruptured, rupturing) **1** break or burst suddenly. **2** suffer the bursting of a bodily part. **3** undergo a rupture. (Barber et al., 2005, p.733).

A theme that came though loud and clear from consultants was a sense of being censored in their places of learning, specifically around issues of diversity

and social justice. As such, it was critical not to replicate these spaces or to create a culture of surveillance. The consultants noted the irony of a citizenship education model and actual practices within their schools. I concur with McGregor (2000) who states:

Critical reading aims to enable students to question and refute the given order of things, and it especially encourages them to dispute normalizing practices that define their identities and implicitly allot them a position on the grid of power relations with particular sites and ultimately within their own society...if education systems are serious about the implementation of critical literacy, those who administer schools and those who teach students must begin to rethink their reactions to students who 'talk back'. (p.222)

My research consultants are clearly those kids who "talk back," but this is not always without its consequences and contradictory messages from teachers and other adults with power over them.

I am also cognizant that we are always censoring – our speech, our texts, our artistic creations and so forth – but this censoring comes from a bifurcated place of ego and dominant discourse. For example, I may censor or edit my past to spare myself shame and/or your judgment. Or based on my subject position as a university instructor, I don't speak to psychedelic drug use as a viable option for altering consciousness because drug use is not promoted in CYC. We are censored by the normalizing discourses that groom us to understand what is acceptable in certain contexts. In the spirit of Foucault, we co-create our own panopticons. In my experience as a post secondary educator dialoging with students, and as a

researcher sleuthing meanings with youth, this collective surveillance and self censoring is painfully clear. So, you may be wondering, dear reader, how an uncensored context can be created if we are mostly our own censors?

For this inquiry, I needed to pay particular attention to the unspoken competition in the room that bolstered consultants' self censoring. For example, at one meeting, Tash was reluctant to show her piece in progress after listening to others present their finished works. While a seemingly small and inconsequential example, it speaks to the fact that there were norms constructed and established within the group that were articulated implicitly (i.e. finished is better than not, bigger is better, and so forth). Although in the moment I commented, "*go ahead, I don't want to foster any competition here,*" I did not stop to explicate with the group that we were effectively engaging in the very competitive, censoring processes so many of us rallied against in our respective learning institutions.

And what of rupture in this methodological paradigm? Like Roy (2003) who I echo from the literature chapter, "I do not mean to celebrate or fetishize the notion of schisis or rupture for its own sake. Each schisis can lead to a new capture" (p.32). In the most ideal sense, I would like to think I created a rupture of spaces available outside of both educational institutions and YCI by creating this research space. In metaphorical terms, the research team was the gulf between two continents of belonging/exile. However, I am not certain that this temporal geography of research consultation resulted in rupture of other spaces, and I wonder if that is necessary? To return to Roy, then, how did the creation of this space lead to new, and perhaps unforeseen and unwelcome, capture? Or is this post

structuralism paranoia? It would be prudent to suggest that a pedagogistry perspective would invite ruptures, but not anticipate their arrival. At what point is dissension rupture and at what point is rupture burps in the gastro intestinal track of meaning making?

Action Orientation

Action n. *1 the fact or process of doing or acting. 2 forcefulness or energy as a characteristic. 3 the exertion of energy or influence. 4 something done; a deed or act. 5 armed conflict. 6 the way in which a machine etc. works. 7 a legal process; a lawsuit. (Barber et al., 2005, p.7).*

Participate v. *(participates, participated, participating) share or take part. (Barber et al., 2005, p.604).*

Pratt (1995) contends that “we cannot move theory into action unless we can find it in the eccentric and wandering ways of our daily life” (p.22). This quote is important as it speaks to a praxis orientation valued in both feminist inquiry and child and youth care practice. As Thompson (2001) says, “without theory, experience is at best a blind groping in the dark, at worst a reinforcement of and collusion with the status quo; but without experience, theory becomes an esoteric mystery, a game for academic troglodytes” (p.49). As our research collaboration grew, it became clear that there was a next step needed. While I am confident that the consultants gained individual insight into their relationship with YCI and new insights into their YCI colleagues, it remained impotent and insular within our collective. Quite frankly, it was also anti-climactic. The hours of talking paled in

comparison to the hours of work the consultants put into their pieces – to stuff them back into oversized garbage bags to protect against the west coast winter weather and my leaking car trunk just felt wrong.

But what counts as action in this methodology? Those who work from social justice informed perspectives argue:

We are not longer called to just *interpret* the world, which was the mandate of traditional ethnography. Today, we are called to *change* the world and to change it in ways that resist injustice while celebrating freedom and full, inclusive, participatory democracy. (Denzin & Giardina, 2009, p.13, original emphasis)

And Madison (2009), speaking to performative research tells us:

The major work of performance ethnography is to make performances that do the labor of advocacy and do it ethically to inspire realms of reflection and responsibility. Bertolt Brecht reminds us that performance must also proceed beyond that of a mirror reflection to become the hammer that breaks the mirror, distorts the reflection, to build a new reality. (p. 194)

I applaud their initiative and passionate persuasions, yet it also leaves me paralyzed. Both quotes imply grand interventions that have profoundly altering affects on participants and audiences. There is privilege in being able to stage performative interventions and hence resources of time and money are often cited as the two largest barriers to arts based inquiries (Knowles & Cole, 2008). I would prefer to elicit Shagoury Hubbard (2000) who frames social justice projects this way:

Justice has many facets. It looks more like hard work and struggle than distanced discussions of lofty ideas. It looks like rolling up your sleeves and digging in. It is indeed an intricate and complex dance of ‘millions of intricate moves,’ characterized by both tiny steps and bold gestures. (p.8)

In this sense, my inquiry is a tiny step in my development as a researcher. To say tiny might surprise some people given the time, energy and resources that are required to finish a Ph.D. By tiny, I am implying that this inquiry has become one intricate move in what I hope to be the “bold gesture” of my beginning academic career. When the project “finished” it sparked new and bolder ideas for future research which I think speaks to its impact on me, at least. For the purposes of pedagartistry, an action orientation implies moving the research processes and products into a public space. This then also addresses other elements such as emergence and ambiguity and relational collaboration, and embodies what Fletcher would refer to as art as social practice. Although the impact of the action cannot be anticipated ahead of time, I believe the research needs to be designed to have some impact beyond the research consultants, the researcher and her committee.

Now that we have a theoretical mapping of sorts, it is now time to turn our attention to the how I came to this research, the consultants who worked on this inquiry and YCI’s mandate overall.

Chapter IV – Introducing the Players

Every morning when the day begins

I make up my mind but change it back again

I'm a shifter of the shape I'm in

Who did you think I was?

(Mayer, Jordan, & Palladino, 2005, track 1)

In this chapter, I intend to introduce the reader to the three key contexts who hold stakes in this research process: myself as the researcher, the site of recruitment and the consultants recruited. There are several “social ghosts” (Gergen, 2001, p.122) who meander in and around these people, and whether they are deceased, fictional, culturally iconic, or on the periphery, they influence the process. If coming from a feminist and social constructionist perspective, there can be no isolated individuals or “players,” for the purposes of clarity, this is how we will be introduced.

Me, myself and I.

Looking back at myself as a teenager, I am struck by the many competing and contradictory narratives. On the one hand, I wanted to be the punk rock president of the drama club. On the other hand, I wasn't enough of a freak to hang out with the really bad kids. I was a floater, meaning I knew people in several circles, but I was never popular in the cliché sense. In fact, I didn't really fit in anywhere and I wasn't particularly good at much except English and outdoor education. What I discovered I *was* good at, however, was social service. I was the youngest volunteer at the local Women's Transition House, my paid work was with

a young woman with disabilities, and I joined every social justice club and started my own gender issues club. And I won the local award for exceptional youth volunteering. The day the local paper came to take my picture I happened to be wearing my “wear a condom t-shirt” because I was also a huge proponent of safer sex practices.



Figure 5 – Yellowed newspaper clipping from *The Brockville Recorder and Times* (n.d.).

Needless to say, the journalist who wrote the article did not interact with a young, sweet, virginal, civic minded girl. She had to contend with a righteous and unyielding Amazon- in- training who refused to put a different shirt on. And while the photo did get published, it was with much scandal in a small Ontario city. So while much of what I participated in as a youth remain my core interests today (women's health, gender, writing), I also had a young introduction to the

consequences of standing up for what you believe in, of being concurrently praised and shamed for using my voice. I share this story to create the gateway to my current research interests. In some respects, my consultants bring back these memories as they are active, quirky, and over-committed. They are also articulate ambassadors for the shifting social discourses of being a young social activist, and the consequences of speaking your mind. And although my research consultants inhabit a different generation, and because of that I view their world as more progressive (i.e. Gay-straight alliances in schools), many of the challenges they articulate are not dissimilar (i.e. sexism). As Bechdel (2003) says tongue in cheek, “lately, the young activists I meet seem to have cut their teeth organizing gay-straight alliances in their day-care centers. And many of them have moved beyond the need for even the categories ‘gay’ and ‘straight’. I’ve reluctantly come to accept that the whole point of a liberation movement, after all, it to render itself obsolete” (n.p.). Yet, as I discovered through this research, there is much work to be done.

Fast forward two decades to find myself mired in questions of epistemology as opposed to grassroots organizing (but perhaps those are not so separate after some consideration). I no longer work for non-profit organizations but rather large institutions and my current challenge is how to enact change from the inside. A sell-out to some, a radical to others, I use research as a means to voice creative dissent and to open up ideas about the social cultivation of identities and dominant discourses of change. How I came to partner with YCI is a relational and personal story, as many intended participatory research endeavors are. As mentioned in

Chapter I, I have been an invited speaker to YCI for the last four years addressing issues of homophobia, heterosexism and Queer histories. Speakers are encouraged to share their own personal experiences as they pertain to the issue they discuss, and as such, I refer to myself as an out-insider in relation to this group, as many of the youth know my coming out story intimately. I am an insider by virtue of being a speaker and my historical engagement with the Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee¹³. But I am also an outsider in that I do not spend the camp weekend with them and as an adult and educator, I hold a level of power in relation to these students. Interestingly enough, only one consultant commented early on in the research process that, “*it must be weird for you to hear these [focus group] stories as a speaker*” and while I invited more conversation on that issue, none was offered. In retrospect, this elephant in the room may have influenced conversations we had in the focus groups and it was my lack of sensitivity to my position of power that excluded these potential deconstructions of power and intentional leveling of hierarchy. This is but one example of textbook participatory/collaborative methods and forgotten privileges and power in the actual research context.

I also come to this research with the perspective that young people, at least in this research design, should be credited for their artistic creations and verbal articulations. Many people, however, did not share my enthusiasm. Generally speaking, my research consultants are high achieving, economically privileged, and considered peer leaders. Throughout our conversations, I have also learned that

¹³ It was within this committee capacity that I originally met Constable Paul Brookes and Retired Staff Sergeant Kevin Worth, alongside some of the police officers who attend YCI.

they do not shy away from identifying inequity or speaking their dissent to status quo decisions. Yet, research with youth has a certain scent of peril for this very reason. On the one hand, as researchers, we have an ethical and moral obligation to keep youth consultants safe. On the other hand, this implies that we, as researchers, need to keep them reined in “for their own good.” When I initially explained photoethnography to a high school teacher, for example, her comment was “well, you can’t let them loose with cameras”! Likewise, when I initially presented my ethics application to the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board, their main concern was that youth would be named, and that parents’ wishes that they remain anonymous trumped the argument that youth had valid voices of their own. I consented to the amendment for the purposes of getting on with the actual research, and it was no surprise to me that no student asked for a pseudonym. I need also to be explicit that my comments above are not written as invitations to romanticize youth. Indeed, my intent is to trouble the binary of good/bad youth throughout this dissertation. This is a vexation taken up in writing on participatory action research with youth. For example, Dimitriadis (2008) comments:

None of this is easy work...PAR [participatory action research] forces us to abandon the categories often used to sort, classify, and essentialize youth. The categories can be deployed by both conservatives and progressives. The former often treat young people as a pathological problem to be managed- ‘at risk’ as defined by adults. The latter often treat young people as incipient radicals, ‘resisting’ dominant culture through everyday cultural practices. Working with youth, in distinction, means seeing young people

as partners in struggle, as resources to be drawn upon in common cause...PAR does not allow us to 'freeze' young people in such fashion. PAR treats young people as agents in ongoing, critical struggles. (in Cammarota & Fine, p.viii)

Yet, as was discussed in Chapter II, there remains an ever present tension in claiming to partner with youth alongside material power relations. And although I concur with the idea that youth are "resources in common struggle," I must be mindful that most resources in the physical sense are exploited for gain. I further struggled with the idea of how not to categorize my youth consultants yet still draw on the categories of YCI, schools and social justice clubs with which to describe them. So with the full knowledge that I will contradict myself, here are their initial introductions:

Research Consultants (aka Team Ranch)

Angelica

"Angelica wants to save the world. She is a student activist with a life time dedication to humanity ahead of her. Artist and freethinker, she spends most of her time confined in an institution called high school, though recognizes this is a necessary phase in her life. She would rather be out doors, taking pictures, surfing, traveling, helping refugees, marching in protests, hearing live music, or planting trees. Angelica plans to continue her work in social justice and art at the professional level, firstly by achieving higher levels of education in said fields. Her passion for peace is one that will never leave her, and undoubtedly guide her throughout her life. Relatively introverted, she enjoys having personal space,

though loves her friends and family dearly. Overall, Angelica is a friendly, laid-back, and peaceful person with the initiative to make the world a better place.”

(Written by Angelica)

Lily-Elen¹⁴

“Seventeen year old Elen is a gifted, adept and young yet accomplished artist. She excels in virtually all artistic disciplines imaginable from fashion and design, to painting and drawing, to dance and choreography. Even from a young age Elen has demonstrated a high natural artistic ability. At the age of nine one of her drawings was chosen as one of the best for her age and was published in the ‘BC Powersmart’ calendar. This year Elen was a featured artist in the 2009 Luminara lantern festival with her work ‘Blue Dress, Big Dreams’. While working as a teaching assistant Elen’s own choreographed dances were taught to the Esquimalt High dance class then performed in a local arts celebration. Elen seems to excel at any artistic task she takes on. Outside of the arts Elen is a leader as well. She has well served the Esquimalt Youth Combating Intolerance (EYCI) club as president for two years and this year Elen has served as city wide president for Youth Combating Intolerance. Under the direction of Elen and Angelica, this year (EYCI) raised over \$3000 for the Victoria Women’s Transition House, a non-profit charitable organization which helps women escape the cycle of domestic abuse. In her spare time, Elen hangs out with her dog and reads as many books as she can.”

(Written By: Jeremy)

¹⁴ Lily-Elen will be referred to as Lily throughout the dissertation. At the beginning of our research, she was in the process of changing her name legally from Elen to Lily.

Kyla

“Kyla is a second year student at the University of Victoria, majoring in history and minoring in French language. She has been involved with the Youth Combating Intolerance movement for the past five years. Since attending the camp for the first time, she has been inspired to educate other students about the effects of intolerance, and promote a peaceful and accepting community. This has included Day of Silence Protests, Free Tibet demonstrations, YCI Motivational conferences, and various workshops for youth and faculty. Currently she is the executive assistant to the YCI coordinator.

During her spare time, Kyla is a devoted listener of John Mayer- she believes that everyone should listen to him. Furthermore, she loves to read and paint. She focuses mostly on still life; however she is venturing into abstract pieces and is enjoying the challenges that come along with it. Kyla is also an avid coffee drinker, and one can usually find her at a coffee shop in Chinatown ensconced with her laptop during the week. She feels fortunate to have been able to be offered an opportunity to be a part of a dissertation so early on in her academic career. Cole Little’s project has combined two significant elements that make Kyla who she is: social justice work and art. She would like to thank Cole for this experience as it provided occasions to not only learn about others, but her as well.” (Written by Kyla)

Sebastian

“Sebastian is currently attending his first year at the University of Victoria. For five consecutive years through Oak Bay High School, Sebastian was able to attend the Youth Combating Intolerance leadership training camp on Thetis Island, and now advises on its regional committee in Victoria. After graduating from Oak Bay, Sebastian traveled to India to volunteer with a Tibetan political group living in exile, and is still active for this cause at UVic. He has a long history as a dancer. Sebastian plans to attend University in the UK to finish his undergraduate degree.”

(Written by Sebastian)

Tash

“Tash is definable by the love she spreads. A quirky individual full of passion, she’s unafraid to speak her mind and stand up for what she believes in. A little hard to believe perhaps, but this fiery flower child is still at Oak Bay Secondary. Her encouragement of community building and tolerance is approached with a wisdom and patience beyond her 16 years through assorted non-profit groups and especially her beloved music and art, through which she uses all different mediums.

Seriously, this girl will knock your socks off!” (Written by Joy)

It was the youths’ idea to write artist biographies for our exhibition. Some consultants chose to write their own; others asked friends to do so. Although they found writing about themselves challenging, this proved far more successful than my suggested “puzzle pieces.” These puzzle pieces were blank puzzles that I asked

the youth to fill in with identity descriptors so I would have a better way of explaining their demographic and identity diversity to my dissertation audience. And while the creation of puzzles was met with enthusiasm, the intention behind them was not. For example,

Cole- I'll be really transparent with you guys- when I write up my dissertation I also need to be able to describe you.

Lily – Like personality wise?

Cole- Well, I need to be able to say 'one of the participants Kyla identifies as a university student, and considers these aspects about her really important,' right?

Cole- Part of it, too, for me is that I'm listening to everything you folks have said with a lens, so I might assume, I don't know, that alligators are more important to you than anything else, right? Because you mentioned alligators once or something [laughter].

Angelica –So there's a huge hidden part of our identity that you don't know and are judging us based on the [one] fact that you know?

Cole- Exactly.

Angelica- But I feel that I'm just always myself and I don't feel like I have anything I'm hiding – it's not like I'm hiding part of my identity that you don't know. I feel like I'm me, and I think you know me, and now I'm a puzzle?

Cole- This idea - yes you are yourself but that then gets taken for granted because of other people, my readers of my dissertation for example.

It was my inclination to categorize them, fragment them that created the resistance. The artists' biographies offer a more resonant and meaningful description, which

the consultants were proud to share with the public. The above conversation also illuminates an academic propensity to complexify rather than simplify. Angelica did not see herself as a puzzle, even though as a researcher with youth that is a metaphor that resonates with me. This was another lesson in unintentionally resorting to reductionist measures as a researcher, despite my claims otherwise.

What I have appreciated about the youth is their capacity to call me out when creating agenda items that did not resonate with their experience or participation. For example, while I was the sole creator of the research questions that guided each focus group and art work creation, the consultants were loud and clear when these questions did not call their muse or spark their imagination. When asked if they would be willing to produce a piece based on their participation in the research, Angelica bluntly replied, *“I don’t think I could do anything with that”* and Lily said, *“I would have to sit with it for a while.”* Tash had a great idea and asked, *“what if you opened up the question to insight to yourself as a person and to others? Because I think we’ve learned a lot from each other here and I think there would be plenty to work with there.”* In the end, we changed the question completely, but both Angelica’s bluntness and Tash’s negotiated question speak to the open space I believe we created and that called into question my authority as the primary researcher. As Shagoury Hubbard (2000) reminds us, “even the most creative and inspiring lessons will fail if the epicenter of the circle is neglected: the students themselves” (p.1).

From whence they came

Together, the consultants came from three different high schools and two consultants are also now University of Victoria students. The common thread regardless of school is their repeat participation in YCI. Constable Paul Brookes describes the group as follows:

With a view to increasing the level of understanding among young people of cultural and lifestyle differences, the Victoria Police Diversity Unit sponsors a 4 day conference called *Youth Combating Intolerance*. There have been five past conferences since 2003 and they have all been held at Camp Columbia on Thetis Island. Victoria Police Constable Paul Brookes has made this project possible by assembling funding and support from Coast Capital Savings and the Victoria Police Department.

Over 300 students have attended from various Victoria schools including: Victoria High, Spectrum, Esquimalt High, Stelly's Secondary, Oak Bay High, Claremont High, Mt. Doug High, Oak Bay High, Lansdowne, Colquitz and the Inter-Cultural Association. The purpose of the camp is to expose students to issues surrounding hate and intolerance and develop projects to implement within their schools to facilitate a more accepting environment. Each school supplies a teacher or teachers to attend the camp, and work with the students on their projects once back at school. The Victoria Police Department, RCMP and Saanich police officers have participated as camp leaders.

The Camp has proven to be an interesting and valuable experience for all the participants, both students and adults. Topics have included racism, homophobia, the challenges of immigrants and refugees, the impact of residential schools, the holocaust, hate crimes, bullying and spreading hate on the Internet.

Surveys returned by students post-conference indicated it was a life-changing event for many. Their testimonials reflected the enormous personal growth that had taken place in a short period of time. (personal communication, September 14th, 2009)

It was the “life changing,” or at the very least, change aspects, that interested me the most. Was it possible for youth to experience fifteen plus years of school and lack any substantial transformational curriculum within the confines of public education? Illich (1970) wrote early on that:

Of course, school is not, by any means, the only modern institution which has as its primary purpose the shaping of man’s [*sic*] vision of reality. The hidden curriculum of family life, draft, health care, so-called professionalism, or of the media play an important part in the institutional manipulation of man’s [*sic*] world-vision, language, and demands. But school enslaves more profoundly and more systematically, since only school is credited with the principal function of forming critical judgement, and, paradoxically, tries to do so by making learning about oneself, about others, and about nature depend on a prepackaged [*sic*] process. *School*

touches us so intimately that none of us can expect to be liberated from it by something else. (p.47, emphasis added)

And yet, as the reader will soon see in Chapter VI, consultants do conceptualize YCI camp as a sense of liberation from regular school norms and curriculum. Although they struggle to maintain new ways of being in between the two spaces (school and camp), YCI, in effect, highlights discourses that are missing from public education.¹⁵ How might a curriculum nested in personal narratives, intentional community building and most importantly, one that transcends school district boundaries and school stereotypes be the catalyst to this? Of course, I am not the first researcher to examine community-based education based on specific needs around inclusion and diversity (see for example, Bloustein, 2003; Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threatts, 2008; de Finney, 2007; McIvor, 2005). Likewise, I am not the first to observe that educational reform addressing diversity is glacial slow in most public education institutions (Apple, 1995, 2000; Cammaroto & Fine, 2008; Corson, 1998; Csikszentmihaly, 1993; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998; Shapiro, 1995; to name some) or according to Ilich (1970), impossible. What makes YCI and my research partnership with them unique is that the program addresses the multiplicity and intersections of oppression and inclusion, and does not draw exclusively from one student demographic. If “a curriculum of experience needs to reinforce self-knowledge and emotional experience” (Bach, 1998, p.27), then perhaps YCI is in Bach’s words, one that “flickers.” Speakers base their presentations on personal experience and strive to form relationships with camp participants. Further, this camp is firmly embedded in my pedagogical heart. I realize that such a declaration

¹⁵ I am hopeful this will change with recent pilots of Social Justice 12.

is often a red flag for committee members and public audiences alike, as it infers an uncritical lens with which I view my research and consultants. On the contrary, I believe it essential to study alongside a population that you feel beholden to ethically, which does not foreclose a critical perspective. As Tsolidis (2001) reminds us, “for deconstruction to be useful, [Spivak] argues, it needs to be applied not only to those things we oppose, but more importantly to those things we hold dear” (p.106).

Recruitment

Part of my interest in this group, of course, developed from my participation in YCI as a speaker. For me, there is a sense of welcoming and community within this camp; I feel a sense of belonging that has eluded me most of my professional and social life. Most importantly I experience a sense of hope, and I was curious to know how participating youth experienced this as well. Youth were recruited through an email distributed first by Constable Paul Brookes to sponsor teachers and eventually the youth (see Appendix A). I also recruited an adult volunteer to make the same request on her Facebook account. Perhaps over zealous, my initial concern was that too many consultants would come forward. I pondered how to turn these amazing youth away as they crashed the doors down to participate in the research. Although tongue in cheek, I think this speaks to the divide between researcher and researched regardless of participatory or collaborative design. When I asked one YCI member what came to mind when I said research, she replied “boredom.” This young woman, who never threw her hat in the eventual ring, was actually a key informant in the recruitment process. For example, she suggested I

not use the term research too much, and most importantly, that I not recruit only those considered “leaders” in YCI. This was difficult, as I had no idea who the leaders might be, as my contact with camp participants was to see them as an entire group during my presentations. She suggested I promote the creative aspect of the project over anything else, but also stressed I should not be recruiting only artists. I think this in itself is a key finding and a tribute to the capacity of youth consultants knowing what works and clearly what does not. I often wonder about this young person, as she was clearly articulate, creative and wise. And given her insight, I am immensely curious as to why she did not sign up despite our exchange of email addresses. Regardless of her lack of participation, and hence my inability to name her, I thank her all the same.

In retrospect, I would have considered technology more carefully. Although I am opposed to social networking sites such as Facebook for personal and ethical reasons, it became clear throughout the data collection process that email was simply old fashioned to these youth. Their preferred means of communication were texting (which I do not know how to do, much to the youth’s shock and surprise) and Facebook (which I do not participate in, which generated more incredulous looks). Our generational divide could not have been clearer and I anticipate it would have been more empowering for the consultants to also act as tutors in technology, and hence, inviting the researcher into a different mode of communication that was informed by their larger social ecology.

Consultants were then invited to an orientation (with the invitation extended to parent(s)/ guardians). In many respects, this was not a “cold call” in that all who

attended had seen me speak on at least one occasion. Further, only one parent actually attended, but she did not stay for the orientation piece despite my invitations. I was actually terrified that no one would show up, especially given I had invited a former student and YCI volunteer¹⁶ to attend to offer moral support. Four of the five people who attended participated and one more consultant was recruited through word of mouth. I drew on Hoskins' (2009) orientation method of offering visual images to elicit dialogue. Specifically, I brought a wide variety of my own art work (including photography, paintings and my preferred medium, collage) to use as examples of meaning making. My artistic process is exactly that-process, and I am less devoted to a polished, finished product than I am to processing an idea. In retrospect, this was an effective means of opening conversation and modeling a vulnerability essential in collaborative research inquiries. I concur with Linnell et al. (2008) when they say, "I am propelled toward theory, that master discourse, to frame up my thoughts, my life. I want someone else's words to wrap myself in. Theory boxes me. Arts practice busts me open again, makes me: vulnerable" (p.295). Given the youth consultants are, by broad brush stroke, high achieving students, I also wanted to tender the invitation to "bust" open and push the boundaries of static categorizations of good students.

In terms of linear time, my interactions with the consultants can be split between BD and AD – before data and after data. The before data included four of the consultants meeting for a series of four focus groups, set two to four weeks apart, and one consultant, Sebastian, met me for two individual interviews. He was unable to attend the initial focus group meetings due to his work schedule. All of

¹⁶ Special thanks to Margaret Shaver for her time and energy.

these meetings and interviews were audio taped and transcribed by me with the intention that this would be the first layer of analysis. It is interesting to note the difference between a focus group and an interview in terms of content, energy and power dynamics. Although all touched on similar themes, as discussed in Chapter VI, the focus groups tended to be livelier, more humorous and held a less serious tone despite the similarities noted. The interviews, while rich and engaging, felt too formal despite the casual setting of my kitchen table. The amount of time is also important to note, as the focus groups took considerably more time and preparation and the “mood” was contagious. So, if one consultant was low and needing to vent, it tended to set a tone for others. We were also easily “derailed” by popular culture events, such as the death of Michael Jackson. Yet, it should be noted that any requests for popular culture insights were promptly responded to, whereas other research inquiries languished in their inboxes, sometimes for weeks. For example, I emailed Kyla several times for her artist’s biography and received no response. When I asked about John Mayer, however, her response (within 24 hours) was this¹⁷:

Hi Cole,

How are you??

Here are my John Mayer picks although I must admit every time someone asks me what my favourite mayer song is, i find it's like a parent being asked who their favourite child is hahaha. I recommend listening to all the albums because they are all great in their own unique way, but definitely listen to "Heavier Things" a couple times through- the album that i mentioned in the discussion and was in my first

¹⁷ I have left her original writing, grammar and format intact.

piece. I think "Clarity" is pure perfection and has always been a go to song, i highly recommend it. I've organized the songs by album so it's easier to find them. i've also attached "tracing" onto this e-mail, it's an unreleased track that i stumbled upon a couple years ago, it's unbelievable and has always been a favorite of mine. Right now i can't stop listening to "edge of desire", according to my itunes i've listening to it 447 and counting (can you tell how much i love his music? AND i'm seeing him in concert again in april).

ANYWAY, i hope you enjoy them as much as i do and i'd love to hear what you think about them! i hope all is well. Take care! Kyla

Inside Wants Out

***Comfortable-** about an old relationship, it's so simple and honest. all i can say is that i want a love that is comfortable someday.*

Room For Squares

***no such thing-** one of his first hit's, and the song that got me hooked on him when i was 10. it's about growing up and the "real world". i love it.*

***your body is a wonderland-** classic mayer.*

***city love-** i hated it at first, now it's one of my favourites- the guitar work in the middle is awesome. listen to it alone, lying on your couch with your eyes closed.*

***3x5-** another one i hated at first, but i love it now...it's about going out and seeing the world with your own eyes.*

***great indoors-** soooo cute, and so good.*

***st. patricks day-** i still don't entirely get what this song means but it's so calm and peaceful.*

Heavier Things

Listen to all the songs...every single one is good

***clarity-** i listen to this ALL THE TIME. before exams, when i'm stressed out, when i'm angry/ happy. it's my own version of zen.*

***bigger than my body-** great motivational song. so inspiring!!*

***something's missing**- this one makes you question the things you have, the things you want and the things you really need in life...very thought-provoking*

***new deep**- used to be my least favourite song on this album. it's about over-analysing and simplicity....the lyrics are awesome!!*

***come back to bed**- relationship song...has one of the most beautiful and sweetest lyrics i've ever come across, it's in the end of 2nd verse.*

***home life**- mayer's view on marriage has changed my view on marriage. i want to live a home life.*

***split screen sadness**- a breakup song, it's so sad, so honest, so heavy and so good. the beginning of the 2nd verse gives me butterflies still and makes me want to cry.*

***daughters**- the perfect father/daughter song.*

***only heart**- i think this one is the most relevant to my life right now...it's got a great beat :)*

***wheel**- such a great song about life, this one has helped me let go of the small things and keep going.*

Continuum

***i don't trust myself (with loving you)**- sooo sexy, great guitar work and lyrics.*

***belief**- political song.... about war, i'm surprised it didn't get a lot of flack. very honest and very true.*

***gravity**- there's nothing to say that could do this song justice....you have to listen to it yourself. very pure.*

***vultures**- about rising up and above....great groove and guitar work.*

***stop this train**- about growing up...so sad, yet so honest at the same time, very bittersweet...the piano in this is great.*

***slow dancing in a burning room**- another breakup song...it's so heavy and honest...just like split screen sadness, i want to cry everytime i listen to it.*

Where the Light Is

***in your atmosphere**- i die everytime i hear him say "i'd die if i saw you" especially the last one in the song...the tone of his voice, so much emotion! and the last 1:45 is*

amazing!

Any Given Thursday

covered in rain- it's a sequel to "city love", sad but thoughtful and the guitar work is unbelievable. listen to this alone while driving along beach drive + ogden point at night- it's amazing and very soothing.

Battles Studies

half of my heart- can't really describe this song, you just get it.

assassin- the opening of this is quirky + unique. it's about a player who gets played. i love the 2:30 part of the song.

crossroads- this is what mayer is known for: excellent guitar work. short song- very strong guitar...it leaves something with you.

war of my life- my new love! his voice in the opening is so pure and so smooth. it's very calming. i think everyone has gone through what this song talks about, or will go through it, or is going through it now.

edge of desire- i think i could write a whole paper about how much i love this song. the emotion is so, so strong. It brings back so much, i remember feeling like this when i was younger- i believe everyone should feel like this at one point in their life. Listen to it lying in bed at 4 am- it's got this beat like a lullaby. The lyric at the 2:05 mark gives me chills every time and the chorus is lovely, absolutely lovely.

Unreleased

tracing- soothing and calming with interesting lyrics. very simple..one of my favourites for sure :)

Despite the research questions being focused on YCI as the conduit/context, most consultants spoke to popular cultural repositories to explain their points. As Pink (2007) reflects:

It is useful to pay attention to the subjectivities and intentionalities of individual photographers [in this case, artists], coupled with the cultural discourses, social relationships and broader political, economic and historical contexts to which these refer and in which they are enmeshed.

(p.69)

And like any group setting, our conversations moved more in a spiral than in a linear progression. I wrestled with how the settings would determine the conversations, and how that could be integrated into the dissertation. This is one reason I chose to create poetry from their words in addition to highlighting conversation pieces clustered around a particular topic or art piece. In quantitative research, Sebastian would be considered an “outlier” that would have serious impact on the average “mean” of the data. However, this is not that, and his participation helped shape a historical understanding of YCI alongside his personal transformation through it. An interesting story about Sebastian emerged from the first time I went to speak at YCI. There was this beautiful blond youth who had his arms draped around an equally beautiful young woman, and who I perceived to be sneering during my entire presentation. My first thought that he was, perhaps, Queer and not liking a presentation on Queer issues from a white and “straight looking” woman. They advise in public speaking to look for allies in the audience to help give you confidence, but I could not help looking at this young man wondering what was going on; what I was saying that was creating visual resistance. When I received my thank you card from the youth, one youth had written “fine presentation, but you did not change my mind about homosexuality.”

I was shocked, as this stepped outside dominant YCI cultural discourse which is all about unconditional support and listening with an open mind (this should have been my first clue in acknowledging the normalizing practices of any group, regardless of their intention). So, in debriefing this with Constable Paul Brookes and Kevin Worth¹⁸, I wrongly guessed it was the young man who had been glaring from the audience and each year after that I dreaded seeing this youth, convinced he was either a hard core homophobe or wrestling with internalized homophobia. It turns out this “openly straight” young man was Sebastian, who eventually participated in my research project. Imagine my surprise having this young man show up on my literal doorstep for the first interview. So, while a funny story I like to tell, it also speaks to larger issues of recruiting from a community partner you are familiar with. It is not just about dual roles, power over and confidentiality, it is also about pre-formed assumptions and brief but impressive interactions. Likewise, there were probably youth who did not attend the research orientation based on their first impression of me as a presenter.

Our AD (after data) meetings were a series of gatherings based on developing and brainstorming the art exhibition, including an afternoon where we worked on a collective collage. All five consultants participated in these. These interactions were not taped, much to my disappointment, as there were some interesting exchanges. Although I knew this would happen, given what other researchers have told me, it was an intentional choice not to record in order to contribute to an uncensored environment, which I discuss in Chapter III. If I did

¹⁸ Retired Staff Sergeant Kevin Worth is a former chair of the Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee and long time supporter of YCI. He and I have an annual tradition of driving to the camp together.

this again, I would record these sessions to catch the reflexive process and to acknowledge that, “the way we treat the most mundane or apparently inconsequential experiences may have the most to offer in suggesting a larger vision of social transformation” (McNiff, 2008, p.37). For example, because I had transcribed the meetings and interviews, I knew the transcripts very well and could point out incongruencies or reflect back on something someone had said in reference to her work. Likewise, consultants made reference to past pieces they or others had produced in relationship to new ideas that they had for their art making process. And, as usual, they bantered about upcoming projects as they pattered on their work, which would have provided an extra layer on how they negotiated roles, power, and ideas.

Our work culminated in a public art show on October 27th, 2009, held at the University Club. This was theoretically important, as you will see in Chapter VIII, but also a tribute to the time and effort the consultants invested in creating their amazing works. In this sense, it was a celebration of talent. It was not easy getting to the end point of the show, as I discuss in Chapter VIII, given we all had very different perspectives of what an art show was “supposed” to look like. Feedback from the youth and adults who attended, however, was positive. At the time of writing, there is a possibility of carrying on with the show in different venues, but this has not been set in stone. In some respects, I would like this to be a living entity that carries forth, but that might be more representative of my romantic inclinations and my real sorrow not to be working regularly with this group.

Perhaps it would be more fruitful to take my lessons from this project and carry those forward for the benefit of other youth research.

Research Question(s)

At the beginning of this inquiry, I was broadly interested in educational processes, youth subjectivities, social justice and creativity. It was my belief and hope that curriculum could influence how students thought about themselves and their relationships to culture. Of course, part of this interest is biased in my belief that social justice and diversity are not integrated in a critical manner in public institutions. Roy (2003) supports this stating: “there is only increasing pressure on institutions to find ways of *managing* difference that keeps things evermore the same, resulting in a deep frustration for those on the margins” (p. 33, emphasis in original). And while YCI’s “curriculum” of personal and intimate narratives is neither unproblematic as discussed throughout this dissertation, it does offer a new vehicle with which to learn about social and political issues. In fact, Maynes, Pierce and Laslett (2008) argue personal narratives are often the most catalytic and underutilized:

Personal narrative analyses...offer insights from the point of view of narrators who stories emerge from their lived experiences over time and in particular social, cultural, and historical settings. These analyses offer insights into human agency as seen from the inside out; as such they can bridge the analytic [and I would argue, curricular] gap between outside positionalities and interior worlds, between the social and the individual. They allow scrutiny of key subjective dimensions of motivation-emotions,

desires, accumulated wisdom, acquired associations and meanings, clouded judgments, and psychic makeup-all of which are the product of a lifetime of experiences. The evidence presented in personal narratives is unabashedly subjective, and its narrative logic presents a story of an individual subject developing and changing through time. (p.16)

Likewise, youth are changing and becoming through their repeated visits to the camp.

Hence my research question is *what becomings are undertaken or recognized as a result of participation in YCI and how might youth involved with YCI narrate their experience visually?* I have borrowed the Deleuzian language of becomings to imply that youth identity is not static and to invite the reader to consider multiple meanings made of multiple selves:

Deleuze is concerned with unfettering possibility to experiment with what a life can do and where a life might go. In other words, Deleuze affirms the possibilities of becoming something else, beyond the avenues, relationships, values and meanings that seem to be laid out for us by our biological make-up, our evolutionary heritages, our historical/political/familial allegiances, and the social and cultural structures of civilized living. There is in this a radical affirmation of the sort of possibilities for becoming that we cannot think of in moralistic terms: becomings that can only be felt or sensed or conjured, that requires us to take risks and experiment in ways that affirm the vitality, the energies and the creative animations of existence. (Stivale, 2005, p. 99)

And although consultants inevitably returned to the concept of “I” as a reference point, I do not view them as singular or isolated. They are formed through relationships and constituted through language. Educational systems often focus on developmental assessments and standardized curriculum and testing methods to ascertain how students are “doing.” But what are they *becoming*? If we change our view of youth from a linear and static end product to a more rhizomatic perspective of experience, what would we see differently? Roy (2003) asks similar questions in his research with alternative curricula:

The use of Deleuzian concepts is to help pry open reified boundaries that exist not just in thought, but as affective investments that secure those territorialities. The effort is to loosen them so new modes of transformation become available than can enhance our affective capacities. The innovative program of the school [studied] held the promise of a different approach; in its effort to break away from more limiting approaches, it recognized that students learned things that are valuable to their becoming at off-campus locations, and in-between sites, in conversations between the site, in the unbridgeable gaps between what they experienced and what language allowed them to express, and in gestures and modes of being that are often palpable but not measurable. (p.13)

As we will discuss, YCI is its own cultural sea of discourse, normalizing processes and expectations of what it means to be a member. Because consultants were repeat members, it was safe to assume they had returned to camp for some reason,

whether shallow or profound, and my hunch and bias was that the experience had changed them in some way.

To map this trajectory, the following questions were asked in advance of all focus groups, and consultants were expected to bring a piece of art work that reflected their answer.

1. How would I describe/view/ understand my life and relationships prior to participating in YCI? You could also describe why you decided to join YCI if that fits better.
2. How has your sense of your self and the world shifted or changed since participation in YCI? You are welcome to interpret this question any way you want, using new or older art creations, just go wild. There are no wrong answers!
3. Given your experience in YCI, how do you see yourself in the future, i.e. who are you going to be? You can wax philosophical if you so desire.
4. How do you define social justice?

The answers to these questions were visually narrated, meaning the consultants brought visual works to explain their understandings. These explanations, in turn, created larger, collective conversations regarding the themes and issues addressed. This is closely aligned with photo elicitation (for an excellent comprehensive overview, the reader is directed to Harper, 2002). For the majority of the time, consultants created new works with which to visually narrate, and other times they brought pieces that they had already created but felt resonated with the focus group question. Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) reflect that, “constructing histories about how our subjectivities are formed (making the agendas and

categories of the subject problematic) can provide a potential space for alternative acts and alternative intentions that are not articulated through the available commonsenses [*sic*]” (p.25). In this case, common sense can be seen as standard ways of showing understanding, such as verbal dialogue. Adding in the visual element, however, required consultants to articulate differently, and created more of a dialogue than a truncated monologue, where “we produce an aesthetic practice within which we take up the visual as our primary language while recognizing that words structure what we see as well as what we say” (Linnell, Bansel, Ellwood & Gannon, 2008, p.285). And although at the beginning there was a palpable sense of competition amongst the works (which I did not forecast and was surprised to see because it contradicted many of their narratives regarding how YCI had changed their relationships with others), toward the end, there was more of an intersubjectivity becoming fostered through the visual narration, most stunningly seen through our collective collage. Most importantly, I stressed that these questions could be interpreted however the consultants read them and in this sense, attempted to move away from binary conceptions of right and wrong they were so well groomed to. As such, while I do not believe the questions became anymore interesting as time progressed, there was more experimentation on part of the consultants in their visual narrations. For example, Kyla, who is an exceptional painter, chose an interactive collage for her final piece; social justice fortune telling cards:



Figure 6 – Kyla’s Social Justice Cards (cardboard and found images).

Although the questions move in a linear time frame from past to future, and some may argue that this is counter intuitive to the messy quagmire of subjectivities and becomings, it was crucial to produce questions that a) were accessible to the consultants; and b) could provide a congruent map for the reader to follow. And questions of self in relation to others and other cultural institutions have been asked before, and these questions are inspired from Newbury and Hoskins’ (2009) success with time framed questions. Others have asked equally important questions pertaining to subjectivity and youth, which I explored at the literature party. It is also critical to orientate the reader to how the research consultants and I conceptualized social justice. This is important to consider for two reasons. First,

the term is used multiple times by my consultants, and to fully appreciate these connections a working definition must be made explicit. I also assume the reader comes with her/his own interpretation of the term. In the next chapter, we will consider how these personal definitions are relationally and culturally influenced.



Reflect in This Space

Do Not Reflect in This Space

Chapter V – Social Justice 101

“It is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail” (Maslow, 1966, p.15-16)

When I began this research, one area of broad interest was social justice as it related to youth and youth subjectivities. But it has been my experience in the post-secondary world that the word social justice is oft-overused. It appears in many professional schools’ mission statements, my own students refer to practicing from a social justice lens and famous researchers are declaring that “we are no longer called to just *interpret* the world, which was the mandate of traditional ethnography. Today, we are called to *change* the world and to change it in ways that resist injustice while celebrating freedom and full, inclusive democracy” (Denzin & Giardina, 2009, p.13, emphasis in original). And I, of course, situated my research in social justice despite the write up being a solitary and academic pursuit for the most part. So when the term social justice is used, what exactly is meant? Makler (2000) tells us that,

At the root of all conceptions of justice is some sense of an appropriate ordering of social structure and relationships among persons. Neither philosophers, kings, nor ordinary people agree on what the proper order, or balance, or benefits and harms across individuals and groups should be, but many ways have been fought to establish one version as dominant over another. However, the eighteen teachers I interviewed about their concepts of justice all agreed that justice is fundamentally ‘about right and wrong.’

They saw justice as connected to the way we treat other human beings, to our desire not to deliberately cause harm to humans or the natural world, to our willingness to speak out when we see others wronged and to act to right wrongs, whether we ourselves have committed them or not. (p.220)

The “root” amongst my consultants, of course, is their participation in YCI. I asked my consultants to visually narrate what social justice meant to them. This is not intended to box them into static definitions, but rather to orient the reader to their conceptualizations at the time of data collection.

For Tash, her visual narration was quite literal:

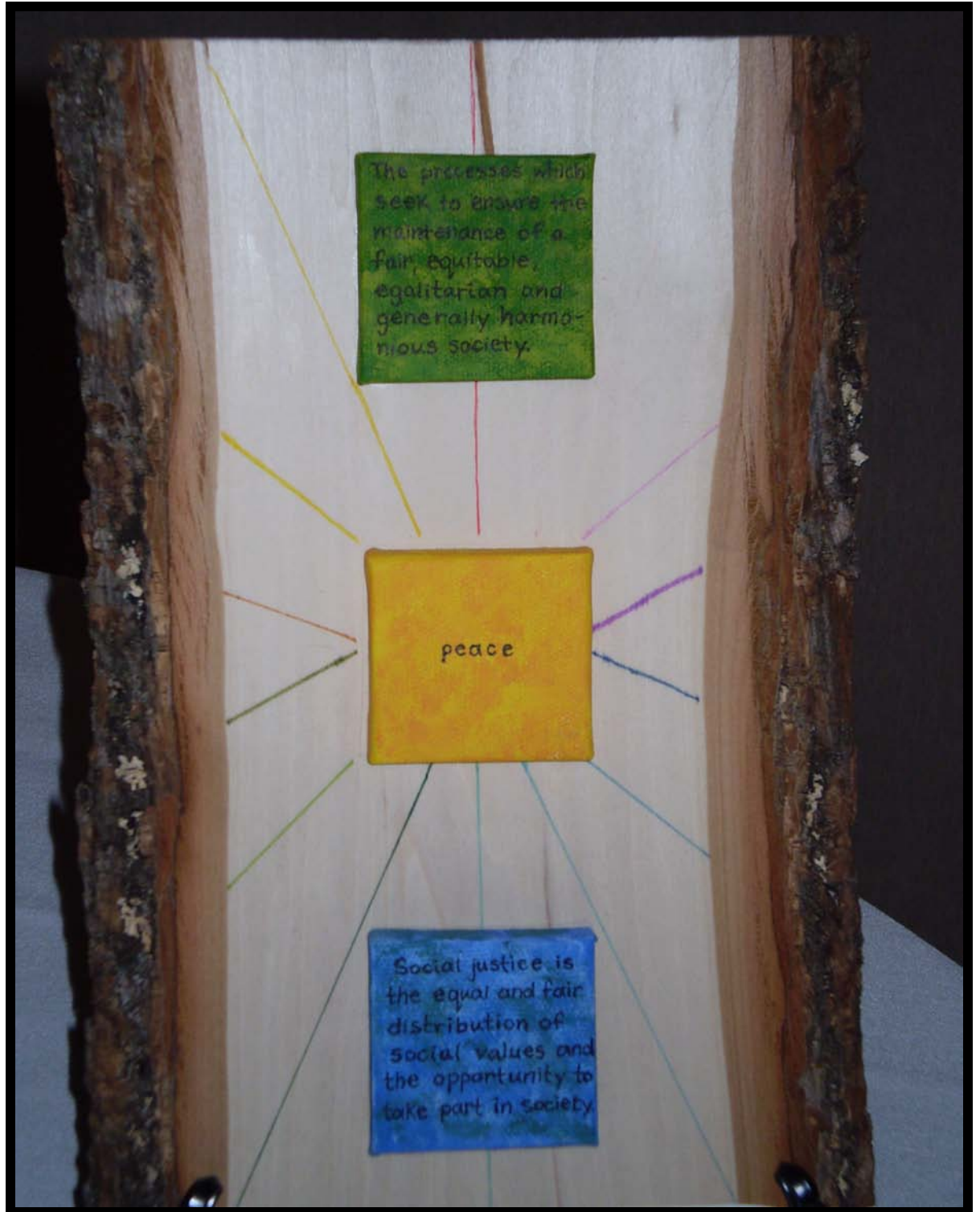


Figure 7 – Tash’s Definitions of social justice (wood, canvas, acrylic and ink).

Tash - So this is mine. [The question] said define social justice, so I was trying to figure out how to define it. I googled web definitions [laughs] of social justice. I love urban dictionary, that thing's been wrong so many times though [laughs].

Lily – It's not wrong, you just get the politically incorrect version.

Tash – Yeah, or it has stuff nobody says ever unless you live in the hood or something [laughter].

Lily –Hey I lived next to the projects when we were in Philly, good times [laughter] growing up in the projects.

Tash – So you had your share of ghetto talk.

Lily – Yes, yes indeed.

Tash – Lucky. Anyway, I was at Opus getting supplies and I found these cute mini canvasses [laughter] and I thought well, I have to use that for something so I painted them and then I thought, I want to put these on a plaque. So I went to Michaels' looking for a plaque and I thought oh this is really nifty with the bark and everything.

Angelica- Oh, that's actually a plaque? I just thought Tash has done her presentation on a tree [laughs].

Tash –I picked the two definitions I liked the best that I found on dictionary.com and the first is defining social justice as 'the processes which seek to ensure the maintenance of a fair, equitable, egalitarian and generally harmonious society' and the other one was 'social justice is the equal and fair distribution of social values and the opportunity to take part in society.' Then the middle one is supposed to be my own definition and I was racking my brains because these seemed pretty

fair and standard. I was thinking about what social justice meant to me. And to me, when you reach the bottom line it's pretty much just peace, when the world finally knows all around social justice and it's a pretty peaceful world, a pretty peaceful society. That's pretty much what it comes down to. I don't know what I was thinking with these lines, to be honest, just sort of how it shines on everything.

Lily – I thought it was like one of those mind map diagrams things.

Tash – Well, if you want it to be [laughter].

Cole- And so why the tree? Was there any significance with that?

Tash –Not really, I was looking for a plaque at Michaels' and I wasn't sure what I'd find, really, just wanted something thick and this sized to put the canvases on.

So I was looking around and I got to this aisle with all these wooden things and like, hmm, wooden plaque, that could be interesting. I saw this one with bark on it, and I thought that's really cool so, it was actually cheaper than the rest of them [laughter].

Cole- I like the idea, too, although it's on these mini-canvases, that it is such a huge part of your world. That's beautiful, thank you. Other comments?

Lily – I think your tree could symbolize growth.

Cole- Oh lovely!

Lily – There you go, I'll take credit for that, thanks.

Angelica - And how it's natural to be socially just.

Cole- Oh, that's good!

Angelica – And it's unnatural to chop down trees and to make plaques [Laughter].

There are several layers of meaning making that are simultaneously occurring in the preceding dialogue. First, there is the literal definition of social justice, and Tash distilling these definitions to a particular “essence” and the underlying question about which internet repository would have the best definition, even if it was an “unreliable” source. Second, the construction of definitions was mediated by social location. For example, Tash felt that www.urbandictionary.com was “wrong” whereas Lily believed it was more “politically incorrect” compared to what those living in Victoria might be exposed to. The third point, made quite humourously, was that a tree had been chopped down for the purpose. Upon reflection, despite all of us claiming to be social activists, some of our environmental actions during focus groups did not support this – disposable cups and plates, lack of car pooling and consultants’ “side bar” conversations discussing shoes and makeup purchases. Or what took the cake was Sebastian fixing his hair for his student card photo in a windowless room with aerosol hair spray! I am curious to know if the lack of focus on environmentalism was generational (i.e. they have grown up with recycling, and messages regarding the environment in general), just the luck of the sample draw, or that such a topic was not institutionalized in YCI or their schools as a primary concern?

Angelica also saw peace as the common denominator in defining social justice. She brought this picture to illustrate her point:



Figure 8 – John and Yoko retrieved from: <http://travel.latimes.com/daily-deal-blog/index.php/category/canada-east/>

Says she of this choice:

So the question was define social activism, right? So this isn't actually my project but I just love this picture, I cut it out of the newspaper a while ago, John and Yoko and they just have a sign that says war's over if you want it, happy Christmas, John and Yoko. I just think it's really cool and I think it definitely defines social activism; you can just point to it and [say] that's the definition.

Lily – Like if you opened a dictionary that's what you'd see?

Angelica – Yes, exactly. I just think it's a really great statement, they're just out on the street, standing around holding the sign and it's during the Vietnam war, and

it's just [how] you choose to be violent, you choose to have this war, you're supporting it so if you want it, and it doesn't have to be like that. And it's more like a general concept, too, you can choose to be violent or you can choose to be peaceful and it's just kind of reminding the world of that. I think it is just really a strong message.

As many people reading this might be aware, John and Yoko did not stop the Vietnam War. That particular photo, however, is a salient reminder of the power of visual means in cultural productions and understandings. Angelica bringing this famous photograph in also reminded me that not all initiatives for social justice begin with celebrities and end in tangible results. Angelica supports this with her “actual” project which was photographed on the Day of Silence, which is a silent protest representing how homophobia silences students in schools (see <http://www.dayofsilence.org> for more information):



Figure 9 – Angelica. *Day of Silence* (photography).

Angelica – It’s social activism because it represents even doing this small thing like not speaking. This is the reason that people have to care; and even just a small effort like that could change the way people think. I thought I could have done a really cool picture or piece of art that was just really powerful, but I chose something more simple. And because it’s me in the picture it could also show that it doesn’t have to be a giant scale, it doesn’t have to be John Lennon doing it.

In this sense, social justice is culturally defined but also personally defined. She articulates that it does not have to be on a large scale, but occurs at the daily intersection of self, context and action. A question I am left with, however, is it the silence that is effecting change or the students’ belief that it is?

For Lily, her definition was one of embodiment. She took a framed family photograph and for her art show installation, it looked like this:



Figure 10 – Lily’s definition of social justice (family photos and Quaker documents).

Lily comments that, *“That’s my grandma. I think for me personally, she is the definition of social activism and social justice and she went through a lot to get to this point.”* She told the group that,

She [grandmother] was at the march on Washington and she was also part of a lot of things that happened in Alabama. Her role with Martin Luther King was looking like a ‘respectable’ white woman and driving a respectable car and driving ‘the cook’ and ‘the maid’ to town, so that’s what she did with Martin Luther King. My favourite story of her, she was in what was called a safe house at one point and she thought she was staying there alone. It was the middle of the night and the telephone rings and she knew she had to answer the phone because it could be somebody in trouble. So she’s never been to this house before, doesn’t know where the light switches are and is groping along and she’s about to reach for the phone and another hand slaps down on hers and scares the crap out of her. And it’s Bill Cosby, like Bill Cosby from the Cosby family on TV and everything, she’s got cool stories like that. The problem is now she doesn’t remember them and so luckily she has been prominent enough in Quakers that most people know them or my mom knows them or her brothers knows them and so that’s how my cousins and I learn about these things.

The installation piece is reflective of her grandmother being the first female church leader to meet with the Pope, the books are the Faith and Practice “documents in advance” which include articles on human rights, and there is also a picture of Lily and her now deceased brother as children with her grandmother. Although there

are heartbreaking stories that are intertwined with Lily's grandmother's history, there are also moments of levity:

Tash – Was your grandmother the leader of the Canadian Quakers?

Lily - Yes, with Canadian Quakers, she's what we call the clerk which is not a religious person at all, it's actually more administrative, but it's what we consider our head of church. So, my mom has told me all sorts of funny stories about this photo. [My grandmother] didn't know what to wear, because the Pope said wear your vestments. Quakers don't have vestments, and you can't go in the nude, so my mom bought her a pants suit. My mom bought her a nice pants suit and she's the only person in the room wearing pants. She's the only woman in the room and she's the only person wearing pants! [laughter]

Kyla took the question about social justice and compared it to the game of poker:

I thought even though it was quite cliché that social justice is kind of like playing cards, in the sense that with social justice it can either be in general the intentions are good but sometimes with the wrong pieces and the wrong tools, it can either turn out really well or it can turn out really poorly based on how you work it. For example, poker, like in Texas Hold'em and Black Jack there are certain cards that you need that can make it really successful or you could screw up and lose a bunch of stuff in the process. So I thought why not make social justice cards?



Figure 11 – Kyla’s social justice cards. Left – helping hand. Right –Intellect.

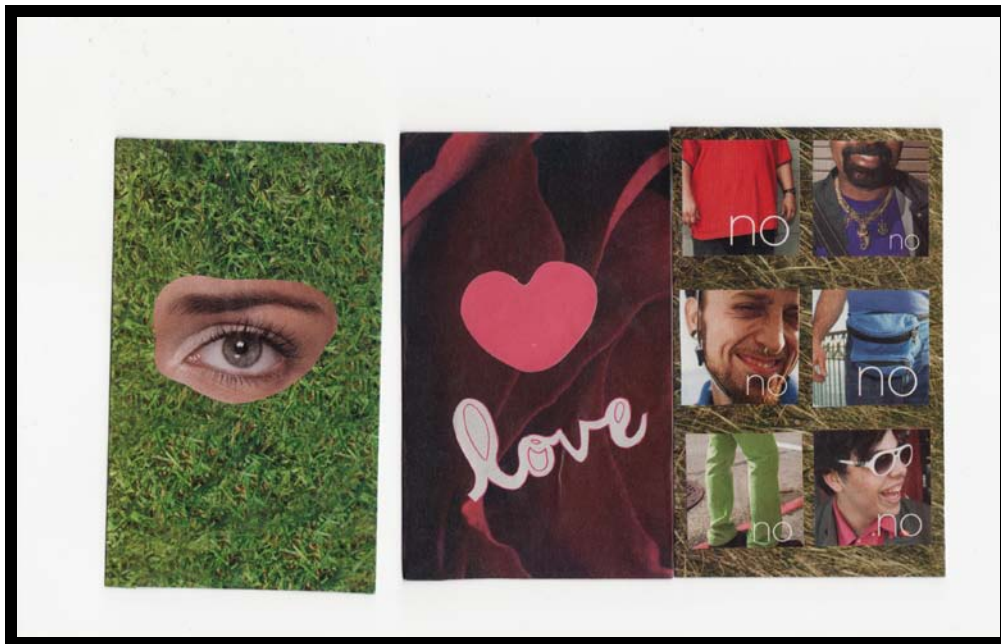


Figure 12 – Kyla’s social justice cards. Left – awareness. Middle – love. Right – the capacity to say no.



Figure 13 – Kyla’s social justice cards. Left – money. Middle – Death. Right –Protest.

Kyla explains her cards as follows:

They’re very simple, they’re easy to read, because you don’t want things to become too complicated or else once again, you get disastrous results. So critical thinking is an important one because there are some people who have the passion and have the motivation to go out and do social justice but they’re actually kind of an idiot and they don’t think things through and then they get themselves hurt or other people hurt. Or they get arrested, hence why I have a police card, because a lot of people do get arrested when they do social justice work. It may not always be bad but dealing with police when you do those things in general it’s not always the most positive, so I have a police card. I also have an eye because I think people who do social justice always have to be aware of their surroundings and aware of what they’re doing and aware of everything around them. Not just their community surroundings but also global surroundings as well because if you do something really substantial it could potentially cause a domino effect and then it could just

proceed into something huge so you have to make sure you are aware of everything. Then I also did just the general protest, I did free Tibet, because we've all done Tibet, a lot, so protesting is another way to do social justice, it's probably one of the best and worst forms in some ways. I guess you could say that because it has great results but I know a lot of people have gotten hurt from it just physically, you just look at the US history and some of the things that come out from it have been terrible. And I have a heart because another aspect of social justice is love, love for what you do, love for what you believe in, and love for the people you work with, it's one of those things, in a way, it's like that underlying theme for everything, it's because you love something so much and you believe in it, right? So, I have a heart.

At the time of the focus group, Kyla had sketched out her ideas on index cards with a Sharpie to illustrate that “*social justice isn't always pretty; it's usually quite bare and simple.*” For the public art exhibition, however, she had produced the collaged cards included in this dissertation. What was exciting about her definition was that it spurred other consultants to ask about cards not present. For example, Tash asked if there was a listening card and Angelica asked about an education card.

Kyla did not disagree with these suggestions, but commented that:

See that's the thing, there are just so many things. It's just picking and choosing the ones you think are most substantial. I don't want to do too many because you can break it down in so many ways but also the reason why they're cards is because, for example, in poker you get a certain amount of cards, you don't get to just pick and choose, so it's another cliché but the way life will deal you cards is

you have to work with what you have and if you have some really poor cards then you're going to have some really disastrous results. For example, if you don't have critical thinking and you have police, then you're kind of screwed and you're going to get someone hurt. I did a death scene card, which is kind of morbid but it's part of life and people are going to die. It's being dealt these social justice cards and how are you going to make that work? And you make it work to the best of your abilities. Also the cards can symbolize people as well; different people have different skills and abilities that they can bring to the table to make social justice really successful.

I appreciate the metaphor presented and I also appreciate Kyla's articulation of merging forces that contribute to any given social intervention. Where I struggle, however, is within the deterministic conception of what tools any activist might be "given." There is little analysis of how these cards might be distributed along lines of privilege. If life is being dealt a hand of cards, how do we account for agency? If complete agency is a fallacy (O'Brien Hallstein, 1999), how do we account for the interplay of what one has been given and what one does with it? Cammarota and Fine (2008) speak to this tension in PAR research:

...youth learn how to study problems and find solutions to them. More importantly, they study problems and derive solutions to obstacles preventing their own well-being and progress. Understanding how to overcome these obstacles becomes critical knowledge for the discovery of one's efficacy to produce personal as well as social change. Once a young person discovers his or her capacity to effect change, oppressive systems

and subjugating discourses no longer persuade him or her that the deep social and economic problems he or she faces result from his or her own volition. Rather, the discovery humanizes the individual, allowing him or her to realize the equal capabilities and universal intelligence in all humans, while acknowledging the existence of problems as the result of social forces beyond his or her own doing. (p. 6-7)

The role of the cards, then, is less about fate and more about social structures that impede or privilege an activist's decisions. As such, there is agency, but it does not stand in isolation from other factors.

Sebastian did not participate in this meeting, and hence, did not articulate a definition of social justice. He did, however, provide examples of performative means of addressing homophobia. There is a "crossing" that he and another consultant speak of based on the geographical and architectural design of their school. This becomes quite a zone of hostility at times.



Figure 14 – Sebastian. Self- portrait.



Figure 15 – Sebastian's favourite photograph.

So when I was bullied in elementary school, [my family's] response would always be 'you should tell someone', and they wouldn't say go beat them up in that situation. They would say if someone says something mean to you say something mean back which I don't know if that's the proper way to do things, in high school, when you're crossing.

Cole- That's an interesting space between those buildings, that sounds like hell.

Sebastian – Well, it depends -it's kind of nice you get to see your friends or what everyone is wearing for the day; you get to see the whole school go by. One time in grade twelve I did full Frankenfurter –like fishnets, my mom got me some really nice heels and my girlfriend did my make up and I had a wig – flawless, flawless the whole costume. I was crossing and there was this guy I didn't know who was a year younger than me. Generally you don't hang out with people from younger grades, you know, because you've never met them really. He says 'hey faggot' and I whipped around in my heels and fishnets and I wasn't wearing a corset, I was wearing a lab coat because I had to be a little more restrained for school, you know. I whipped around looking to hear who said it ready to say something back. I'm not physical, I've never been in a fight, so I was ready to reply but I saw the person, they turned and they were walking away, the person I thought it was. But in any case, I didn't pursue, I didn't want to. They had disengaged from the situation, they hit and run, so I didn't feel it was worth it to someone trying to be negative and rude to me I didn't feel it was worth going after them. So at that point I felt it was a change from previous years of always responding to something. I remember that instance as being the one of I just didn't care anymore, almost, I didn't feel it

was worth responding to. Before that, I think I'd always kind of had a need to defend myself with words if someone assaulted me. But in the last few years of high school I've kind of stopped caring, well, after doing it for so many years I have nothing to gain. Would it make me feel better to tear someone else down as much? You know it's not positive to be negative; it's not going to benefit my life at all. None. In the last few years I've turned it off.

It is interesting to me that at what I perceive as a potentially vulnerable moment (dressed in drag at a public high school) the moment arrived when actions spoke louder than words. It is also noteworthy that he has gone on to win awards for his Frankenfurter impersonations. Yet, even in “the crossing” where one could see the whole school, dressed in an outfit that crosses gender expectations, there is a distinct *non* crossing. This is evident in Sebastian’s comments about grade segregation and I will further discuss these sustained boundaries in Chapter VI.

I must also be clear in my own conception and definition of social justice. My conceptualization is closely linked to the model of CYC praxis that includes the overlapping domains of knowing, being and doing (White, 2007). The knowing aspect includes drawing on theories, fiction, poetry and art that inform my knowledge base. I concur with Makler (2000) who says, “the image of justice that emerged for me is that of a Picasso face, deconstructed into many acute angles and planes, challenging us to set aside our notions of linearity and corporeal substance for a more complex image of the many conflicting parts that form our social and personal selves” (p.220). In this sense, I “know” social justice through the complex and contradictory ideas I read and view. But of course, this knowing is inextricably

linked to “being” in the world. How I conceptualize social justice is shaped by my privileges along with where I have been treated unjustly. This brings us to the doing domain. As John Fletcher, the English dramatist once said “deeds, not words shall speak me.” I was considering this when I was invited to an activist speakers’ series at the University of Victoria. Another speaker and I were discussing whether we considered ourselves activists or if activism and movement for social justice was embedded in our work with youth. The doing aspect of conceptualizing social justice forced me to consider the term more broadly. Derrida (2005) explains:

...*justice* can become a verb. It then designates a way of being, of shining forth, a radiating, and of acting, a way of doing things, most often with words, with the performative force of a speech act: *to justice*. To justice would be to produce justice, cause it to prevail, make it come about, as an event, but without instrumentalizing it in a transitive fashion, without objectifying it, but rather making it proceed from itself even as one keeps it close itself, to what one is, namely *just*, closest to what one thinks, says, shows and manifests. (p.692, emphasis in original)

For myself, to justice comes about in my teaching, research, and writing. It also comes about in popular assumptions of what social justice looks like such as attending demonstrations, writing letters (I successfully had a sexist ad removed from a local radio station) and so forth. Yet, as Derrida points out above, to justice is often in a form of speech. In this sense, social justice for me is a megaphone through which my voice transmits.

I would ask the reader to take a moment to create their own definition of social justice. My consultants and I asked others to do the same when they attended our art exhibition. We had created handbills that said “if the only tool you have is a hammer...” and invited participants to contribute their own thoughts of what constituted social justice tools and put them into our literal tool box collaged with expressions. Here are just three examples:

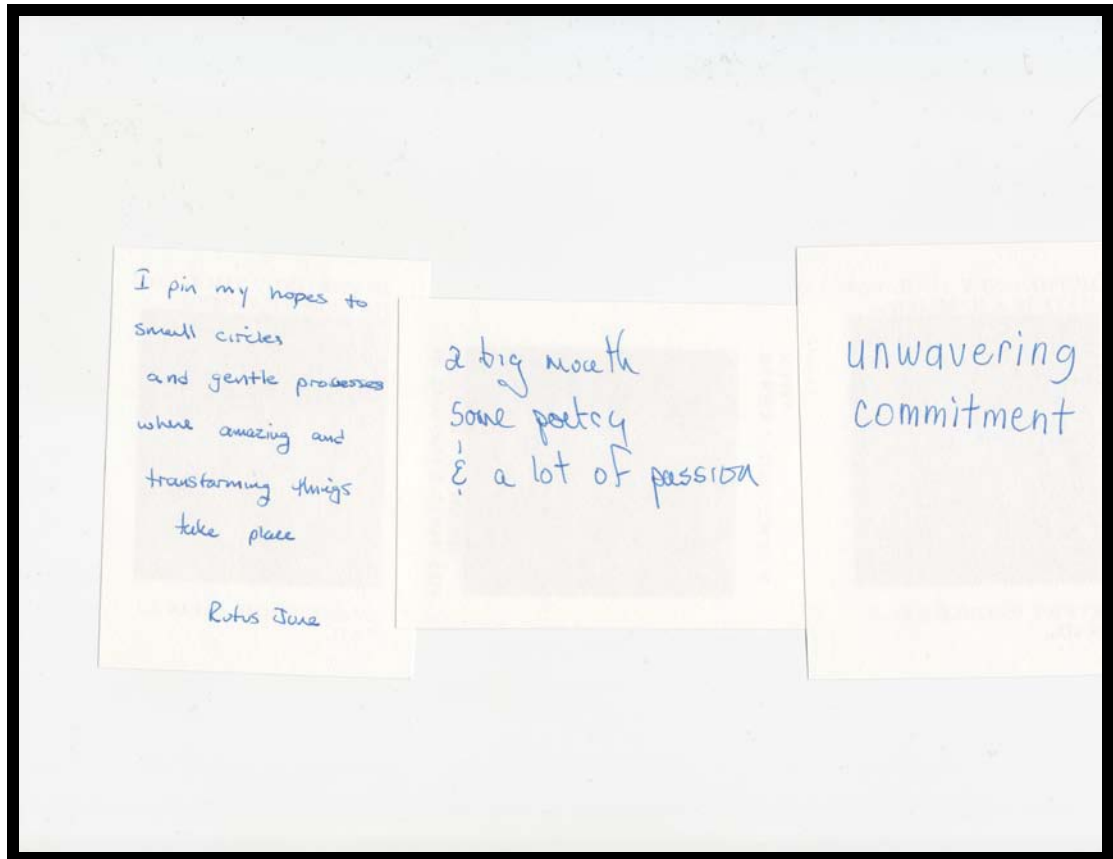


Figure 16 – What are your tools for social justice? Comments from audience members.

But where do definitions of social justice come from? Although we might consider each of the consultants’ and exhibit participants’ as subjective or unique, I have structured this dissertation on the assumption that we are constituted by inscribed and collaged discourses. As Bruner (1996) reflects:

Interpretations of meaning reflect not only the idiosyncratic histories of individuals, but also the culture's canonical ways of constructing reality. Nothing is 'culture free,' but neither are individuals simply mirrors of their culture. It is the interaction between them that both gives a communal cast to individual thought and imposes a certain unpredictable richness on any culture's ways of life, thought, or feeling. (p. 14)

So the common theme of peace seen through many of the consultants' definitions of social justice speaks to Bruner's idea of a "communal cast." This is of particular importance when considering the curricular terrain they have all participated in – the public school system with themes of multiculturalism based on policies such as "zero tolerance" and YCI's youth driven declaration to "combat intolerance."

There is no individual despite the landscape of discourses that support an individualistic paradigm and the institutions arising from that; that is, we are socially constructed through language and relationship. I concur with Gergen (2006) who says:

Postmodern writings open important new vistas in our comprehension of morality and for practices more fully suited to living together in a world of differences. They suggest, for one, that we should cease looking to a slate of ideals, ethical foundations, a code of justice, or canons or morality in order to create 'good persons' or a 'just society'. High-sounding words and phrases themselves require nothing in the way of subsequent action, and may be interpreted in so many ways that even the most violent oppression can be justified on the basis of the most glowing ideals. I believe we should

turn about from abstract justifications and look to ourselves in the process of relationship. For it is out of these relationships that we generate the hells for ourselves that we term injustice, oppression, immortality, and so on.

(p.241)

Gergen's comments are especially relevant to this inquiry as he speaks to the disjuncture between lofty words and relational deeds. So while qualitative researchers, Child and Youth Care practitioners, and YCI members are well versed in the language of social justice, democracy, and diversity, "our" relational enactments do not always live up to them. I think this an especially important point before our departure into the rest of this text as it speaks to how we are all groomed through language. And while my consultants do engage in acts of social justice and organizing collectively and individually around justice oriented interventions, they are also subjects in various institutions. And so are we, dear readers. In this "constrained agency," as O'Brien Hallstein (1999) coined, we are trying to match our ideals with our realities. As we move through the next several chapters, it will become clear that this is not always possible. But hope is. Freire (2003) states:

The idea that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naïveté, is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism. But the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion. To attempt to do so without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle one of its mainstays. The

essential thing, as I maintain later on, is this: hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness. The hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain. (p. 8-9)



Hope in This Space

Do Not Hope in This Space

Chapter VI – Working the Metaphors

Oh twice as much ain't twice as good

And can't sustain like a one half could

It's wanting more

That's gonna send me to my knees

Oh gravity, stay the hell away from me

And gravity has taken better men than me (Now how can that be?)

Just keep me where the light is

(Mayer, 2006, track 4)

In this chapter, I attempt to concurrently make sense and make nonsense in discussing the metaphors that emerged from the transcripts. As stated above, I am looking less for truths as opposed to new meanings, and this is accomplished through the collaging of the data to produce data poems in relation to the visual works. These metaphors which I explicate below form the YCI discourse surrounding self, social change and diversity.

Coming to the light/how I beat gravity

Imprisoned by fear, window of opportunity -None.

Really -Dark -and -heavy

everyone circle

it's just a brick wall with this little door

and everyone says something

because suddenly you're different

you're not a unicorn, you're not a fairy

I'd/you'd be all these flowers.

The dark getting lighter,

you are moving from the dark place into the light.

They say god talked to you though the silence

stuff like that,

the dark getting lighter.

Everyone circle and everyone has a candle,

she passes the flame and it goes around and everyone says something,

it symbolizes hope and triumph and coming out of the dark.

The dark getting lighter.

Like you know the light in the forest?

Turned the world pink and everything beautiful

so vibrant and alive.

Use the light, goodness, the light.

(Little, YCI data found poem)

“And God said, let there be light, and there was light” is a famous religious quote, heralding in a new world. Consultants also spoke to “seeing the light” from their participation in YCI. These metaphorical references no doubt are multi-layered. For example, light is a common metaphor in Western culture, including the light bulb for ideas and the binary references to light versus “being in the dark.” It also holds colonial significance for how people are racialized and categorized. Such metaphors are also keenly local. One consultant, Lily, is a Quaker, and during our meetings she would often use Quaker jokes and parables to explicate her ideas; two of her favourites being “thee the light” and “Quakers do it in the light.” Most consultants referenced John Mayer as their favourite song writer, so imagine my surprise when the album *Gravity* (2006) and the title song included references to where the light is. The metaphor of light is also enmeshed in YCI culture, with the ritual of the candle light ceremony at the end of the camp. As such, images of candles, light tunnels and dark alleys were used in some of the art works:



Figure 17 – Tash. *Untitled* (acrylic and photo on canvas).

Tash reflects on the candle as follows:

One of the biggest things I got out of YCI was hope and faith. Like I've said in other meetings, I was pretty decided upon the fact that I could not depend on people my age to care about these kinds of things because I had only met maybe one person who did. I was so impressed and amazed by all the people who cared when I came to YCI camp. It totally restored my faith in the teenage race. So that's what this is for [pointing to candle] which I will always carry with me, not just in youth but all people, and also the potential we have to take a stand and fight intolerance.

On the one hand, I am in love with her painting, and while immersed in the research inquiry, it hung on my bedroom wall for months. On the other hand, her reference to teenagers as a “race” was marked. She has spoken to this more than

once, and in the following example she discusses how more desirable academic programs attract “cliquey” students:

One of things I find immature and I hate to frame it this way because it sounds like I'm calling them a different race, it sounds very degrading. But with this breed of student, with this breed of people, they are very by the book, they are very closed minded and they have to follow the rules - you have to do this, you have to have a plan, that's all there is to it, don't think outside the box - in my experience at least.

Despite my rallying against essentialist definitions and connotations of teen/adolescent/youth, here I had a consultant provide it. To suggest a race is inherently colonial and inevitably categorizes fellow adolescents as “other.” By doing so, it folds in the assumption that adolescence is biologically determined and distinct, not socially constructed and maintained. Her comment also speaks to the privilege of using race as a construct to elevate her own position. Tsolidis (2001) states:

We may hold dear a social location constructed as particularly oppressed because it provides a sense of moral if not epistemological privilege. In the business of transformation, oppressive locations have a particular currency.

We need to reflect on this issue of currency and its potential to interrupt anti-hegemonic articulations. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.108)

And I remain curious if this particular generation of activists assume that “race” is no longer a loaded term or by virtue of their self definition as YCI members, do not need to self reflect on their use of language? hooks (1994) for example, speaks to contemporary feminists, noting that “critics fail to interrogate the location from

which they speak, often assuming, as it is not fashionable to do, that there is no need to question whether the perspective from which they write is informed by racist and sexist thinking” (p.77-78). Or is it only through the language of “race” and othering that a category for belonging can be emoted? This is not to excuse the profound lack of critical race analysis in the focus groups, but rather to suggest young people still see through the binary of us/them. And perhaps because we have not offered or constructed a different way to situate ourselves in the world, Tash defaults to racialized categorizing. Like Bach (1998):

I have experienced discomfort as I touch pockets of strong feelings of difference. This keeps me mindful to what Bateson (1994) writes about issues of difference while questioning the double helix if what when ‘listening to cynical remarks...particularly those in the public eye-and synthesizing these into the conviction that an entire people could be always devious and insincere. We fail to hear in the implied comparisons. Dangerous compared to what? Insincere compared to whom? Outside danger may be a part of the comfort of home’ (p.36). (p.86)

This is but one of several contradictory observations made by YCI consultants. Despite their “training” in issues of racism, homophobia and colonialism, they perpetuate dominant discourses. Is this because YCI is separate both physically and in its curriculum delivery? Is it because people like me present a dominant narrative at the camp that reinforces difference as fixed? Are the personal stories amputated from the larger social matrix that produces the subjects therein? For example, although I have spoken previously to the power of personal

narratives, of a narrative curriculum, when presented as individual truths as opposed to complex intersections, perhaps some of the potential for deconstruction is lost. I struggle in this text between allowing the consultants to learn this new “language” and hope that they eventually get to critical reflection and dissecting each of the inconsistencies.



Figure 18 – Lily. *People are getting better* (acrylic and multimedia on canvas).

Lily based her multi media piece on a spoken word performance by Shane Koyczan, recently made famous from his presentation at the 2010 Olympics called “People are getting better” which juxtaposes capitalistic progress with examples of human suffering. It is interesting to note that she could recite it from memory, and like many of the consultants, it appears that songs and poems of resonance are regularly reviewed. She has included one line in the bottom left corner of her work:

“everything can be narrowed down to the truth behind it, you just got to know where to look; you got to know where to find it” (line 2). She describes her self portrait as *“it’s like I can’t figure out what’s going on, I’m blindfolded. So, the dark getting lighter is after YCI. You are moving from the dark place into the light.”* In order to reach the light, however, she surmises that she needs the two tools of YCI, peace and light. These tools weave their way through many of the produced works and dialogues.

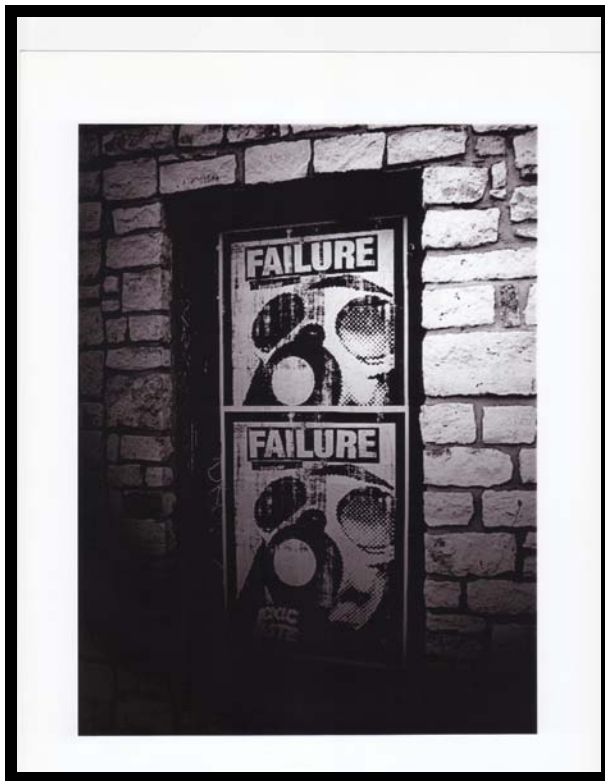


Figure 19 – Angelica *Failure* (Photography).

Angelica’s piece above was her first contribution to the data based on the questions of self conception prior to camp participation. She says, *“basically, it’s just a brick wall with this little door with all these posters on it that say failure. It speaks to being shut in, and having no windows of opportunities, that’s what I kept*

thinking about because it's covered; that's what it symbolizes. So if I was going to display this I would put it in a corner and I would have a light on the corner going down into darkness." Subsequent conversation stemming from this piece also introduced that not only can events such as YCI "shine the light," but other people and institutions can keep one in the dark. The metaphor of light also comes out of camp experiences and exercises built in to foster a sense of trust and intimacy. One exercise at the beginning of camp involves being led as a group blindfolded through the woods on Thetis Island. It is intended to build a sense of solidarity and trust. The candle light ceremony, another aspect of the annual curriculum, is the last exercise done by the YCI participants:

Lily- [referring to her piece above] Light, light. I was going to do a candle but I decided not to.

Kayla- Oh, the 'perfect' candle.

Cole- Are there candles involved [in camp]?

Kayla - Candle light ceremony.

Lily - At the end of the camp everyone circles and everyone has a candle. Judy starts and she always recites 'the woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I've miles to go before I sleep' and then she passes the flame and it goes around and everyone says something.

Kyla- And we've had some interesting stuff at camp.

Lily - Oh my goodness, like my first year, it was 4 hours, it went into the wee hours of the morning and everybody was sobbing.

Kyla - People were sobbing until 3 AM.

Lily – Yeah, and people were telling their whole life stories and there was some pretty intense...

Kyla – really dark and heavy...

Lily – things.

Kyla – For example, M., ‘when I saw my sister lying dead in her bed,’ and yeah, it kind of went on from there and it was just like...

Lily – it was a little ridiculous.

Kyla – There was a consensus with all the students that that was probably one of the most open, liberating...

Lily – empowering, supportive- like situations you have ever been in your life.

Kyla – And Paul [Brookes] was even crying.

Lily – Not just crying but Paul was openly sobbing and all of the police officers and teachers were sobbing.

Tash – Wow.

When I asked how this was liberating, Tash replied that “*because it’s not everyday. I think when it comes to crying and when it comes to really opening the gates and letting out really your core, and your essence and how you really deeply feel about things it’s hard to do that on your own, you need something or someone to bring it out of you and it’s not everyday you get that chance.*” So not only are cultural metaphors present, but cultural assumptions of what needs to change, all delivered in essentialist language. As a feminist and as a social constructionist, conceptions such as “core” and “essence” are counter intuitive for me. I feel uncomfortable with the idea that certain contexts “draw forth” certain veiled or

hidden facets of people. In the context of education, however, where emotions are seen less than “facts,” it may indeed be a rare opportunity to “open the gates” in front of other students. For others who had experienced trauma in their own lives, however, the candlelight ceremony was not as powerful. Lily, for example, tells us:

I know that for me, the candle lit ceremony isn't that big of a thing. It's more when the Virks speak because their story runs really parallel to my family's with my older brother. When he was 14 he was a Bha'i and he was kind of a Goth and kind of different and he was bullied profusely on the subject of his sexuality. It was to the point that he wasn't going to school and he was cutting and using drugs, and he would run away and it was really crazy. And then it came to a head and he was like 'sure whatever I'll get help' and then he went and killed himself. So, hearing their story and how Rena was bullied and how she died, it's so similar to my family's story. That always affects me way more every time I hear them than candlelight ceremony because that hits way closer to home. Over the 4 years that I've been there [at YCI], Mr. and Mrs. Virk, after the first year, I told them and even Chris and Rena died in the same month, 10 days of each other, but years apart things like that. I know them now, and I see them, so that's always affected me way more than the candle light thing, I find a lot of it, some kids just start into it, so it can be kind of superficial or you have someone sitting next to you that you just would rather not [laughs].

So while most consultants spoke in the metaphorical language of light and darkness, sight and blindness, how they came to understand and apply these metaphors in their own contexts inside and outside YCI differed based on

resonance and not necessarily prescribed activity. However, there still appears to be an implicit assumption about which activities are meant to be most meaningful.

To suggest YCI unveils the light of justice would be tempting right about now. After all, consultants spoke about the impact the camp has had on their developing sense of selves using this very metaphor. But it must be questioned, which light has been shone, and “what diversity do we silence in the name of liberatory pedagogy?” (Ellsworth, 1992, p.91). In some respects, the organization of the candle light ceremony speaks to larger cultural assumptions that catharsis is a required element of change and “breaking down” in front of one’s peers exposes an essence as opposed to a socially constructed meme of self disclosure. I see a parallel in my own clinical practice and educator of CYC practitioners; somehow clients and students “prove” they get it (whatever “it” might be) through confessional means. This can be through exposing family of origin secrets or disclosing traumatic events that have shaped who they believe they are. And most of the time, this is institutionally sanctioned through counselling processes and CYC curriculum. Yet, as both my clinical and pedagogical experience attests, there are certain, so-called correct ways of doing this. To step outside a standard confession results in a potential shunning from peers. As a feminist, I do believe the slogan “the personal is political,” but am equally mindful that some personal stories are more welcomed than others.

Consultants were firm in their conviction that sharing secrets was an excellent way to “unburden” oneself, essentially to carry a lighter load. This was

also influenced by their shared love of www.postsecret.com. For example, in one data meeting, we discussed the influence of postsecret on Lily's postcard project:

Tash – [referring to a music video] Anyways, it's all about post secrets, it's really good.

Cole- What do you think is up with the popularity of secrets or the catharsis of telling one?

Tash- Like the popularity of reading them or people [telling them]?

Cole- Well, I guess both.

Angelica- People probably feel good if they're keeping something inside and they can't tell anyone and they let it out they probably feel a lot better, I guess.

Tash- Especially because this is a way to tell the whole world basically.

Angelica- It just makes you feel better about yourself and stronger.

Lily –I was having a really, really bitter fight a while back with one of my friends and we were both crying and tears and it was just terrible. And I told him this secret and he was like 'oh' and that was it. It was just done, after I told him this secret. It's just so weird how things like that make everything better.

So, there is power in secrets, in catharsis and in telling. But there was a lack of advanced analysis on why some things are secret and others not. All of the consultants faithfully checked this particular website and were free in their judgments that some secrets were “profound” and others “gross” while others still “just funny.” On the day of this particular meeting, the theme for postsecret was fathers as Father's Day was advancing. I found some of the examples shared deeply disturbing and questioned how one person's catharsis is another's trauma.

However, there is some criticism in catharsis techniques in an age of endless blogging and up-to-the-minute Facebook updates. For example, Chesler (2005) reflects:

I am questioning whether what one learns via public group catharsis is precisely the same as what one learns from reading in solitude; listening to an expert lecture, and then participating in a focused and informed discussion about the material. I question the highly theatrical and emotional nature of how information is being imparted. I view the teaching technique as not only lazy but also as proto-fascist. (p. 17)

Although I am not Chesler's biggest fan, she raises some valid points about how group catharsis could potentially be a "lazy" means of achieving superficial consciousness and predetermined consensus. Her comment regarding proto-fascism is also a valid warning, as themes of repenting and confession are common in several suspect group processes, from neo-Nazi youth, programs that claim to convert GLBTTIQQ¹⁹ youth, and the occasional CYC classroom. Palmer (1998) comments:

When I explore the movement model with others, it is often criticized for being value-neutral. The model can, for example, describe conservative movements that the critic dislikes as well as liberal movements he or she applauds. Worst yet, any model that starts with 'divided no more' easily applies to fascist movements in which people decide to bring their actions

¹⁹ GLBTTIQQ is a contemporary acronym for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered, two-spirited, intersexed, questioning and queer.

into harmony with the evil that is in their hearts-such as the Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Aryan Nation. (p.175)

In the context of YCI, if you are the one person who says “*cheers to the cooks!*” in the circle, according to my consultants, you have not achieved the purpose of the camp and fail to enter the imagined inner circle. “Cheers to the cooks” was considered a cop-out remark in the candlelight ceremony where implicitly, something profound was expected. On the one hand, having participated in and facilitated group therapy, I know that the effects of a therapeutic group experience can take some months to be integrated into verbal articulations, and more importantly, actual, daily living. On the other hand, consciousness- raising is considered a valid component in feminist praxis, and as a feminist I have gained much from such experiences. At times, however, a false intimacy can be created. This is not to suggest that in the moment youth are not exposed to powerful confessions, but rather such raw vulnerability cannot be sustained outside its original context. As consultants reflected, the intimacy created in the camp was not always sustainable once back in the high school halls. Thus, the question becomes not the impact of the light, but the sustainability of it. This brings us to the next metaphor of shedding social skins by virtue of participation in YCI.

Shedding social skins or: This is sort of a general good will dandelion

At what point you really become conscious of having a choice
in the form of a present ?

Bows are very pretty and they're very prim and proper and very smooth
cause it's like the outer and layered like a façade

how everyone else sees you

and underneath is the red;

you know,

how you see yourself

they're the same but they're different.

I think I deserve a break

shed the constrictions of normal social life

Just jump through that window;

the outcome will usually be the flipside

the possibilities are endless and you can look at it in different ways, right?

I'm standing there shaking the sand out of these butts of metal birds

all the seeds are being blown about and all sort of good things are being spread
through the world

just all about pathways and they go all over the place and

so I'm just one of the seeds

but it's like it teaches you to go beyond that

I think I deserve a break

shed the constrictions of normal social life

It makes you wonder if we changed

then we went to the camp and I fell in love

a get away, like a mental and physical getaway

but you're always like sticking your fingers in the paint

which is kind of a fresh start

it will shed some of the negative aspects of high school but still offer up the
opportunities

I think I deserve a break

shed the constrictions of normal social life

kind of step out of high school

There will be a few weird people,

just give someone a handshake with someone you feel uncomfortable with,

get to be a different person or whoever you want to be

shed the constrictions of normal social life

(Little, YCI data found poetry)

What spoke most powerfully to the social construction and maintenance of social identities was the consultants' referencing to being able to "shed" one identity and take up another while at YCI. Sebastian, for example, says:

At high school everything is a bit more guarded, you feel there's a lot of people and a lot of little different social things. If you want to get through high school sane, you kind of have to be considering social things and ways to navigate them. At YCI that's still present but I think that people, they're all starting a brand new experience together of something different, it's a completely different environment. So in high school I don't like to think I was a completely different person, it wasn't like I had two personalities, just I was a lot more open and friendly at YCI because I felt it's safe, it's a safe environment and high school is definitely not a safe environment I don't think even in the most accepting of schools. With that many people, with that many backgrounds and prejudices and teenage attitudes, I don't think it can really be a safe place, I don't think it's going to happen, maybe in a high school there could be a group, and someone, like a good teacher could make a very special close group of people feel safe, but at YCI it's like an intimate group even though there's 60 kids or whatever. I think because it's a safe environment versus a very threatening, threatening place.

In many ways, this quote saddened me. As much as I experienced high school as threatening to a certain degree, I had some naïve hope that this had changed. It also made me reflect on my own classrooms, which while I hope are co-constructed as safe places for students, often are not. As Garcia (2002) reflects: "we assume that every student feels safe in our classroom just because we are

welcoming and sympathetic. We assume that we can create a strong classroom environment in a few months. Sometimes we assume that every student interested in our subject as much as we are” (p.25). On a larger scale, I felt quite hopeless as the world itself is filled with those from diverse backgrounds, prejudices and attitudes; did Sebastian imply world peace could not be achieved? Or was this only an issue with adolescents? I followed up this piece with the focus group:

Cole – Sebastian was mentioning that too, about just to have a break from your regular role at school.

Kyla – It’s like a get away, it’s like a mental and physical getaway.

Tash – And emotional.

Tash also reflected:

The other thing that’s pretty big that I took away from YCI was this incredible sense of community and how it was amazing that you [Kyla] were able to bond with that guy R. I was amazed by the friendships I made in just five days and just the fact that such a great strong powerful community could be created in just five days and what we could all do, like all these YCI kids that went to camp if we work together what we can achieve, right? So, that just gave me a lot of faith in the power of community, working together.

Kyla also spoke to the change of scenery versus personal change:

I don’t know if we changed, we just, I guess we got to know each other in a different setting which was nice. It kind of takes away the pressure of friends and school and work and you just focus on each other, you really focus on other people when you’re at that camp, so I guess that really helped.

Sebastian speaks to his camp experience in comparison to so-called normal life:

Sebastian - And I think I was 12 when I went [the first time].

Cole- Wow, by yourself?

Sebastian– By myself and so I was nervous but I went and it was so great and I loved it and everyone was so nice and it was a chance to kind of step out of high school, how you see yourself, you know, or how everyone else sees you, so you get to be a different person or whoever you want to be. Just kind of shed the constrictions of normal social life.

Yet, if high school is the “normal life,” then does that imply that YCI is “abnormal” or a different kind of normal? How is it constructed as an “elevated context” (Daniel Scott, personal communication, May 19th, 2010)? Indeed, my understanding and experience of YCI’s purpose is to introduce youth to ideas, stories and activities that are not present in public curriculum. In many respects, YCI reaches Csikszentmihalyi’s (1993) utopic vision of what education could be. He states:

Perhaps the most urgent task facing us is to create a new educational curriculum that will make each child aware, from the first grade on, that life in the universe is interdependent. It should be an education that trains the mind to perceive the network of causes and effects in which our actions are embedded, and training the emotions and the imagination to respond appropriately to the consequences of those actions. (p. 275)

But to offer this as an alternative to regular education implies that diversity is not a central and essential component to preparing youth to engage as citizens. Corson (1998) recognizes this, saying:

On the one hand, in this new world of postmodernity, human diversity is being recognized at last. On the other hand, people's *real* sociocultural identities have little value in the marketplace of that new world. As a consequence, whatever values and interests of schools are linked tightly into that marketplace, students and teachers from diverse background find that their interests are still missing from education. (p.3-4, emphasis in original)

As will be discussed in the authenticity section, several students apparently attend YCI for the sake of missing three days of regular school. Others, however, do see it as a break from regularly maintained roles and routines. As Sebastian says, coming to YCI is stepping back into a place of respect: – *“It’s nice, I mean as soon as I got back [to camp] I kind of stepped into that role and it’s nice to know everyone and be respectful of everyone and have everyone be respectful of you for once [laughs].”* YCI seemed especially resonate to those who felt disconnected from their regular school. Sebastian had been tormented since grade one with overt and covert homophobia, mostly directed at his long term involvement with dance. Tash, teased for being “emo”²⁰ and who considers herself more mature than her peers, has also felt alienated from her school. This goes back as far as she can remember, and she says: *“even in grade school, like in grade one for instance, my friends would want to play pretend games at recess and they would want to pretend*

²⁰ When I asked the consultants to explain “emo,” they told me emo kids fall on a spectrum of emotional, artistic, and wear black.

they were unicorns and I was thinking you're not a unicorn, you're not a fairy. Some of the things they were into, I just wasn't; I liked reading and art, so for me, most of life I hated recess." As an adolescent, then, she was able to form relationships with her peers based on very particular interests, including YCI. For example, when asked how YCI had impacted her sense of self, she created the following multi media piece to articulate how she viewed things differently:



Figure 20 – Tash My Vie En Rose (acrylic and photography on white board).

Entitled “My Vie En Rose,” Tash reflects:

Normally I don't like sunglasses and I never wear them and this is probably pretty outgoing for me most people would say. But I just decided I had to have them. And it was really interesting, it was kind of an inside joke with some choir friends of mine now that they are the magic glasses that turn everything to pink and make the

world a better place. My friend was really jealous and kept asking me if she could wear them. Her feet were really hurting because her shoes were giving her blisters and we were walking all over Toronto so I gave them to her and she was like ‘ah, my feet don’t hurt anymore.’ Then it was pretty funny because she’s walking and wearing them and acting like a totally different person all of a sudden. She’s this perfectly beautiful, lovely little blonde girl and she put them on and she said ‘oh, these are so dope’ and then my friend who’s known her for her entire life said ‘I’ve never heard you say dope in my entire life!’ It was bizarre, and as soon as she took them off she walked into a bicycle [laughter]. So this kind of represents after I joined YCI and I got to really see how people my age can be, because I was kind of discouraged about that. I had never really known anyone my age who really cared about the world and was willing to do something about it and put in the effort. When I went to YCI camp I saw a lot of that, so that I think made me a much more of an optimistic person, which is where the pink sunglasses come in. They kind of turn the world pink and everything beautiful and because I know that there are people like me, my age, who are working and striving to make a difference in the world and who really do care and put in the effort. So that’s pretty much what this is, like people my age, teenagers, and working together. Oh, if you haven’t guessed I took a bunch of photos through the sunglasses. I just sort of chose this because it seemed so vibrant and alive. So yes this one because it’s alive and that sort of sparked some more vibrance [sic] in my life after I joined YCI.

In this respect, it is not just a sense of shedding a skin, but adding a layer or gaining new perspective. As Wooldridge (1996) suggests, “look closely at

something you see all the time. Write [or record] as if you've never seen this before" (p.30). For Tash, there was a literal lens she viewed her choir trip through and the metaphorical lens of YCI. How do we look at something familiar in a new way? For Lily, her stepping into YCI was not as transformational, as it spoke to her Quaker faith:



Figure 21 – Lily *Untitled* (acrylic on canvas).

Of this work she says:

So basically these are my roots, these colours are my family so it is really hard not to be socially aware and really hard not to be socially involved because my grandmother worked and was a colleague of Martin Luther King Jr. and his family. She was at the march on Washington and she was at Selma and Birmingham, everything! So it's really hard not to be involved and she was very socially

minded...It's kind of a lot to grow up with. And it's also because of my roots in Quakerism and who my family is – it's impossible not to feel like I have the world on my shoulders. And so that's kind of what is here – these are the roots holding me, holding the world on my shoulders, then the rest of the world because there are people who just don't know and then there are people who know but just don't speak up.

In reference to both Tash and Lily, YCI serves as a confirmation of difference felt in other contexts. So while YCI may not have had a radical impact in terms of transformation, it served as a platform for them to express this difference in what Palmer (1998) refers as “communities of congruence” (p.172). He says,

Communities of congruence are vital in educational reform, but creating them is made difficult by the privatization of academic life. I am often reminded of this fact when I visit a campus for two or three days. When my opening talk is over, someone will come up to me and confide, ‘I agree with everything you say about teaching-but I am the only person on campus who feels this way.’ At the end of the second session, three or four more people will approach me, one by one, to share the same secret. (p.173)

Likewise, I would guess some students in the public education system feel, like Tash and the teachers noted above, as the “only” one. Yet, for any of us who have found our community of congruence based on marginalization know, congruence and harmony are not the same. We bring to these communities, as the students do in YCI, a host of stories and assumptions.

Subjectivities cannot just be left behind and freshly re-invented in the absence of our socially constructed histories and inscribed narratives. Ropers-Huilman (1997) speaks eloquently about this, and thus I quote her at length:

Identity, then, is a term that is most useful when broadly defined and seen as perhaps not all-encompassing. The 'creation' of identity is impossible as there exists no time when a totally new and unchanging being enters a discourse. I cannot distinguish such a point in this research. Rather, the concept of identities is like viewing a borderless map. Many of the landmarks have posted names; indeed, I have lived in places called 'White' and 'Woman.' Once a location, an identity, is a part of me, I cannot disown it. Yet it need not own me. Rather, I can visit, through careful listening, other cities whose characteristics and opportunities provide lessons and insights as well. While some people travel more frequently and enthusiastically than others, this process of traveling is endless. Our identities are multiple, yet enmeshed with each other in a chaotic balance of life choices and struggles for self. (para. 33)

The borderless map she describes is how I would like to think of subjectivities from a social constructionist and feminist perspective. I would like to think that, metaphorically, “everyone is a tourist, an immigrant, a refugee, an exile or a guest worker, moving from one part of the world to another” (Denzin, 1997, p.xii), but this is not without its consequences. For example, Sebastian speaks to how despite being liberated, albeit temporarily, from high school roles, the impact of newly

formed selves did not “stick” once he and others were re-immersed in the high school halls:

I'm back in a social setting with my girlfriend, my friend group kind of thing, it gets back into that, not really snippy but critical, a lot more [critical] than you would be at YCI. At YCI you just wouldn't feel right being, because it's generally not a nice thing to be critical and when we got back to school she [another YCI participant] was really bothering us. She was just kind of a little bit flakey and I can be flakey but in any case, for whatever reason, valid or not, we weren't mean to her, but we were certainly annoyed with her, not impressed and said some mean things, like not mean things, but critical things that wouldn't be said at YCI. I think the environment at YCI is very real but a lot of the times, back in a high school setting..., I mean you're at YCI for 3 days; you're at high school for 5 years. You know that's the mentality you're kind of set in and some people can't break out of that mentality at YCI like but some people find it a big relief to be more open, have discussions, meaningful discussions with people because a lot of people don't get that in high school like when you're in a group in a circle at YCI.

It appears from this quote that while YCI offers a context for individual and collective change; its potentialities are not always realized. What is especially problematic is that this observation comes from Sebastian, who out of all the consultants had the longest involvement in YCI. I question whether camp creates a sense of false intimacy, or at least, an unsustainable intimacy. Further, given consultants felt themselves to be “true” YCI members despite evidence of not

acting in what is perceived as “true” YCI ways, it brings us to the discussion of notions of authenticity. Turn the page to find out more...

Anticipate in This Space

Do Not Anticipate in This Space

Authenticity

Little minor dilemma-

why are you here?

There are people more deserving

you can tell by just their attitude to the whole cause

they wanted to gain tools to make a change in their community

To be fair I didn't deserve to go back some years

“are you going to be devoted this year?”

There are people more deserving

I love how ashamed they look when they say it

Their heart isn't really in it, right?

I had like 75 clones coming my way

which is really interesting

it diminishes passion

they look down at the floor,

and then they say they realize this camp is so much more

than just missing three days of school.

they look down,

I love how ashamed they look when they say it

To be fair I didn't deserve to go back some years

are you going to be devoted this year?

but he's kind of seen the light,

realized I've changed so much

(Little, YCI data found poetry)

A curious and unexpected discourse arose around issues of authentic activism and “deserving” camp participants. I say curious because these conversations were in glaring opposition to the inclusive dialogue promoted by YCI (even though I discovered attendance is indeed, based on individual teacher’s conceptions of “deserving” or “worthy”). As the consultants spoke to these issues, I was reminded of hook’s (2000) description of the fractions in North American second wave feminism between “authentic” feminism and theoretical feminism:

...the tug of war that has existed within feminist movement between feminist intellectuals and academics, and participants in the movement who equate education with bourgeois privilege and are fiercely anti-intellectual. This tug-of-war has led to the formation of a false dichotomy between theory (the development of ideas) and practice (the actions of the movement), with one group privileging ‘practice’. As a consequence, there is often little congruity between feminist theory and feminist practice. This intensifies the feelings of some women engaged in activism...that they are superior to or more “politically correct” than women who concentrate their energies on developing ideas. (p.113)

Likewise, within YCI, there are identified individuals who are accused of participating by virtue of wanting to win scholarships and these people are rendered less than committed. This was especially poignant when Tash was talking about the following picture that represented pre-YCI involvement:

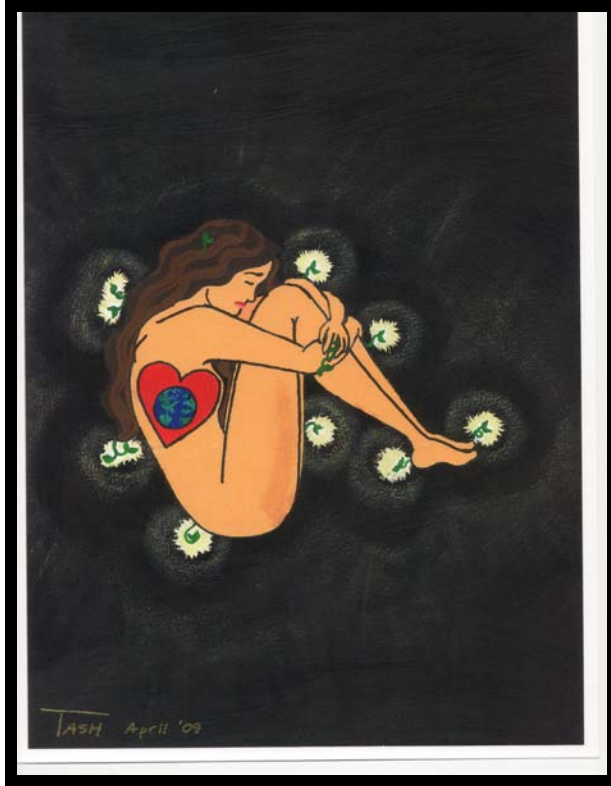


Figure 22 – Tash – *Untitled* (acrylic and ink on paper).

Tash - It all feels, really, despite that [having several social justice clubs at school], it all feels really superficial a lot of the time I find. It's like people join the club but their heart isn't really in it, right? I don't know, it's hard to explain.

Lily – What I have experienced with Oak Bay? Having friends there and siblings and being there for various things they care enough to get it on their scholarship resume, and that's it, only trying to better themselves.

Tash- Yes, exactly! I think it's also the thing that drives me crazy about Oak Bay above all else is, it's the most conformist institution I have ever been in all my life. My first day at Oak Bay, I kind of freaked out just a little the first time when I had to cross buildings. So when I crossed I had like 75 clones coming my way, it was like Ah! [laughs] I saw the same kind of girl 10 times in a row just crossing, like

same outfits and hair, it was freaky. I think that probably in my experience when people feel compelled to conform it is usually because they have low self esteem. Last year I was in Mango and Interact²¹ and some of the people there genuinely cared about the cause and it was great to have them on board and then there are definitely people there who didn't have an air of seriousness about it at all. They would be joking about it and stuff; why are you here if you don't really care about it? It felt like they were there for their own selfish reasons, like [high pitch voice] 'oh yeah, I'm not a snobby, ignorant rich kid, I'm in club Mango' – it's just a way to make them feel better about themselves more than anything else.

The underlying impression was that participation in YCI made consultants “true” activists even if they belonged to clubs with those interested in building their resumes. An ironic contradiction to this conversation is that two consultants put this research project on their resume and asked me to write letters of reference for their own scholarship applications. Harre (2007) speaks to the conception of identity projects and points out that:

Projects can emerge in a variety of ways. I have discussed how people can almost slip into an identity project as an activist or volunteer through their social networks: In these cases, a person may only take ownership of the project gradually. Alternatively, their activism or volunteerism may never become an identity project, as it may remain simply an activity they are doing as part of their membership of the original group (with the latter being an identity project on its own). (p. 715)

²¹ Both of these are clubs dedicated to particular social justice themes.

When I asked how you could differentiate between genuine people and resume builders, the consultants told me that:

Tash – You can just tell by their attitude to the whole cause.

Lily – If you spend enough time with them. The really big tell tale one is if who comes back to camp next year, who joins the club next year.

Tash- People go [to camp] just to miss school from Oak Bay. I'll call him Steve.

Anyways, Steve apparently last year from Oak Bay he came back to join, because he's in the club this year, sporadically that is, and apparently last year came[to camp] to just miss school and this year is going to come to miss school again. I think that is a little minor dilemma right now, because I kind of want to say ok, you can't go, there are people more deserving who want to go to this camp, right? But we were talking about this last YCI meeting - if there is someone more deserving they should get the chance. What, there are 25 people in the club at Esquimalt and only ten get to go, right?

It is interesting to note that the consultants often speak in terms of deserving and not of equitable opportunity for participation. This could be speaking to larger issues of entitlement based on their relative privilege (i.e. they have the time, resources and language skills with which to participate) nested within a larger cultural discourse of martyrdom. However, they do acknowledge that even the least seemingly motivated, or least deserving, can “reform”:

Lily – I am proud to say our GSA [Gay-straight alliance] this year is headed up by a boy, he's straight too. Except for that it's kind of bad, he only got into GSA last year because his girlfriend was in it, but he's kind of seen the light.

Cole- Well, it's interesting too because picking up on some themes of like people starting out to do things out of selfish motivation, right, missing school, hanging out with the girlfriend and then somewhere along the line, something transforms, right?

Kyla –You definitely see that in camp over the four days. I remember the first year, there were a bunch of girls who were my roommates. They were really nice girls, but you could tell their motivation to go into the camp was not because they wanted to make a difference you know, because they wanted to gain tools to make a change in their community. They told me straight up first day –‘we’re here because we got to miss three days of school.’ Then I remember there would be people in candle light ceremony saying ‘I came to the camp because I knew I would miss three days of school but coming here I’ve gained so much and realized I’ve changed so much.’

Lily – I love how ashamed they look when they say it.

Kyla – Yeah, that sounds really bad, but they always...

Lily – they look down,

Kyla – they look down at the floor, which is really interesting and then they say they realize this camp is so much more than just missing three days of school. So for me if I recruit students and they’re going in for selfish motivations, in a way I’m ok with it because I know the outcome will usually be the flipside. So sometimes it’s good to not always have people who are always so gung ho about changing, it’s those ones who don’t want to change that you want to change, right?

So while the consultants spoke earlier to the potential of catharsis in the candle light ceremony, it becomes somewhat of a litmus test for who emerges authentic

and transformed. The irony, of course, lies in the fact that all students, deserving or not, are groomed for three days and the normalizing of self disclosure that is then read by others. This is not to suggest that many of these “repentant” individuals did not, indeed, have transformational experiences at the camp. But what is appropriate repenting is certainly constructed and reinforced.

Likewise, this sense of authenticity was applied outside of camp as well.

For example, some of the consultants met with another community youth advocacy group to discuss a potential collaboration and there was a sense that this group was doing community building “wrong.” Kyla and Lily were especially critical, stating:
Kyla – I wasn’t ready to go that deep with people I just met an hour and a half ago.
Lily- We were playing this game where you had to say if you really knew me, you would know and you would finish it.

Kyla – We used it in Challenge Day and I’ve seen it on Oprah and it really breaks a lot of barriers and it’s really good and kids really learn from it. But some of the students who we were brainstorming with wanted to do it right at the end of the meeting and we had just met them.

Lily- Um-hmm.

Kyla – And we had just met them, just met them about an hour and a half before and they were getting into some really deep stuff and one was like ‘if you really knew me, you’d know that I have a thing for Sandra Brown romance novels’ [laughs].

Lily– It was fine.

Kyla – It was fine but it was just, I wasn't prepared to be that revealing, especially with people you don't really know, like if it was at YCI and it was the third or fourth day, I'd be ok, but not an hour and a half!

I have also participated in “if you really knew me” at Challenge Day (see www.challengeday.org for more information). For me, it was with total strangers from the local community I resided in at the time and I perceived it as a means to transcend tedious small talk; permission to push the boundaries of “nice” disclosure. It was also designed to eliminate pre-determined hierarchy based on age, grade, culture, and positions of power. So, I was surprised that the other group's invitation for depth seemed too rushed for Kyla, and was considered “too deep.” The community advocacy group in question is one comprised of youth with mental challenges, and I am curious what role such difference made in *wanting* to break down barriers. The rules for “the other” had been drastically changed. Likewise, Sebastian traveled with his former partner to India to work with Free Tibet, a cause that is championed by Judy through YCI. He felt many people traveling to India were seeking a sense of authenticity via inauthentic means. Says Sebastian:

I think people have a lot of misconceptions about India. Everyone is struggling to make a living and there are so many foreigners going through that it creates a very dishonest kind of atmosphere where you can't really interact nicely with Indians because they're poor, they need your money. You know, I can accept it that they need it to live because the people I met were the people who survived off tourists, and tourists have created these people's life styles and it's all about deception and

commissions and not fun just to go through. When people come back and say they had this amazing spiritual time I just say liar. Maybe you went off into the hills and did some weird little hermetic kind of thing, but you probably didn't, you probably stayed in a really dirty city and met with a guy who claimed to be a guru. So we were just constantly irritated by those types of people there. Indian people are so poor and they can't afford for people who want to come and mooch and live. We worked with this kid from England who was stealing from shops and these people can't afford to have some kid whose parents bought him a ticket to India stealing from them, you know, it just makes me so angry – we would watch him from the office, look over this balcony at this little kid with blond dread locks running along the street. Not a little kid, he was probably as old as us.

In some respects, Sebastian is speaking to the commodification of spirituality and offers one of the few overt conversations regarding colonialism. At the same time, like many of the consultants, his own recognition of privilege is poorly articulated. Hence, the authenticity theme speaks to issues of entitlement, what my friend Matthew would call Champagne socialists. In some respects, I attribute this to class, which was never explicitly discussed by consultants. I formed my own assumptions based on driving them to and from their homes, visiting one consultant's parents' business and hearing stories from consultants as we drove. This leads us to discussion of being polite as activists.

Polite Activists need only apply

Polite Activists need only apply

Something about this society
that bums me out from time to time
is this whole diplomacy thing you have to be-
You can't say that! Inappropriate!
Don't step on toes! Vulgar!

Am I going to get in trouble for this?

It was dead silent
that whole British thing.
Their fear of saying something wrong,
or inadvertently racist.
So they just kind of avoid it
It was dead silent

It was the day of silence -
Push some people's buttons
and walk this fine line of continual threats
Bitch, whore, slut
sometimes you can say no and get run over by it later

Am I going to get in trouble for this?

It was dead silent
that whole Canadian thing.
They don't want to upset anyone.
So they just kind of avoid it
It was dead silent

Right, so
that bums me out from time to time
(Little, YCI data found poetry)

The urge to create research spaces that were intentionally uncensored stemmed from consultants' repeated references to how they were silenced in their school environment, at YCI, and by other YCI members. While some of this censorship was explicit, much of it was under the guise of "politeness" which was clearly gendered, sexed and classed. And this is what many critical theorists focused on diversity in education echo; that "state space is also mutilated silence" (Roy, 2003, p.110). What became apparent was while all the adults referred to throughout the data collection supported diversity initiatives, they were not always happy with how the consultants chose to display them. Further, the consultants spoke to how they language their initiatives in a manner that would not make them appear as "bitchy." As Linnell et al. (2008) reflect:

More than a call to say nice things it is also a call to remain silent, to not say the unsayable, the messy, the difficult, the unpleasant. It is an aesthetics of speech that prefers harmonious melody over discord. It is an aesthetics of speech that contains within it an ethic, an ethic of harm minimization, of preservation of goodwill and approval, of self-preservation and preservation of the Other. It also implies an ethics of censorship and silence: Do not speak the unspeakable! But might we still think the unthinkable? In the silence of the unexpressed...(p. 301)

In the context of high school, Lily speaks to interventions that are essentially shut down by teachers:

One thing that's been happening at school is a lot of censorship of students and student groups. When we came back from camp, the people who didn't go to camp had done a really awesome display case and they had stuck pictures of all of these people who are stereotyped and they've written all these stereotypes on it. Then they had two cut out stick figures and one's black and one's white and it was really good. Then they were told to wash it off 20 minutes into the day at school and they were told it was inappropriate. There's more totally inappropriate graffiti in the bathroom and on the lockers, I think almost every locker has 'penis' scratched into it. These were words like jock and prep and things like things like that so it was just so frustrating. Then the women's studies class did a big poster - half of it was sexist claims and the other half was feminist rebuttals to those claims. They put it up and the women studies teacher got into a big fight with the principal because the principal said it was inappropriate and vulgar and just like wrong and so they either had to take it down or the class would be unsubscribed for next year.

In this sense, dissent is tolerated, but only to a certain degree. It is interesting to note that the principal referred to in the quote above was the same person who was not interested in my proposal to conduct research with the women's studies class in question! This comment is neither to blame nor slander the principal for her choices; rather to illustrate the tensions of controlling educational spaces and concurrently championing diversity issues. For me, as an educator, it also speaks to what is extolled in policy around diversity but not encouraged in the actual halls. For example, Lily points out "inappropriate" sexist and sexualized graffiti already exists as ambient violence in her daily life as a

student. Angelica also experiences ambient violence, and this is captured in her photo:



Figure 23 – Angelica Day of Silence (photography). Photo credit: Nicole Harrison. Photoshop: Angelica.

It was on the day of silence at school and it was during my photography class. I went outside with my friend who was also silent and we were just taking pictures and I saw in the skateboard park right outside our school said fag, I was like oh

dude, like it was the day of silence, I had to do something with it, something artistic. I think it kind of represents that's why we're silent, that's why this is happening. I think I could have crossed it out or painted over it but that wouldn't have really helped the problem, that's just more vandalism, that's like fighting fire with fire and it's not going to change the world but like, doing something like not speaking is.

When I asked the consultants how they speak out against violence, tangible or implied, they reflected:

Kyla – Try not to hurt anybody's feelings.

Lily – It's like today when I'm sitting in class and that guy is pretending to shoot the teacher in the head and the teacher is 'what's going on?' What am I supposed to say? 'Oh he's just goofing around'? Did I really just say he was being a jerk to the whole class when it was dead silent? Am I going to get in trouble for this? And luckily I didn't but what can you do?

Cole- But you put yourself at double risk.

Lily – Most definitely. Angelica and I walk this fine line of continual threats to be suspended and it's continual, it's constant and we're always under the threat of being suspended and we always have to remind our [YCI] club please be careful with what you say and what you do under our name because Angelica and I are at risk of being removed from the school.

Tash – Because of what you say?

Lily – Just because of things the administration disagrees with.

Lily, however, puts her speaking out in a historical context, and reflected that issues are not as overtly violent as when her grandmother was working on social justice issues. She says:

Lily- My family had to emigrate from Philadelphia up to Canada because my grandmother was receiving death threats from the KKK, I mean that doesn't really happen anymore, it's not the same issues that we're dealing with.

Cole- And you also acknowledge that it's still there.

Lily- Yeah, it's still there, but there are more people advocating. Like, if there was someone in a classroom who said to a black person, 'nigger', you know that there would at least be thirteen or fourteen that would say hey that's not appropriate, whereas back then you would have two or three.

Cole- So interesting looping back to our first conversation about what it would mean to stand alone and not be popular with others and now you are talking about these issues unfolding in a space where you can trust others to speak up as well.

Lily – Actually, this happened yesterday. Yesterday was our high school's day of silence for LGBTQ [said haltingly], etc. etc. [laughter].

Cole- Well done, better said than some of my colleagues up here.

Lily – Right, and I was silent. And in my English class there is a boy from Iraq and his father was actually murdered by American troops and his family went to Syria and then they moved here and he didn't understand why myself and another girl weren't speaking. And there is another guy in my class who was trying to explain it to him, he was saying 'in Canada we say people that are homosexuals are ok and they are allowed to do what they want.' It just made me really angry because the

guy from Iraq said homosexuals are shameful and 'if someone who was homosexual comes onto me then I am shamed for the rest of my life.' He was just saying all these really bad things and he's actually said 'I have punched a homosexual in the face for being near me.' He said 'you don't see homosexuals in Iraq' and our teacher, we had a substitute but she actually said 'well that's because they're afraid you will kill them, you don't see them because they're afraid.' He says 'we see them in Canada but here I can't punch them,' things like that. It was just awful but because I had taken this silence I couldn't actually say anything and the other people in the class weren't saying very intelligent things, except the teacher, so it was really hard thing, because I would have set him straight about it. And there was this one guy and he was trying really hard to explain it to him... 'homosexuals are ok, but if one tries to kiss me I'm going to kick him.' You can make your point and you can say they are ok, but when you say you are going to use violence against them...homosexuals aren't stupid people, they know if you're gay or not and not hit on you if you're obviously straight. Some of these people, it mystifies me how stupid they are and some of the ideas they have. I was just so angry that I couldn't actually say anything because I was silent to make a point but I couldn't make the point to set them straight on the answer.

Cole- No pun intended. So that's a rich example, how can we go forward with such opposing views? What do you think? It sounds like people were trying to educate the student on policy and norms of Canada.

Lily- And the soc teacher did eventually say 'you don't have to like them but you have to respect them.' She said 'that's the way it is in Canada, you don't have to

like them but you don't disrespect them.' I don't think he really got it, and she tried again with the example of if he raped a girl she would be shamed and he wouldn't so then how come he is shamed if he did nothing if a homosexual hit on him. He was just 'it's not the same, it's not the same.' It's so frustrating having to have to sit there everyday now with this kid, essentially it's not cool.

Cole- Wow, intense.

Tash – That's interesting that it happened on the day of silence because that really enhances the point of the day of silence – 'oh I can't speak out.'

Lily- And we can try to educate them where it gets to the point where they're not going to beat up people.

Tash- That's tolerance not acceptance.

Lily- Yes, exactly. Also he kept bringing up that it's in his religion, and it actually says in his holy book, you know, these people are sinful, and if you come in contact with them you are going to be shamed, and you are not going to get wherever you get in your afterlife, so how do you teach them, how do you re-educate people when something is a thousand years old? And has been taught for generations and generations?

Cole- Excellent question! What do you think?

Angelica – Well people are going to have the beliefs if people are raised to believe different things than we are, and the wrong, the negative, things people are going to hate and discriminate. I mean that's just the way it is. It's not only with gay rights, it's with everything. Like in Iraq women's rights and all of that...that's way behind where we are now. Eventually maybe there'll be acceptance, hopefully.

This conversation stands out as possibly the richest example of talking about diversity, and the consultants raise complex issues of cultural locations, policy, tolerance versus acceptance, and questioning where we learn our prejudices and how we might change them. Makler (2000) reflects:

Adolescents already know that individuals have different ideas of justice. Systematic study of the evolution of Western notions of justice, accompanied by cross-cultural comparison, would provide adolescents with coherent frameworks against which to test and refine their own evolving ideas. Asking students to articulate the features of a just situation, or to discuss what would have to change to make a particular unjust situation just, might help them to see that human choices-to act or not to act-make a difference. Meaningful teaching of participatory citizenship cannot evade the question of how a democratic pluralist society should organize to sustain itself over time. (p.221)

I concur with Makler that such issues need to be explored in more depth, which was what the substitute teacher was attempting to do. But I also sense some frustration on the part of the teacher. I, too, struggle in classrooms where students are trying to articulate their perspective and being attacked for their lack of politically correct language. Perhaps showing one's ignorance creates fears in other students' of their own? In my own desire to have a "harmonious" classroom, do I stunt the critically reflective capacity of my students? Makler (2000) further states that, "teachers' reluctance to articulate clearly the issues of justice embedded in discussions of

injustice perpetuates students' confusion and leaves them to wander out of the thicket of relativism on their own" (p.218).

In the aforementioned dialogue, Lily speaks out against homophobia using homophobic assumptions such as being able to "tell" who is gay or straight by virtue of how they look and/or act. And Angelica speaks to notions of western advancement without problematizing her reflections of how "we" women might be better off in North America. The double edged sword of YCI curriculum, then, is awareness of injustice and its subsequent application in different contexts. So while the consultants do not necessarily question their own production of cultural norms and expectations, they do critique the idea of diplomacy and capitalism:

Tash – Something about this society that bums me out from time to time is this whole diplomacy thing you have to be.

Lily – Right, so sometimes you can say no and get run over by it later.

Cole- You were talking about political correctness earlier and you are talking about diplomacy, so I am wondering what that is all about?

Tash – Well Canada too, but especially in BC, especially in Victoria.

Lily-Especially in elderly people.

Angelica- Especially in high schools.

Tash – There is this whole very British, very conservative culture here and it's very oppressing.

Lily –Sometimes, like honestly, you need to tell people no you can't and you have to dig up reasons and be like well ,you didn't do this little thing we're going to say no and you have totally try and justify it, and you just want to say no, you can't, so I

get in trouble all the time in YCI because I will just say no and then I get you know, ten people telling me that's wrong to say no. You know it's no wonder you guys are freaking about what to do with your life because you can't say no about anything – it's just awful, it's disgusting.

Cole- So do you think that is a Canadian thing or a gender thing? Does that have to do with being women?

Tash – Well no, well possibly, but I think in the main big picture it is a British thing; it is a Canadian thing, but it's a British influence...

Lily– and it's totally related to this pressure that you need to be something, you need to be doing something, [Tash- I know!] you need to be doing everything, you need to trying to be a doctor, and an artist and a musician, try to be all these things at once. I have so many friends who just burn themselves out.

Tash – Sometimes I call it the conveyor belt society, it is kind of an inside joke between some friends who are born somewhere else. That they come here from Europe and they're asking where is the joi de vive? You know? Welcome to North America, it's the conveyer belt society and everything is go- go- go, I heard a really good analogy once, has anyone else seen story of stuff?[www.storyofstuff.com] I love story of stuff, I need to show you sometime. Do you remember the one scene where she talks about people are on this constant treadmill to make money? It's the TV and the work and the mall, so go to work , and you are burnt out from work, so you come home and crash and sit down and stare at your TV and they say oh, you should go buy stuff and so you go out and buy stuff - spend more and then you need

to go to work and then you come home and crash and the TV tells you that you suck. So it is this constant treadmill and it just bugs me.

On some level, they are articulating the Euro-western norms of diplomacy and how that gets in the way of applying not only their new found knowledge, but also asserting their boundaries, yet another western counselling ideal. They feel stifled by Euro western norms, but also concurrently ingest much of those ideals of what they are supposed to be. Sebastian comments that:

I think that one of the biggest things, and I know I say it a lot, but you learn so much at YCI that that becomes your knowledge, you just become more open minded. At YCI you learn to be respectful of people and, try not to be judgmental and if you're going to judge them, judge them on personal merit not your interactions with them, not because they're a certain race or a certain gender or anything right? I think a lot of people are uncomfortable addressing things that are unfamiliar to them. A lot of people wouldn't be comfortable talking about race issues or gender issues or sexuality issues because they don't want to upset anyone. They don't feel comfortable talking about that maybe because they don't necessarily have a prejudice; it's just they're not familiar with it and they don't want to step on anyone's toes or hurt anyone's feelings, so they just kind of avoid it and, if something came up it would be an awkward situation. With YCI, I'm more comfortable talking about the kind of issues we talk about at YCI because I feel some of the issues, I've got a good base in them, YCI has kind of trained me almost. That is something I'm really grateful for, just not having that awkwardness around those topics. I actually think that is huge, I really like that.

So, a tension that was evident is the capacity to engage in potentially uncomfortable conversations within a perceived static cultural context. Further, the discourse is saturated with conceptions of personal merit as opposed to structural understanding of how racism, sexism, anti-Semitism and homo/trans phobia intersect. For example, Sebastian reflects that *“you have to chose what cause you want to support, the cause your passionate about, you can’t really be passionate about 5 different causes, it just doesn’t work, it diminishes passion.”*

I laughed when he said this, for on a different occasion in the research, I had taken the following photo:



Figure 24 – Little Bumper Stickers (digital photo).

I am left wondering, then, if YCI has accomplished anything outside “add and stir” approaches to diversity:

Within both the feminist and the critical, multicultural literatures, authors speak about the complex relationship between theory and teaching strategies, and each of the perspectives speaks to the importance of making appropriate connections between theory and practice. Social justice educators agree that the use of strategies without a coherent framework can promote a *tourist* or an *add and stir* approach to diversity. (Zerbe Enns & Forrest, 2005, p.17, emphasis in original)

I then step back and remind myself that this is not a program evaluation, but at the same time to critically ask how such curriculum sets up students to potentially fail in its application. However, it may be prudent to consider YCI as an entry point. Luhmann (2001) reflects on the complexity of entry points in the context of feminism, stating: “looking from my position, looking with awe back and forth, I do see that different generations navigate feminism very differently, depending on how, when and where we enter and encounter feminist practices and theories” (p.37) and she also speaks to the “specific psychosocial historicity” (p.38) of such entries. In Deleuzian terms, these entry points might also be looked at as thresholds. Sotirin (2005) speaks to the importance of thresholds, stating:

Thresholds are zones ‘in-between’ two multiplicities, what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as ‘zones of proximity’, where the elements of multiplicities enter into, and pass through and between each other. Thresholds precede the bifurcations and distinctions that separate one multiplicity from another. As Deleuze and Guattari observe, ‘the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities’ (ATP:

249). While we might think of the self as that which is ours, the site of our uniqueness and that which most distinguishes us from others, in this observation Deleuze and Guattari cast the self as preceding these forms and functions of self-organization. So the importance of thresholds is that these ‘in-betweens’ are becomings. When we are ‘in-between’, on the threshold, what keeps us distinct from this or that can become indiscernible or indistinct or imperceptible. (p.100)

Keeping this in mind, then, one can view some of the consultants’ incongruencies as a folding in of multiplicities.

Back at YCI camp, the aforementioned candle light ceremony, which consultants agreed was extremely powerful, was also a site of perceived censorship for them. Given that the number of students at any one camp can range from 50 to 90, the first ceremony was quite lengthy, or as one consultant reflected “went into the wee hours of the morning.” This resulted in:

Kyla – And then a lot of the teachers next year went up to students and said...

Cole- keep it short?

Kyla – ‘Short, keep it happy, you’ll get a time limit.’ And now when you mention that they kind of deny that, which is funny.

A basic tenet learned at YCI is how to respond to issues of oppression, and students create interventionist scripts. These are to reinforce the concept of assertive intervention. But such assertiveness training is not evident above as they speak to issues of censorship and power differentials.

Kyla – It’s that whole thing that they talk about with passive aggressive, you want to be assertive and not aggressive. The need to speak up, we always talk about it every time.

Cole- Who?

Lily –[Two adult YCI facilitators] always talk about it, because we usually do an intervention skit where someone’s being discriminated against and then students can stop it and say this is how I would do it. It’s all about bystanders and their role in how the outcome of the situation is and it’s that whole idea from Rena Virk, right? There was what, 15, 20 people actually seeing her being killed but nobody did anything, and [these two adults] always talk about three ways to intervene, there’s a passive aggressive way, there’s an assertive way and there’s an aggressive way that usually doesn’t turn out that well.

Cole- So what did they recommend was the best way?

Kyla – Assertive.

Lily – I think assertive was the best.

Kyla – But I’ve never seen it in actual action, so, that would be something to see [laughs].

There are several points that can be drawn out of this short exchange. Just as Sontag (1977) claims “essentially the camera makes everyone a tourist in other people’s reality, and eventually in one’s own” (p.57), likewise bystanders are not witnesses, but voyeurs. And although the consultants do not see themselves as bystanders in their schools, there is a tension when they do speak out. As well, Kyla reflects that she has never seen assertive interventions enacted, which speaks

to either a lack of role models or a lack of these concepts being translated to their own social justice practices. It also links to how women, specifically, are perceived when they attempt to be assertive.

Lily – It's funny because I find myself saying 'ok how am I going to react to this, passive, aggressive or assertive?' and I think that in YCI all the time.

Cole- So are you able to kind of model the assertive leadership style?

Lily- Well, yes and no. When I respond assertively then they respond in a very condescending way or some way that makes me look like I'm a pushover or I'm stupid or a namby-pamby. So it's frustrating that they can't be like that themselves.

Cole- So how do we create that then or how does that get created? Is it personal responsibility or is it rules and structures, having Const. Brookes as your dad [laughter]. I'm curious how being assertive looks like for women specifically?

Lily – You get called a bitch.

Kyla – I get called a bitch all the time [laughter]. Not to my face, but people are probably saying 'wow, Kyla's acting like a bitch and she's not letting us talk.'

Lily- Oh yeah, I'm sure half the kids in our YCI club hate me, like Cycle for Change [a fundraiser], I hunt people down and say 'why haven't you done this?'

Kyla – But then if you're nice nothing gets done.

Lily- Then nothing happens.

Kyla- I don't know, at this point, I don't really care, I just want to get things done and if I have to push some people's buttons then I'm ok with that because I know in the end the outcome will be pretty good for the project that we are doing. This may

sound bitchy right now but at times I really don't care anymore, I'm kind of over what people think of me in that aspect.

Tash – It's the project that is the most important thing. Also it seems like people just call slut, whore, bitch, whatever just for any tiny reason all the time.

Lily– Yeah if you have big boobs, you're a whore.

Kyla- But I can't help it [laughter].

Cole- Then I must be a virgin, that's all I can say [laughter].

Tash – So you can try and stop it, but you're only one person, and it doesn't really work and say something about it or you can just roll with it and not care what others think of you.

Cole- And then be called a bitch of course for being assertive about the situation [laughter].

These consultants were acutely aware that despite their leadership potential, as young women they were always suspect and that their actions considered “bitchy.”

Participation in YCI is also risky for boys:

Tash - I don't know a single guy in my school who would want to, who would feel for it, and want to put in the effort to make a difference in this area. So, yeah, it's pretty discouraging, I think it is to do with, well, I don't know, Oak Bay is a bit of a different story cause there's a lot of, I mean there is in every high school, but there's a lot of peer pressure on the guys, I guess, to be a certain way.

Lily – To not look like homos.

Kyla – Go barbs! [the name of the Rugby team, said sarcastically]

The concept of care, social justice, and “soft” clubs, then, is constructed as a female domain in the high school. This was particularly risky for Sebastian, who is a dancer and fastidious regarding his hair. As a colleague pointed out, it may have been *less* risky for him to attend YCI since homophobic harassment was the norm since elementary school. For example, he says:

Well, just as a teenager and developing my sexuality, going to YCI I think made me more open minded and not have the usual kind of high school fears like what if I'm gay. Going to YCI and exploring that, it just makes it a lot easier and less scary because in going to YCI you learn to not have the usual bad connotations attached to homosexuality, you know? Young people develop fear and are scared socially because of that, going to YCI, for me anyway, eliminated that aspect of fear.

At the same time, he was concerned with being perceived as an “asshole” taking a YCI leadership role, saying, *“it's really hard trying to boss around 30 students saying 'you have to be here, I need your deposit and sign this form.' You don't want to be an asshole and you don't want to accept the responsibility of being a teacher, so it is nice to have someone who is used to that.”* Underlying all these fears of being a bitch or an asshole speaks to power, and who is credited power in high school settings, and how that is constructed and maintained through hierarchy and punishment for transgression.

Despite being aware of how they were pejoratively cast for their leadership attempts, the consultants perpetrated their own gendered stereotypes. I confess that I was surprised at how they spoke about women older than themselves, and how

their descriptions were steeped in sexist binary of motherhood and ageism, not to mention essentialist notions of boyhood:

Lily - Tonight I get to have dinner with my boyfriend and his scary mom.

Kyla – Scary moms are the worst.

Lily – She’s really scary.

Kyla – I’ve only met one scary mom and it actually shook me to the core [laughs].

Kyla then describes a story where she and a friend went to pick up a friend.

However, due to having a N license, this would result in too many people in the car.

Although the youth assured me that this rule gets broken “all the time,” the mother of the friend is actually training to be a police officer. As such, she decided to lend her own car to circumnavigate this legal issue:

Angelica – My friend calls and says ‘so my mom is lending me her car’ because his mom has a Lexus that she doesn’t really like to lend to A cause A is quite the crazy driver, it’s not like he crashes into things but he just likes to speed and go fast.

Angelica- He’s irrational.

Lily – He’s a boy driver.

Kyla – He’s a boy. Anyway, I met his mom. She’s like the ultimate ice queen, she’s nice and she’s really polite but there’s no warmth. You know when you meet moms they’re really nice and they’re just like ‘oh it’s very nice to meet you.’ She was very polite, there was just no warmth and it was just very icy. It’s the only scary mom I’ve met. I’ve never had issues with moms, except A’s. So his mom is scary too?

Lily – She is scary, she’s Italian and in Italy it’s the big thing, people live at home until they’re 20 and their mom looks after them. She likes me, she just doesn’t like

that [her son] now has a girlfriend. Plus she's really scary looking, she's really white and then she has white hair, so she's just really white and scary looking.

When I read this part of the transcript, I felt I was being inscribed by fairy tale discourse – ice queens versus the young princesses. It is interesting to note that gender is not explicitly addressed at YCI as its own presentation. It is interwoven through my presentation on homophobia and no doubt mentioned when speaking to what happened to Reena Virk. Although the consultants spoke to how they “hated” the double standards applied to young people regarding sexuality (i.e. he’s a stud, she’s a slut), they reproduced sexist ideas in their more casual conversations such as above. Yet, when Lily spoke of her grandmother involved in the civil rights movement, there was no taint of “icy” or “scary.” She recognized that her grandmother had to make choices that were not always popular, especially as a White female Quaker:

Lily –She was the head of the church for Quakers, and that was a big deal, and she went through a lot to get there. That's why I think she is the definition because she struggled a lot and she was telling me a few weeks ago about how her being a social activist, she's had to live with a lot of guilt because she inadvertently responsible for the death of her eldest son's best friend. What happened was she was involved with the women's group for peace and freedom and the community they lived in was an intentional community, so that means everybody was welcome and there's different religions and stuff. And my uncle David, his best friend Jeff Taylor, they were like thirteen, fourteen and Jeff was in Boy Scouts and one night the Boy Scouts went to a rally with the KKK and brothers of freedom which is a big

thing in the States. It was a protest against my grandmother, because she was speaking out against division between colour and equality and it was a protest against her. Jeff did not attend and then the next week, his Scout leader took him out back and said 'you're not worthy to be a Scout' and ripped all his badges off him and sent him home. Because of that Jeff went home and killed himself.

Cole- Oh my god [crying].

Lily – So she decided after that that they needed to move away from the States because she was putting other people at risk by speaking out for herself. So she really went through a lot with that and really having to come to terms with her speaking out for other people killed somebody; she didn't kill Jeff but because of what she believed in Jeff died. So she has had to deal with that her whole life but even though she did that she kept fighting for things. I just met Jeff's younger sister and she just wrote a book about it.

Cole- Wow.

Tash – What's the name of the book?

Lily – It is the Plain Language of Love and Loss: A Quaker Memoir.

Cole- So the guilt that you describe with your grandmother had to carry, and although that story is heartbreaking, do you think that guilt is a necessity that comes with acting for social justice?

Lily -I think so because after a certain point you kind of have to say yes, I'm probably hurting people by stating my views, but if I don't state my views what's going to happen to everybody else you know? Or what's going to happen to that minority or that ethnic group?

Angelica- You have to look at the bigger picture, eh?

Lily – And they also had to move to Canada because like she was getting death threats from the KKK and so was her family and she just felt like she couldn't live in that neighborhood anymore, because it was an intentional community of all these peaceful, kind people and she didn't want to put them at risk.

Here we have a young woman, ambitious and high achieving, from a historical line of resistance, yet employing the same sexist attitudes of scary moms that would have hindered her much loved grandmother. After hearing many stories of her grandmother, I was thrilled that she attended the art exhibit and Lily was nothing but the ideal granddaughter at this event- getting her grandmother a snack and so forth. These are some of the contradictions I am left reeling with.

Horizontal violence

Nursing literature perhaps has the longest and most published record of what they term “horizontal violence” (Curtisu, Ball, & Kirkham, 2006; Farrell, 1997, 2001; Lerper, 2005; Longo & Sherman, 2007; Marshelle, 2007; McKenna, Smith, Poole, & Coverdale, 2003; Roberts, Demarco, & Griffin, 2009; Rocker, 2008 to name some). What is horizontal violence?

According to Duffy (1995, p. 9), horizontal violence refers to 'overt and covert non-physical hostility, such as, criticism, sabotage, undermining, infighting, scapegoating and bickering'. Duffy (1995 p. 16) suggests that 'the nursing world is rife with aggressive and destructive behaviours' propagated by nurses on nurses. It is contended that, because nurses are dominated (and, by implication, oppressed) by a patriarchal system headed

by doctors, male administrators, and marginalized nurse leaders, nurses lower down the hierarchy resort to aggression amongst themselves. (as quoted in Farrell, 1997, p.502)

I was first introduced to this concept when wondering why those who identify as LGBTTIQQ bully one another. I was prompted to revisit this area when listening to consultants speak to what happens outside of camp as they spoke of stereotypical teenage exclusions and inclusions, and at times, a grasping for elusive power. I was mindful that I could easily assign a mentality of “boys will be boys” or other gender-centric assumptions. I could have assumed that the “glow” of camp fades into the inevitable structure of public education. Yet, I think it is important to make explicit the power arrangements that shift and stutter in various contexts and not relegate these to some exclusive domain of adolescence. At the same time, this conception of horizontal implies a level playing field, where instigators and victims are somehow equal. However, by virtue of participation in YCI, this violence was evident:

Lily- What happened to me is that at our YCI club we run on a system of two heads and they work in tandem together and then we don't have a vice president or whatever and you're supposed to share the power; and one head is Angelica and there's another one. It was fine at the start of the year and then what happened was Angelica was getting completely steamrolled by the other head of the club and then so...

Kyla – and this girl, she is quite...

Lily- she is quite something.

Kyla – She’s very take the bull by the horns, she’s very...

Lily- she’s very involved and she’s very keen but she talks down to you even though you are more experienced than her, have been in the club longer like myself and she talks down to us all the time. We’ve been in the YCI since grade eight, we ran the club for two years on our own, and took kids to camp twice on our own and everything like that. There’s a lot of bickering that goes on between her and myself and Angelica because she totally makes decisions on her own and does not follow the process of democracy that we have set up for the club, doesn’t follow the process that if there are two heads of the club both heads must approve. So right before camp, Paul emailed Mr.X, and said can you pick two students to go with the rest of the girls from EYCI? Angelica and I thought that’s cool, Mr X is probably going to pick some good people. He works in the resource centre and stuff and he’s one of the counselors and he picks these two friends who are best friends of X, Y, & Z. Angelica and myself and our sponsor teacher are standing in the classroom giving them the forms and she is storming in and ‘I need to talk to you right now’ and like drags us all out and is like ‘they’re not allowed to go, they’re not involved with the club and blah, blah, blah, they can’t go’ and then we’re like ‘ah, ok,’ and we just kind of leave. Then I am in the next class and Mr X comes and pulls me out and starts doing this big lecture on how I am being exclusive and how I am excluding people. It was like she threw me under the bus and all sorts of things. Then the other day it was really, really bizarre my boyfriend comes to me, he’s in a class with her called integrated studies which is where you do a big, big project and then present an hour long presentation on it. So her big project was the YCI

conference and her presentation for ½ an hour she spoke about how Angelica and I have been the biggest inspiration to her and are the best leaders in the school and I thought he was joking at first because she acts like she hates me. So for us there's a lot of drama in our club and so because of that it was just really frustrating to go to camp because of what had happened before and because I got thrown under the bus and like blamed for all sorts of things that I had absolutely nothing to do with. It's just a lot of frustration.

The “drama” the consultants describe does not reflect the YCI mantra of passive, assertive or aggressive. But neither does democracy imply equality. For example, Makler (2000) reflects that, “there also is disagreement about whether justice ought to be equated with fairness, and whether fairness should be regarded as a principle to which we owe allegiance as a duty (the position expounded by Kant). Carole Gilligan, Nel Noddings, and others challenged the equation of justice with fairness as a male construct, rather than a universally acceptable definition of justice” (p.216). And while I do have reservations regarding both aforementioned feminist theorists in terms of promoting essentialism, what consultants described as power struggles and censorship does reflect a patriarchal hierarchy. So I am left wondering what harm is incurred in the name of forwarding social justice projects? Despite consultants’ own experiences being silenced by adults and peers, how do they assume immunity to the same under the banner of social justice? There were moments when I thought “these kids are just plain mean to others.” And as mentioned previously, they know when they transcended an unspoken YCI rule when hateful comments are prefaced with “*I know it sounds bad*” or “*I know I*

shouldn't say this because I do YCI." So how much of YCI is the acquisition of diversity language so readily available in multicultural provincial curriculum initiatives? I am also curious given that the consultants were diverse in their sexual orientation, ethnic heritage and faiths; I was also curious how dominant discourses leaked out. At the same time, Sebastian was able to articulate some of this learning and change how he responded to homophobic remarks:

I was always bullied 'hey faggot' and stuff like that. It was sad for me but I think it made me stronger, able to deal with more things in high school. That continued right up until high school but when high school came I was a bit more...I had something to say back to them usually and it usually would only happen once that someone would say that to me. It's unfortunate that it got a little bit nasty when someone would say something like that to me, but through YCI I learned that's not something to do. I wouldn't say 'I'm not gay' and scream at them or something, I just would be angry that they were attacking me- not that they were calling me gay, because if someone was to call me gay, like through high school and YCI I realized that I wouldn't take that as an insult. But it is just the fact that they use that to seek to harm me - want to use that as a weapon and so that really upset me.

Sebastian also learned that conflict can be productive, and not get you "thrown under the bus" as Lily would say. It is perhaps because he has gone to camp the most times out of all my consultants, and because of this he can reflect on a longer trajectory of his becoming through YCI that he can articulate this:

YCI gives you that tool set and then you have that and you don't need to worry about it anymore, so less conflict definitely because of YCI. Because if someone

made a racist comment or someone heard a racist comment in the halls at school, if they go to YCI, generally I think, my experience and hearing from other people, they would address that, they would be angry about that and they'd address that and that might cause conflict but in the end it resolves more, I think.

Fractal emergence

Fendler (1998) comments:

Critical pedagogies acknowledge the social aspects of educated subjectivity, and the critical response often has been to insert a (semi) autonomous or resisting subject. The educated subject of most critical pedagogies is identified on the basis of a desire for social justice and a moral commitment to democracy; it is a subject position that implies the mutual identification of social goals and subjective desires. (p. 55)

Many consultants stand in opposition to many of their peers in discussion and action surrounding social justice. For example, Kyla says:

I can't vent this [discussion of YCI and school politics] to my friends. It's not that they don't support it but we just don't talk about it. They're like 'oh Kyla's social justice thing.' We don't talk about it, I don't know if they don't support it, but I don't really care, it's my thing and I don't really want to force them into it. So I can't vent it to them, and I can only vent so much to my mom because she's never been [to camp], I mean she's heard everything from since I was 15 but it only goes so far, my mom doesn't really understand all the logistics, so it's great when Lily and I get together because she understands.

At the same time, how consultants spoke was very similar, a sense of picking up YCI language. Despite being introduced to a spectrum of diversity issues at the camp, localized YCI clubs would focus on one aspect that resonated. While I was taking a “break” from my analysis, I watched a video that focused on the fractal ecosystem of the red wood forest in Oregon

(http://www.ted.com/talks/richard_preston_on_the_giant_trees.html). Given I was wrestling with Deleuzian concepts of rhizomes, this was a refreshing discovery as essentially the red woods produce similar eco-systems that are concurrently similar yet individual; what is known as reiteration. Although cautioned not to use “organic” metaphors with which to describe my research, it is analogous to how discourse is circulated, adapted and like collage, built upon with prior images and words. This results in fractal self-similarity. Briggs (1992) reflects:

In art, self-similarity- which can come in infinite variety – is not created by a slavish permutation of some form at different scales. Rather, it is closer to the self-similarity seen when we compare a human hand to a hummingbird’s wing to a shark’s fin, and to a branch of a tree. It is the artist’s task to find and express this significant relation between forms and qualities that are simultaneously self-similar and self-different so as to create an artwork that allows us to glimpse the holistic nature of our universe and our being in it.

(p.30)

If we consider this research project as an off shoot of YCI, it can be seen where we create our own eco-system, with different elements and exposing ourselves to different environmental considerations. An interesting example of this was when

Lily and Kyla produced two separate works for separate questions and used similar brush strokes, etc., to visually narrate their answer. As Briggs (1992) asks, “how could systems that are essentially chaotic possess self-similarity on various scales?” (p.23) and my interests were peaked in how consultants spoke to issues of change and social justice in reference to the self becomings.

Although all consultants were heavily involved in group initiatives, their explanations were steeped in individualistic and developmentalist discourses. When we were discussing the consequences of change, for example, the consultants reflected:

Cole- So, we're just talking about ideas about [Angelica's] picture, and how people can get stuck in life and what keeps them stuck in a place of ignorance and fear, and [the question of] is it age specific. Angelica, can you just repeat what you just said about older people getting stuck?

Angelica- You could definitely go through periods of your life where you are stuck, you are not changing, you are not growing, you are just doing the same old thing, same patterns.

Lily – I think also other people can make you stuck, like other people can make you think you're supposed to behave a certain way.

Cole- Can you say more about that?

Lily- It's like how other people project things onto you and you're kind of stuck with that because you know if you change – you could hurt them, or upset them or make them angry and then you can't change for fear of hurting others.

Angelica – Like with relationships?

Lily – Yes.

Cole- Ok, note to the recorder she is nodding vigorously, so can you talk more about that?

Angelica – You just get to a certain place where you feel just I don't know, stuck, I guess, and just what Lily said.

Cole- Can other people keep us stuck, I don't know if they can? So, if other people can keep us stuck...That is what you are saying?

Tash – Unless you're in an extreme situation, like life or death kind of situation, in everyday life you're essentially the only person who can keep yourself stuck, you're the boss of you. You are your own person, but definitely media, society, friends, peer pressure, it all influences you and those are things that can keep you stuck.

Angelica- But what if you're changing and people around you aren't? You kind of feel out of place.

Lily- You feel kind of badly that you are upsetting them; you know making them feel uncomfortable because suddenly you're different.

Angelica- Yes.

Tash- Personally, I have been dealing with that most of my life because I tend to be a lot more mature than people my age and I've always had a hard time relating to them. My friends have always been older than me, but I've never actually felt guilty about that, like 'oh now I'm upsetting them.' I learned to deal with it and accept the fact that I am just in a different place than they are and vice versa and there's nothing either of us should feel guilty about, you just have to accept it and do the best you can, do what feels right for you.

Cole– Ok, that’s one perspective of this, but Lily can you think of a specific example related to your comment?

Lily –I guess the best personal example for me was last year, I was dating this person for about nine months and we were together a long time then we were separated over March break – I came back and I realized I wasn’t happy and basically when I broke up with him a whole group of friends with the exception of two or three people, for them it was the end of the world. I was now Godzilla, I was the she-bitch and all sorts of awful things because I had broken up with him. Changed my mind and broke up with him and changed how I felt. I could’ve of avoided being completely alienated from an entire group of people, just by you know, staying the same and being stuck and I would have saved myself and saved them from that whole thing. But because I did change, I ended up dropping out of the educational program I was in because I had no friends and class was so hard to go to everyday. I was off by myself sitting in corner and no one would talk to me, and they would say rude things to me, things like that, so I changed and was so much happier for it, but because of it they made my life awful.

Bloustien (2003) reminds us that “identity refuses to be static so we attempt to contain something that is continually in the process of *becoming*, continually in flux” (p.32, emphasis in original). As the consultants reflect above, this can be tricky in terms of navigating social terrains. How can one embrace a becoming when others expect you to stay the same? How can we possibly become something outside of inscriptions?

Clearly, the above conversation brings to the surface many tensions regarding the relational constraints and consequences of self evolutions and consultants' becomings. While Tash speaks to being your own "boss," others speak to the violence that can trigger. I would argue that Tash is inscribed by a privileged, Western notion of individualism, and I concur with Gergen (2006) who says:

As many argue, there is [a] substantial dark side to constructing a world of individual agents. When we make a fundamental distinction between self and other, we create a world of distances: me here and you there. We come to understand ourselves as basically alone and alienated. We come to prize autonomy –becoming a 'self made man,' who 'does it my way.' To be dependent is a sign of weakness and incapacity. To understand the world as constituted by separate individuals is also to court distrust; after all, one never has access to the private thoughts of others. And if alienated and distrustful, what is more appropriate than 'taking care of number one?' Self gain becomes an unmitigated virtue...loyalty, commitment, and community are all thrown into question, as all may potentially interfere with 'self-realization.' Such are the views that now circulate widely though the culture. We may not wish to abandon the tradition of individual selves, but constructionism invites us to explore and create alternatives. (p.25)

I doubt that Tash implied any vigilante attitude, but it was interesting as the youngest, she insisted that unless it was a life or death situation, choice and change rested on the individual. Lily and Angelica, on the other hand, speak more to

gendered expectations of women in relationships. In fact, Lily and Angelica's comments regarding relationships reminded me of an ethic of care perspective.

Noddings (1984) comments:

How can I meet the endless demands of caring? Here, interestingly, standards of behavior, of custom, come to my rescue. While we often suppose that rules of behavior are laid down for the benefit of the cared-for- that is, for others- it is clear that rules of behavior make it easier for those- who-would-care to fulfill the minimum requirements of caring. So long as I behave according the general rules of the group I find myself in (and so long as those rules are not somehow offensive themselves), I am not likely to hurt those around me. But as we noted earlier, if I behave consistently and automatically by rule, I cannot be said to care. My interest seems to be focused on obtaining credit for caring. I want to be considered a 'polite' person. Thus while the rules are instituted for the sake of gentle and pleasant interpersonal relations, and they are an enormous boon to the one- caring whose energies are, after all, finite, I must know when to abandon the rules and receive the cared-for directly. The rules of general conduct are accepted by one who is prepared to care out of regard for others but also in recognition of their time and energy saving usefulness. (p.51-52).

Although none of my consultants were even born when Noddings was writing, the description of women being more concerned with relationships and denying, at times, their own wish for change to accommodate others, still perseveres. And although Lily did make a decision in the end, it was not without much pain and

ostrasization. While none of the consultants reflected that change was easy, these examples speak to how change at the level of social justice can be attained.

Especially if, as Noddings assumes, “the rules” will guide us.

This brings us to considering self future conceptions of the consultants.



Dream in This Space

Do Not Dream in This Space

Chapter VII – Conceptualizing future selves

And I hear you say, as I fade away...

We don't have to wait till tomorrow

Won't be around, Won't be around, Won't be around...

(Mayer, 2008, track 7)

In many respects, the data collection could have easily ended with a qualitative spin of pre and post visual narrations of consultants' relationship to themselves and YCI. However, a curiosity lay within me as to what could be imagined for the future. Although no longitudinal studies have yet been conducted with YCI, anecdotal stories from others about seminal learning communities have emerged over the course of the research. For example, Daniel Scott speaks to the high rate of environmentally engaged young adults who all happened to participate in an alternative curriculum as adolescents (personal communication, November 18th, 2009). Artz (2010) works with young adults crediting particular educational opportunities outside mainstream public education as contributing young women's sense of self. These examples, however, are retrospective. While there is merit in looking back, as I asked my consultants to do in this research inquiry, there are also unarticulated possibilities concerning the future. I also considered this question counter-hegemonic in that many of the youth consultants described current pressures to define their future selves to appease parents and teachers, especially in relation to choice of university and career. For example, Lily describes some of these pressures as experienced by one of her friends:

Lily - There is this friend of mine and she's just burned out, she crashed and she's depressed, and she's having sleeping and anxiety problems and it's freaking me out. She's not coming to school and not doing anything. We're both in an academic excellence program at our school and she's still in it, but I dropped out because I got really angry when a teacher told me an 85% on my physics test was not sufficient.

Tash- Oh my god

Lily - An 85 is above average and I thought get over it, it's a good mark! But it's awful for her because everyday she's constantly freaking out because she doesn't have a 90%, she doesn't have 99 % and – she just kind of runs herself ragged and now she's to the point where she's actually sick and not mentally stable in the slightest. You could see it coming because so many people- her teachers and her family- telling her you need to this, you need to do 100% in everything, you need to be involved with everything and you can't say no and it's just sad because there is no way out other than your body just saying no and quitting on you. In my family there is this constant dialogue between my mother and I - I want to become a paramedic and she says she will not support me in being a paramedic; she's terrified about that happening to me.

Tash – Terrified of what?

Lily – Of that happening to me, running ragged just trying to achieve and achieve and achieve and she's constantly trying to tell me, don't be a paramedic, I don't want you to do that, I will pay for art school and usually it is the other way around, you know – I just find it so weird, but it's what I want to do.

Tash – I wish I had your problem! ‘You want to be an artist? Hope you enjoy starving!’

Angelica stood out of the crowd, stating she was “*too unmotivated to stress out*” about these types of conversations, yet at the same time, was experiencing pressure to re-write her SAT’s. She was more than willing to proffer her thoughts on others, however:

Angelica- Can I give you some advice?

Tash – Yes.

Angelica - Totally follow your dream. I know you really want to do that [attend United World College], but don’t be ‘this is what I am going to do with my future’ and then if you don’t get in be totally clueless. Create an alternative plan. And if also you are already this stressed out you’re only grade ten, right? It’s just going to get worse.

There appeared to be more certainty in not what they would be, but who they would be in relation to their YCI experience and social justice. At the same time, I wondered during this particular focus group if I had not inadvertently introduced that same anxiety amongst consultants as other adults in their lives had, stating: “*I stepped back and thought about the question, too, because I thought let’s just ask the most ambiguous, existential crisis inducing question, like who are you going to be, right? [laughter]*” However, perhaps it was my own future anxiety, as consultants produced thoughtful and self reflective work. Angelica submitted this piece to visually narrate her future self:



Figure 25 – Angelica Mug Shot (photography).

Angelica describes her work as follows:

Ok, so this is what I did and it's basically a mug shot and it represents in my life. I want to try and make the world a more peaceful place and fight for freedom and just pursue that throughout my life, even if I don't end up being a UN diplomat or something like that. I still want to be peaceful and go to protests. I don't know what scale it will end up on the mug shots basically represent I will keep doing this even if you lock me up and take everything from me, I will still have this and I'll still keep trying.

Although others in the focus group thought this self-portrait was “very real” for Angelica’s propensity for being “mischievous,” I wanted to hear more:

Cole -So, do you think it will be turbulent down the road, then, in terms of your saying even if they lock me up and take everything away I will persevere?

A- No, I m not saying I want to go out and do crazy protests and civil disobedience and get arrested and stuff, I'm not saying that, or that I see myself being in jail or anything like that. It could happen, but no, it's just to represent that nobody can take that away from me.

Cole- So how do you anticipate how that will be pursued? What avenues?

Angelica - Well, [pause] I guess just constantly being aware of what's going on in the world and doing things to help the community. But maybe also in college studying something like peace and conflict studies or just stuff like that and majoring in it if that's what I decide to do and going into a career path that way. But if not, just remaining peaceful in my life and through my actions.

Her conception of a peaceful future, while abstract, speaks to both the personal (community actions, awareness, and so forth) but also structural (field of study).

What is interesting to me is her conceptualization that she would not acquiesce in her values, and there appeared to be little evaluation of her privilege in relation to this capacity. I pressed for more concrete examples to support the concept of “a peaceful life”:

Cole- So when you are talking about living a peaceful life and this question is open to anybody, but what does it mean to live a peaceful life?

Angelica- I think just through your general personality and attitude and when people around you are angry or whatever you don't get involved in it, I guess, try not to be aggressive in your actions.

As the reader may have noticed, the references to passive, aggressive, and assertive thread through the consultants' reflections on actions. Yet, her comment "don't get involved," to me, does not represent a working understanding of assertive means of addressing conflict. Indeed, there appeared to a reluctance to speak to conflict openly, as consultants referred to it as "drama" in their clubs. And although they received intervention skits and role plays at YCI, these were not mentioned in any great detail as transformative learning moments. I wonder, then, if the responsibility of the facilitator is to open spaces for personal stories alongside the skills to be assertive in a variety of contexts. In this sense, a more praxis focused orientation may be of benefit.

Cole- When I asked you guys which one [intervention] is best and you said assertive, right? And you said that is really hard because I've never seen it done in action. It got me thinking well, how then do we strive to meet ideals if we have never seen them demonstrated?

Lily – Right after we were talking about that actually we had a committee meeting and [Constable] Paul Brookes was there and he had his two small children, I guess they're not that small, they're what?

Kyla – Oh they're small, x is still like three or four.

L – Three or four and the other one is eight or nine so they're fairly small, and as we were leaving they were getting into their mini-van and I remember one of his kids did something to tick the other one off and he turned around and said to them, 'how are you going act? Are you going to be passive, assertive, or aggressive [laughter]?' And I thought holy cow, oh my goodness, Paul is such a cop!

[laughter] But I think it was just really cool he was reinforcing how to act in a situation where someone is being an aggressor towards you.

Cole- So what happened? I'm curious.

Lily – One kid was punching the other one or doing something aggressive and they were crying and Paul said, ‘well, how are you going to act? Are you going to be passive, aggressive or assertive?’ and explained it a little bit.

Kyla – That’s pretty big for a three year old.

Cole- I was just going to say [laughter] the concept of choice, like we have a choice in terms of how we act, but also in how we re-act.

Angelica- Because most kids just get upset and throw fits and stuff, you know? Like, [laughs] No one told me that [concept of choice].

Tash – It makes you wonder at what point you really become conscious of having a choice in that situation. I don’t know how far back I can remember. I think back now on the first time I made a decision in a situation like that, and I don’t really remember, but, I don’t. Can anyone else?

Angelica- No.

Lily- No.

Cole- In grade one we had to do drawings of what we wanted to be when we grew up so I drew myself as an astronaut, I wanted to be an astronaut, until I failed math a few times, not to mention science, but anyways... Jamie Blower, he looked at my picture and said well you can’t be an astronaut, and I said why not? And he said because girls can’t be astronauts and I punched in the arm [laughter].

Angelica- I would have punched him in the face.

Cole - But I was so upset at him for that, because I knew it was wrong but I couldn't articulate the sexism behind the statement, right? Or, you know, how many people don't think they have a voice, conversely, right?

Tash- That's the other side of it.

In this exchange, the consultants are raising questions regarding the ability of young children to consider their choices in any given situation, and while they admire Paul's congruence as a facilitator and a parent, they cannot recall an initial situation where they were demanded the same. This is similar to Sebastian's conflict that some kids may just be too young to participate in YCI:

Sebastian - There was always grade eight's up until this year but I just think that from my experience going for a few years where there were twenty grade eight's and the level of discussions and the level of problems just circulating around, like a maturity level? It took away from the camp, so I just think in general when you're younger a lot of the issues are a bit too mature to deal with,[but]it doesn't have to be grade eights, it could be a grade ten with just a different mind set, you know, who hasn't matured enough, who deals with it in different ways than someone who was more mature. They act or just kind of switch off, too much for them to handle, so there wasn't as much quality.

Cole- But that really is a big question for me, and something I really struggle with in terms of anti homophobia work because you are trying to explain to people well, younger kids actually get this at a more basic level. Have you ever seen It's Elementary, the documentary?²² It shows these little kids talking about gay and lesbian families- 'like what's the big whoop,' that's an actual quote from the movie,

²² Readers are directed to <http://groundspark.org/our-films-and-campaigns/elementary>.

right? And they don't get the political implications, they don't get the historical context necessarily, but they're just ok with it. On the one hand I'm struggling with shouldn't education around social issues start earlier, but what you're describing too is that learning can't take place if you're in an environment where you're distracted by acting out behaviours and immaturity, so how do you achieve balance?

Sebastian - The committee at the time, we had a talk about it and said why don't we do middle school conferences? We don't have to cut them out; we don't actually have to ignore them. Cater specifically to grade eight's, make sure you know it's still relevant to them and they would absorb it more easily and just direct it right at them. I think everyone thought that was the perfect way. I really valued the camp going as a grade eight, it was really at a time when I was deciding what to think about people, you know. I could have developed prejudices; I could have generally been pretty set in my mind set. I'm open to change and discussion and everything, but firm in my values, so I kind of worry if I got in my head when I was younger certain values, like what I would call values, like homosexuality is wrong, if I got that in my head, I would have stuck with that and been firm in convictions all through high school, so I'm really glad I was set straight [at YCI].

So, who the consultants envisioned themselves to be was clearly related to their experiences as younger people and the activities that they had been exposed to. But who is to say that they fit their own definition of "mature"? And how can maturity even be measured if the consultants self segregate based on grade? Ageism is a thread that weaves throughout without much comment or awareness.

For example, unlike xenophobic comments regarding Americans, no consultant prefaced their comments regarding age as “I know I shouldn’t say this because I do YCI but...”

Lily based her visual narration of the future based on a series of photographs from a past trip and prior experiences. These were presented as postcards, which was influenced by her admiration for www.postsecret.com. She also comments that:

I was originally going to do a slide show and then I thought about post secret and how post cards are such an interesting thing, because it’s not enough space for a letter, but it’s not just a picture. I just looked at the pictures and did a Quaker-ly thing and just kind of letting them speak to me, letting it come out from sitting with it in silence and stuff.

Cole- That’s a very cool description,

Lily – It’s just kind of what Quakers do. Basically what Quakerism is letting, well, they say God talked to you though the silence but they also use the light, goodness, the light, etc. You just let it come through the silence, instead of praying to God, you let god speak to you, and so I just let the pictures speak to me.

Cole - You mention it’s not just a picture but not enough room for a letter, so...

Lily – with postcards, because they’re so small when you send them to people, usually they’re pretty expensive to send depending on where you are sending them from and then you just have to be really selective about what you say because you don’t have very much room.

In total, Lily created 20 postcards (see Appendix B). Below is the inspiration for the title of our public art exhibition:

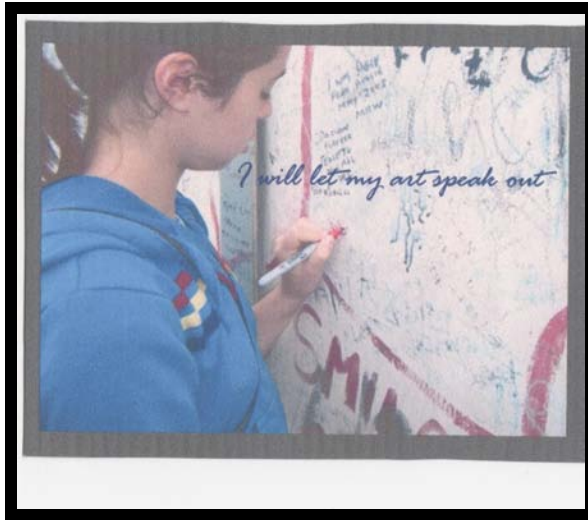


Figure 26 – Lily’s *I will let my art speak* (photography and ink on paper).

When I opened the conversation to others, consultants agreed that not only was the concept interesting, but it captured a sense of the future that was not based only on material identity or gain. Angelica was especially, and uncharacteristically verbose:

Angelica - I think it's cool because it's not just 'oh I want to be this when I grow up, I want to have this personality', it's like everything that is Lily [laughter]. It's more important things, it's not like I want to work doing this, I want to travel, I want to get married. It's about who she wants to become as a person, and it's based on her life, experiences she has had and what she wants to grow from and what parts of her life she loves and I think it's cool. It's also just your values and it's not something where you have to wake up tomorrow and be able to do all these things, it's like throughout the course of your life, to try and become that.

Tash also spoke to carrying forth, and a sense of becoming her full self in the future. Recall her painting:



Figure 27 – Tash *Untitled* (acrylic and photography on canvas).

Further comments she made in reference to this work include:

These [cut out people] over here are going to be representing community and it's going to be cool and then here [above fist] is a picture of me. I always felt and knew that I wanted to make a difference in the world when I grew up, that I wanted to stand for social justice. Since YCI, of all the issues out there, fighting discrimination has become my biggest passion. That is what this [fist] is for, it's both to represent racism because you know whatever skin colour, all the colours of the rainbow but also fighting homophobia and also it's symbolic. The symbol of the fist I think was first used as a logo by the Black Panther party. It's just fighting for justice and against discrimination in the future. This [top left] is more than

anything a general artsy corner I just sort of beginning of the painting just having fun and sort of experimenting with scratch lines and things like that but it turned into the olive branch of peace. Then this is me blowing a dandelion and this is sort of like metaphor for what I see myself in the future given my experience with YCI which was the question and the answer above anything else is part of something so much bigger than I am. So I'm just one of the seeds and this is sort of a general good will dandelion and all the seeds are being blown about and all sort of good things are being spread through the world and these are just the good things I would be working with in my future, peace and because of YCI, having strong bonds and good relationships.

Her choice of metaphor, however, precludes the idea that dandelions are perceived as weeds to many, despite their medicinal properties. Wooldridge (1996) writes:

In her poem 'Back to Arcadia,' my friend Cassandra Sagan Bell tells me how, when she was a child, she blew dandelion seeds all over her neighbors' perfect suburban lawns. 'I loved those weeds/with their proud yellow smiles,' she writes, closing her poem, 'And me?/I'm still spreading wild things/with every breath'. (p. 86)

When I asked the consultants how it was that their visual narrations, although created individually, held a fractal self-similarity, they replied:

Angelica - I think that it [YCI] speaks to definitely more to who you really are than what you want to do. YCI is more focused more on things like personal qualities and attributes. It doesn't generalize people, you know what I mean? It doesn't

judge people based on looking at them and what they look like and what they do but it teaches you to go beyond that.

Tash – It’s a real developmental experience.

Not all consultants were romantic about the future, or the “insurance” YCI provided in ensuring they would continue to be ideal/ized social activists.

Cole-And so obviously you anticipate you will be able to sustain that kind of going beyond the surface kind of stuff?

Kyla – That’s the future, you don’t know what’s going to come. Like Michael Jackson died, who would have thought? I’m sorry, but who knows what’s going to come? We might have some traumatic experience that will make me hate all of this, you don’t know, it’s just one of those things. I was thinking actually for a project, ‘I don’t know’ [laughter] but make it really pretty.

Kyla had not finished her visual narration of the future, although she had some rough ideas based on Oprah’s magazine column “things I know for sure.” Yet, in this small excerpt, she speaks to the uncertainty inherent in predicting the future, and her place within it. Is this because she was in first year university, and in off the record conversations, confused about her major? What is really because of the meaning she made of Michael Jackson dying, someone she considered a hero of popular culture and music? Was it her relationship to John Mayer’s lyrics? Was it representative of her maturity, or indicative of apathy? These remain curiosities given Kayla’s previous piece:



Figure 28 – Kyla Possibilities & Pathways (acrylic on canvas).

I wouldn't say this is after YCI when I was 15, it's more after YCI when I was 16, because when I was 15 camp was so much fun and I got to hang out with my friends and miss school. It was still life altering, but grade eleven it just hit me in the head, like oh my God, I need to do something, that kind of thing. So I guess my theme is all about pathways and my first one [piece] is really boxy and there's no fluidity or pathways I guess you could say.

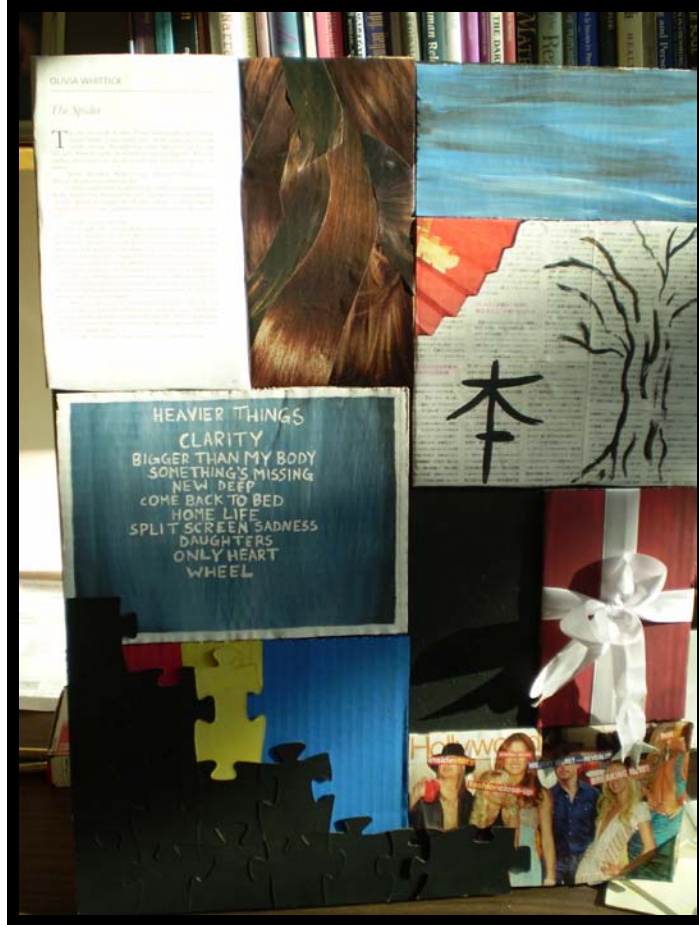


Figure 29 – Kyla’s visual narration of “how did you see yourself prior to YCI”? (mixed media).

*So this second one is more about pathways and a lot of colour. There’s a movie called *Wings of Desire* about an angel falling in love with a human and the angel at the time, he can’t see colour. But as he falls in love and experiences new things and things start to come into focus and he starts seeing everything in colour. So, lots of colour and the other one was like blues and blacks and not a lot of variety in shades and what not? So this one’s just all about pathways and they go all over the place and the possibilities are endless and you can look at it in different ways, right [turns canvas] and you can turn it. My mom loves this one cause you can turn it different ways and you can interpret it any way you want. I made the canvas bigger*

just because new horizons, bigger horizons, so scale is different as well, because things just got bigger and larger and I guess its possibilities and pathways if you wanted to title it.

Most striking is a sense of possibility in their future conceptions. As an adult, I worry about water shortages, poisoning by our exposure to plastics, and a host of other potential calamities. Is their hope to be commended or framed as naiveté? Does it speak to a commitment to changing the course of the planet or mere entitlement? Or does my very questioning and doubt speak to my pessimistic adult persona? Naidus (2009) speaks to this, saying:

So, as artists who engage with the gradually unfolding apocalypse, and teachers who engage with our students, we have a lot on our collective plates, and a sense of urgency about our work. Yes, the socially engaged artists of our parents' generation were also passionate about erasing social injustice and lifting the world out of oppressive systems, but it seems to me that there has never been such a multiplicity of messes facing humankind. Perhaps every generation has this sense of self importance and overwhelming pressure to solve things before it's too late, but I think not.

(p.204)

So maybe there is hope after all.

Chapter VIII – Puttin’ On the Ritz

“I mean on the one hand, I think, how hard can it be to put on an art show? On the other hand...”(Little, in focus group)

Today I finally overcame

tryin' to fit the world inside a picture frame

Maybe I will tell you all about it when I'm in the mood to

lose my way but let me say

You should have seen that sunrise with your own eyes

it brought me back to life

You'll be with me next time I go outside

no more 3x5's

just no more 3x5's

(Mayer, 2001, track 8)

I chose the above lyrics because they resonated deeply for me post data collection. “No more 3x5’s” essentially speaks to the end of documenting life in frames, and opening one’s eyes to what is present. Indeed, when gazing out my back window at the play park next door, I see many parents documenting their children, but at times, not engaging their children without a camera. When I am at social gatherings, I sometimes feel as though they were orchestrated for Facebook, and not the moment. Despite my protests, I am an active producer in my own right. The end of data collection, then, was the end of Team Ranch’s version of 3x5 productions and this raised tensions in and of itself. This chapter will explore three particular areas of tension in relation to this research: collaborative public

presentations, ownership of data in arts-based methodology and the quagmire of telling tales about others.

Collaborative public presentation



Figure 30 – Happy artists at our show.

The culmination of my work with my research consultants was a public art exhibition. This was framed as a celebration of their contributions, but also an opportunity for community interaction with the youth and their work. Since none of us had ever hosted an art show, this ambition, while ultimately successful, was a significant learning curve. In my opinion, it was especially important to plan for this show as this was the testing ground of collaboration. Our conception of what constituted an art show was the first point of negotiation. Kyla, for example, said:

I just keep having images of the Victoria Art Gallery, which I love, it's so tiny. Just really like the classic art show, I just think it's pretty and classy and just you can't go wrong. I just really like art galleries. I went to the Andy Warhol one seven times during the summer and I just loved it, they did a Mao, I guess Andy Warhol did a Mao art, like wall paper and they put it up, it was the coolest thing ever, I can't stop thinking about that right now, it was really cool.

The idea of art show was also influenced by others attending shows in their community, in the following case, one in Fernwood:

Lily- There's all these small details I can think of. Like if we have it in the evening, then we definitely have to have cheese trays. Like that one we went to with my mom and the only thing we did was eat crackers, because it was weird.

Angelica - Yeah, you have to have something...

Lily- for people to nibble on. I find people sometimes more engaged with things if they're eating because then they don't feel so awkward because they have something to do with their hands, you know, and they're not just looking around.

Although it may seem a superficial point to include a conversation about cheese and crackers, it speaks to two points: comfort and perceived professionalism. For example, Angelica was clear that she wanted the show to be perceived at a professional level and “*not just some student show.*”

The selection of place was tied to the above conversation. We had bantered around ideas including the graduate student lounge at the University of Victoria (too expensive) and local coffee shops (too time consuming). When I showed them the “free space” I had found on campus, the response was akin to promising an

adolescent a new car and producing a rust covered Pinto. I was, quite frankly, embarrassed. I was embarrassed because despite comments such as “*we can make it work,*” they would not be proud to hold their show there and this was obvious given their side glances to one another and other non verbal reactions. It was my urgency to host the art show in anticipation of a conference that contributed to my less than collaborative stance at this point. I had become the stereotypical used car salesman trying to convince them I was not selling them a lemon. And they were willing to make lemonade. But I left that meeting feeling terrible, and recognizing my motivations, felt appropriate remorse. Although the explicit agenda has always been to create fodder for a dissertation, I had wanted to believe I was acting in a collaborative spirit that defied an implicit and egotistical academic agenda. How wrong I was. Sadder still was that they would accommodate me, which speaks to unspoken power relations inherent in the overall research project. As Lather (1991) comments:

For those interested in the development of a praxis-orientated research paradigm, a key issue revolves around this central challenge: how to maximize self as mediator between people’s self-understandings and the need for ideology critique and transformational social action *without becoming impositional*. (p.64, emphasis in original)

While my conference deadline was pressing, I also felt an urgency not to lose momentum as we turned into a new school year. I was trying to impose an agenda that met all of Lather’s points within a very narrow range. Again, this reflects a lack of trust on my part of participants to follow through on an idea they were

“*stoked*” and “*excited*” about. In retrospect, had I pushed for the conference deadline, and not collaboration, the preparation for and participation in the show would have been a dismal event for all.

Eventually, we chose to hold the event at the University Club. When I toured the consultants through the Club, my intention was to rent the bar area with its beautiful view, fireplace and cozy couches. But when they saw the Wild Rose Room, exclamations of “*it’s perfect!*” and “*this is awesome*” were endorsed. They wanted something “fancy” but intimate. Clearly this was enthusiastically endorsed by the consultants, but another practitioner questioned the choice of location as elitist, isolating and potentially alienating for those who might benefit from participation. Just when I thought I had done the right thing with my consultants, it began to unravel with colleagues. Complicating my “grand plan” was an incident in which my consultants and I were in the parking lot adjacent to the Human and Social Development building assembling easels together. We were trying various pieces on each to make sure they fit and that the easels were sturdy enough. A young man went by and said “hey, what are you up to?” and I cheekily replied: “An installation art parking lot project.” He thought this was a legitimate response, asked how long we would be showing there and then told us about an art exhibit at the Fine Arts Building the following week, including DJ’s and spoken word. A silence fell over our group. They wanted something cool, I wanted something cool, and what we had planned might fit “classic art show” but it was definitely un-cool in comparison. I told him that we were also preparing for an art show and gave him the pertinent information, including that it was to be held at the University Club.

His incredulous response? “How do you get a gig there?” and I said, “with a cheque book.” He said: “I thought so.” And at that moment, all legitimacy was stripped away, despite my consultants’ beautiful work in the parking lot. I did think “this *should* be our show” and the idea of a parking lot art installation project was not that crazy. But I was painfully aware that I had bought a show about youth activism with my privilege and I wrestle with this. On the one hand, I think it was a generous gesture to host a celebratory event for their works. On the other hand, I was working under real (or perceived) production deadlines. Within all this, I consider the conversation held with consultants regarding the potential show:

Angelica- Are we going to have any kind of security, what if crazy homeless people come and they’re being crazy? It happens.

Lily – No, that’s not going to happen.

Angelica- Oh yeah, it’s at UVic.

Cole- And UVic also has...

Angelica- Because I’ve been in places like...

Lily – Like when we just waltzed into that art opening a few weeks ago with your mom?

Once again, I was struck by these side bars regarding Americans, boy drivers, icy moms and now, the homeless. And as much as I have been critical of their contradictions, it seems I stand accused. For I did not ask: what is a non-stereotypical American? Why are boy drivers reckless, why do we think of “warm” and “icy” moms; what of homeless people attending our art show? What of those without our “wealth” in our own backyard? It was at this moment that I recognized

that many of the consultants worked with high school clubs that promote philanthropic/colonialist practices in “other” countries without considering their own backyard. And I was the bystander in this conversation, despite ALL our YCI grooming. Earlier on in the research process, I had come across a poem by Stitt (2005) that read: “we did not learn to love enough/we did not come to see/that we are all sprang/from the roots/of the same tree” (as quoted in Tripp & Muzzin, p. 180). Perhaps that is what I wanted.

And to whom does the photograph belong? Issues of ownership

Barthes (1981) asks us: “...to whom does the photograph belong? Is landscape itself only a kind of loan made by the owner of the terrain?” (p.13). Although Barthes asked this question in 1981, prior to the proliferation of media sharing, uploading and downloading and DIY culture, that is precisely what makes the question so relevant today. As emphasized in this work, an epistemological and ontological orientation to collage would render nothing original, and hence, nothing “ownable.” At the same time, there were material works developed and delivered and discussed. These pieces requested of the research project were not “mine,” but I felt much attachment to them. I sent an email to the research team in December 2009 stating:

Hey all

Hope this email finds you all well. My life has been pretty busy but I can finally focus on my dissertation this month.

So, speaking of which, I have a question regarding your art works. Lily - I would especially like to get your grandma's photo back to you! But I am wondering if there is anything I can keep either permanently or temporarily. For example, several of you gave me copies of stuff (Jelly's photos, Lily's post cards) but obviously everything else is original. Keeping it "temporarily" means up and until

my defense which may be in June. If I end up moving before my defense, I will most likely need to return borrowed items.

Let me know! I love it all! But I do have time to drive it to you, so that is why I am asking now.

Thanks everyone!

Cole

I knew there was something wrong about this message. I knew it as I wrote it and I knew it when I hit send. The ethical implications sounded through the body; anxiety having taken up full time residence in my stomach and bowels. When I sent it and read subsequent replies, I remember thinking “ah! You selfish researcher, what will your consultants, committee and other readers think!?” So if it felt wrong, why did I send this? After all, although emergence is present in this study, changing the rules was not in order, especially given the trust developed over all this time. Was this an attachment to the kids that I wanted “proof” of, or a sense of being so immersed with their works that mere cognitive meanings and memories would not longer suffice? Was it because I sent this in December when the first draft was to be submitted and feeling anchorless without the physical work surrounding me? Was I looking for something to affirm my power and position? Or was it the physical dismantling of the collective collage that signaled the demise of our work together? After all, while some of those pieces could stand “alone,” they would never be put together again in the same spirit.

What struck me is that because there were physical works produced: this exaggerated the entire issue of ownership in qualitative inquiry. After all, I did not send an email asking if I could use a story they had told in a focus group – I implicitly “owned” that data (and perhaps explicitly through their consent forms).

Smythe and Murray (2000) speak to issues of ownership in narrative research, and various speakers I have heard in the last year cite “ownership” of collaborative performances as a key issue. And ownership is clearly an issue in community based initiatives with communities traditionally marginalized being exploited by researchers. At the same time, I found little explicitly addressing visual data and issues of ownership. Is this because everything is scanned and archived? If my consent form clearly states that work will be destroyed, is it unethical to hang Angelica’s photos in my house? As it turns out, only one consultant “gave” me her work; she shared with me in an email that because it was done “for” the research, it was mine to keep. And as for the collective collage, the pieces that Sebastian and I did will be layered upon to create a new work.

Telling Tales

The third tension stems from my dual relationship with the youth. This is not to suggest that rich qualitative inquiry cannot be done with those we know (or, ourselves); in fact, it was not the actual research with the youth that was problematic. It was the analysis and subsequent writing of the dissertation. While I hold enormous respect for the youth involved and for YCI in general, I wrestled with how I presented both. Like Josselon (1996),

My guilt, I think, comes from my knowing that I have taken myself out of relationship with my participants (with whom, during the interview, I was in intimate relationship) to be in relationship with my readers. I have, in a sense, been talking about them behind their backs and doing so publicly.

Where in the interview I had been responsive to them, now I am using their

lives in the service of something else, for my own purposes, to show something to others. I am guilty about being an intruder and then, to some extent, a betrayer. (p. 70, as quoted in Smythe & Murray, 2000, p.320)

As the “out insider” I had not considered how I might “betray” some of the inner workings of and ambivalence about YCI described by the consultants. When these topics were spoken about, I felt I was betraying Constable Paul Brookes, who has worked tirelessly on his own time to make this camp happen, who has invited me back year after year to speak and who graciously gave me consent to conduct research. I needed to remind myself that this was not a program evaluation; it was an exploration into subjective experience and meaning making. At times, I hoped that YCI could be a transformational experience, at other times I doubted it. I did not want to present the consultants as shallow, contradictory or superficial, but at times that is the meaning I made from their conversations. Further, because they are identifiable, there were several sections omitted from this final text as it would, in turn, betray others. Although I stand firm in my conviction of lack of anonymity, it complicated the overall process for providing a richer context with which to explore some of the aforementioned contradictions.

And then, of course, I felt guilty when I *did not* feel guilty. At times, I was dismayed by my consultants’ off record conversations and then chide myself that they are only adolescents. This, of course, stirs the perpetual pot of developmentalist and essentialist discourses. Why should a socially constructed phase of development be an excuse for socially unjust behaviours and exclusionary practices? While there is literature supporting the concept of love in practice (see

Butot, 2004, for example) and current discussion in CYC regarding the concept (see <http://www.cyc-net.org/threads/love2.html>) no one has guided me as to when you really do *not* love your research consultants. For example, one consultant told me over and over that she had emailed her artist's biography and I did not receive it until much later in the writing process. And at one point, I had to take a break from writing because, as I told my supervisor, I really didn't like them very much. A tension still lies in my concurrent desire to "protect" them and "expose" them; much like what I critiqued in Chapter VI.

I believe there is a yet to be written Handbook of Qualitative Research Regrets and Musings. These are just three tensions presented in the course of this research. And while they are not resolved, suffice to say they prove that qualitative research is a messy terrain indeed. I now turn the reader to the concluding chapter, in which I explore some of the implications of this endeavor.

Deconstruct in This Space

Do Not Deconstruct in This Space

Chapter IX - Conclusion

By the time I recognize this moment

This moment will be gone

But I will bend the light, pretend that it somehow lingered on

(Mayer, 2003, track 1)

A concluding dissertation chapter, I have been told, is to be written with confidence and clarity. As such, I will revisit the original research question and the methodology developed for this inquiry, review the key metaphors that emerged through my and consultant's work together, and critique some areas I would have improved in the overall research design. I will then look to potential future applications. Yet, a concluding chapter is also a melancholy undertaking as it signals the shifting of several relationships. At the time of this chapter's writing, I met one of the consultants at the Victoria Pride celebrations. She has been accepted into a prestigious academic program in Toronto and will be moving soon. So, not only is this a conclusion in the research process, it is symbolic of all involved moving onto to different projects, different inquiries and divergent life paths.

Research Question

The overarching question for this inquiry was what becomings are recognized by virtue of participation in YCI and how might these be visually narrated? Inviting youth to reflect on YCI and its relationship to their becomings was key. Although YCI members fill out feedback sheets to YCI presenters and have also filled out post-camp surveys, there have been no other spaces for them to link their understandings to other facets of their lives and histories. Most

importantly, no one has asked them to do so visually. In the art work produced, there are rich layers of meaning being made, re-made and interpreted by others. By allowing the consultants to pick their medium, in the end we created a wide array of expression, some which evolved in their risk taking and application of metaphor. I believe this research has shown that all hell will not break loose if you let them loose with cameras, paint brushes and talent. I learned at a very fundamental level to trust the youth. As an adult CYC practitioner, one would assume that would be an essential component to my practice, but clearly I needed to be reminded. This has spilled over into my clinical work, where I am working harder to be more congruent with what I say to my young clients and the collaborative therapeutic plan applied.

At the same time, working on the periphery of Deleuzian concepts such as becomings proved challenging. Although I see this as an exciting alternative in how I view youth, they still exist in contexts that prefer to categorize them by virtue of developmental trajectory and other linear modes of epistemology. I, too, stutter between these seemingly opposite ways of viewing youth. For example, although I concur with Roy (2003) who says “the use of Deleuzian concepts is to help pry open reified boundaries” (p.13), I am also cognizant that those boundaries are inextricably enmeshed in my focus group questions. My focus group questions basically progressed on a time frame:

1. How would I describe/view/ understand my life and relationships prior to participating in YCI? You could also describe why you decided to join YCI if that fits better.

2. How has your sense of your self and the world shifted or changed since participation in YCI? You are welcome to interpret this question any way you want, using new or older art creations, just go wild. There are no wrong answers!
3. Given your experience in YCI, how do you see yourself in the future, i.e. who are you going to be? You can wax philosophical if you so desire.
4. How do you define social justice?

Despite the use of linear time superimposed on the concept of becoming, I was successful in drawing out several intersections of consultants' lives. Recall Lily, for example, whose participation in YCI did not radically change her, but rather confirmed the social activism milieu she was brought up in. Special attention was also paid to consultants' future conceptions of themselves as this question was the most richly narrated in the visual sense.

I also struggled at times with my consultants to ascertain if I was not really witnessing what Conley calls "fake becomings" (as cited in O'Riley, 2003, p.33), which "masks the perpetuation of colonialism and colonization as it mobilizes those who have created a greater divide between those who have and those who have not" (p.33). Given my discussion of consultants' othering and marked references to race and gender, this is a vexing and unresolved issue.

Pedagartistry

Now that I have participated in arts-based research, I feel this project is but a stepping stone to more elaborate participatory research. The sense of liberation and excitement through the production of visual means allowed for greater reflection on the research process, the research questions and my own role as a

researcher. It was through the development of pedagartistry, *concurrent learning and teaching through artistic collaboration with an action orientation*, that I finally felt a holistic and authentic sense of self as a researcher. Instead of fragmenting my interests into binaries of academy and community, researcher and artist, camp speaker and camp colleague, I was able to collage these interests and subjectivities to produce what I believe is my most integral work to date. This is not to suggest that pedagartistry erases the complexities of qualitative work, but it did leave me with a more tangible sense of hope. I also left this research concurrently questioning the purpose of academia and my role within it; perhaps this was a message to rekindle my commitment to the arts and the political potential of visual and performative engagement? As Spivak (1993) reminds us, “the reader must accustom herself to starting from a particular situation and then the ground shifting under her feet” (p.53). If and where this ground will settle is uncertain, but what remains important is that in studying with adolescent activists *through* art, I have been changed myself.

What was particularly effective using this methodology were its five components:

- Choice
- Emergence
- Relational collaboration
- Uncensored
- Orientation to action and public participation

Using these unique points under the umbrella of pedagogistry, combined with the momentum for arts-based research positions this inquiry as a collage of creative praxis. In my future projects, I intend to develop this methodology further, specifically enhancing the fifth point or orientation to action and public participation, which leads us to some disappointments using this methodology.

I also leave this inquiry with a few disappointments and outstanding questions. In my post-partum slump, I look back and think, “I wish I had done that differently.” For example, I am immensely proud that we successfully hosted an art show. This was congruent with the pedagogist definition of “an action orientation” that seeks public participation. However, I was disappointed with our turn out (which may have been 45 people). In that sense, I leave this research with the understanding that the action orientation of my methodology must be followed up more closely with networking and promotion. In my own experience as a researcher, I would so often minimize my work as oppose to “market” it. Likewise there were moments where I felt my enthusiasm silenced by others. For example, when I presented a short piece of the research in progress to a community forum, a long time local activist questioned “the gimmicks” me and others were using to support and promote youth activists. Although I disagree with her perception, it made me question whether I had unconsciously jumped on a theoretical bandwagon as opposed to embracing a more congruent way of being in the world. Thankfully, the authors introduced throughout this text became an invisible (and at times virtual) support group in using creative means in contemporary qualitative research.

Key Metaphors

Linking to the activist's comments above, my consultants were clear that there are certain expectations of how to be a young activist, as explored through their themes of coming from the dark to the light; shedding social skins; authenticity; polite activists need only apply; horizontal violence; and fractal emergence. As the reader has been privy, there were several problematic conversations that emerged though out the course of the focus groups. I have been a youth worker and advocate for many years, yet I found myself holding the YCI members to a higher accountability. Now that I can identify this in retrospect, it makes sense that some of the racialized and gendered commentary was so glaring to me. Although there were moments of disappointment and dismay on my part, these examples served to illuminate the social constructionist underpinnings of this inquiry; we cannot be isolated from dominant discourses that champion such categorizations.

This also suggests that all curriculum grooms its subjects. For example, even though I consider the above five themes to be rising out of the conversations through the use of metaphors and stories, they are embedded within "YCI-speak". This was especially telling in the consultants' reflections of the candle light ceremony and who was deemed an authentic member based on their confession. . Throughout this text I have been clear that I was not looking to uncover "truth" but rather to be privy to consultants' processes of becoming. I have also been clear that this research was not intended to be a program evaluation. However, by virtue of the focus group discussion, I learned a lot about what was behind the green curtain,

so to speak. And not all of it was pretty. Kiaras Gharabaghi, after watching the 2009 YouTube video for YCI (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwVj1xwc4PM>), asked me if there was a danger in presenting these types of diversity youth initiatives as overly positive (personal communication, April 1st, 2010). His question narrowed in on some of the uncomfortable feelings I was having exploring the tensions I have written about. While I believe YCI to be an important space with which to explore the personal stories of oppression and liberation, its circulating discourse and promotional materials do not acknowledge the shadow side of such education. Having only been a speaker and having only had positive interactions at YCI, the consultants' revealing of this shadow side and its adjacent issues of power, group dynamics and authenticity was an unexpected.

Future directions

Clearly, there are areas that were not explored in this research. It would be interesting, for example, to speak to youth who had experienced their first YCI camp or to speak to those youth who chose not to return and explore the dynamics from those perspectives. And although one young woman warned me not to recruit only the "leaders" from YCI, I am left wondering if my consultants would consider themselves leaders or were heads of various YCI clubs based on their longevity. Further, it would be interesting to explore notions of healing, belonging and change from the perspectives of the speakers, who like the consultants in this inquiry, are long time participants in YCI. Some are also elders, and I think it would be important to include them (visually and narratively) sooner than later to capture

first hand historical accounts. I am also keenly interested in speaking to graduates of YCI after a decade to investigate the sustainability of their participation.

Summary

I believe this inquiry has demonstrated that youth have a need and a desire to be in spaces that foster their critical and creative imagination. These spaces are few and far between in the highly regimented place called adolescence. This inquiry has shown that innovative methodology, in this case, pedagogy, is key to inviting youth in relationally collaborative ways. Further, there needs to be an honouring of their creations and I believe I did this justice. In sum, I do leave this inquiry revitalized in all areas of my work and am re-committed to arts-based practices for research. Despite an initial fear that this would be perceived as “research light” due to the creative aspect, I remain convinced that visual narrations have the power to evoke, politicize and rupture common sense assumptions of what it means to be young, what it means to be an activist, and what it means to change. I hope you are changed, too.

Dear reader,
 It is with regret that I tell you this is not the end. There can be no such thing, as the point is to create more trouble than truths. I am sure that you are leaving this text with many questions, tensions, and an itchy intellect. What ideas do you take away regarding youth, arts-based methodology, and social justice? Which authors and/or consultants will you carry on conversations with?

Sincerely, Doubt



Epilogue

I need to reconfigure my sense of self, apparently.

But it has to be like cool sounding:

*“disguised as an academic but really raised by wolves and she is
lurking through the halls of academia looking for her pack”*

she’s not making it up
not using conventional language
she was assertive, or crazy or both.
Pretty badass.

I thought it was like one of those mind map diagrams things
shuffled differently and delivered at different times.

Treat it as an art project,

like analyze it,
do whatever,
I don’t care.

So can I burn it and bring the ashes?

I was going to say something, but I forgot, it probably wasn’t
important

(Little, YCI data found poetry)

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Appendix A – Invitation for Participation (Email Script)

Hi all YCI members!

I hope this email finds you all healthy and happy. I am very excited to invite you to come and check out a special project I am starting in late February. In fact, this project has been inspired by *you*.

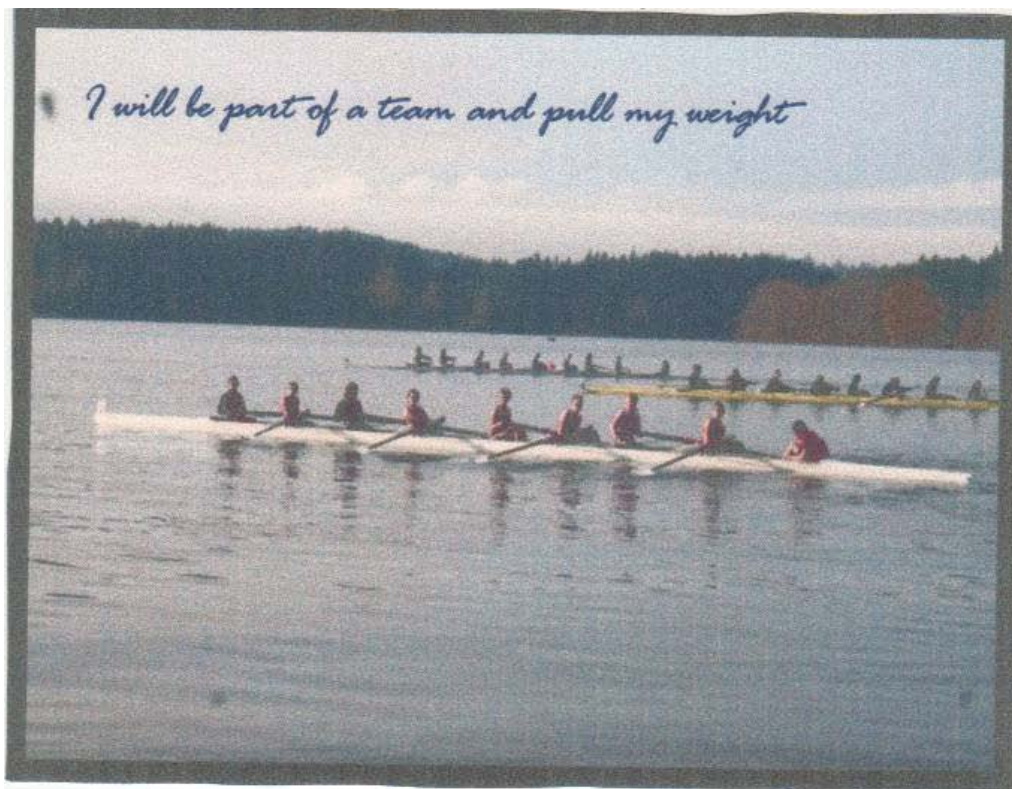
As some of you may know, I am doing my PhD at the University of Victoria. Part of a PhD is doing an original research project. I think YCI is a pretty unique opportunity to participate in and what I would really like to do is find out what your experiences have been being a YCI community member. The best part of the project (besides the pizza and dialogue) is that we get to produce all sorts of creative pieces (like collages, photography, paintings) to help us talk about your experience in YCI. You don't have to be an artist to participate; you just have to be yourself.

Here's the catch – I can only have 6 to 10 of you participate in this project and you need to be in at least your second year of camp. If you are in your last year of camp, I am especially interested to hear from you. I also need your parent(s)/guardian(s) to give the ok for you participate, so it would be great if they came along.

I will be hosting an orientation on March 25th at 6PM at the University of Victoria in the Human and Social Development Building, room B141. Come hear all the details, have a slice of pizza and ask me questions. If you are interested in checking this out, send me an email to jnlittle@uvic or call me at 250-480-0649.

Take care everyone!
JN Cole Little

Appendix B – Lily’s Postcards



I will be flexible

