

Decolonizing youth participatory action research practices: A case study of a girl-centered, anti-racist, feminist PAR with Indigenous and racialized girls in Victoria, BC

by

Nishad Khanna  
B.Sc, University of Saskatchewan, 2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## Abstract

This study focuses on a girl-centered, anti-racist, feminist PAR program with Indigenous and racialized girls in Victoria, a smaller, predominantly white city in British Columbia, Canada. As a partnership among antidote: Multiracial and Indigenous Girls and Women's Network, and an interdisciplinary team of academic researchers who are also members of antidote, this project defies typical insider-outsider dynamics. In this thesis, I intend to speak back to mainstream Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) literature, contesting the notion that this methodology provides an easy escape from the research engine and underlying colonial formations. Practices of YPAR are continuously (re)colonized, producing new forms of colonialism and imperialism. Our process can be described as an ongoing rhythm of disruptions and recolonizations that are not simple opposites, but are mutually reliant and constitutive within neocolonial formations. In other words, our practice involved creatively disrupting new forms of colonialism and imperialism as they emerged, while recognizing that our responses were not outside of these formations. I seek to make our roles as researchers visible, rather than hidden by hegemonic equalizing claims of PAR, and will explore some of the ways that white noise infiltrated our ongoing efforts of decolonizing YPAR practices.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the last decade, I have been working in the field of youth engagement, using youth participatory action research (YPAR) and youth-engaged research to involve young people that have been marginalized from the means of (formal) knowledge production. However, I have been frustrated by the continuous centering of White, Eurocentric, neoliberal ideologies in youth engagement and YPAR practices that often go unquestioned, and that further marginalize certain young people and their experiences more than others. Despite their claims and aspirations, many of these youth participation initiatives end up privileging white, middle-class experience and/or reifying “at-risk” labels, obscuring structures that produce marginalized identities and contexts of risk. There is a distinct gap in youth participation initiatives in Canada when it comes to integrating critical theories into exploration and knowledge production as an integral component of current practice. Therefore, when attempting to articulate these erasures, it is difficult to explain how YPAR practices themselves shape what knowledge can be shared and what knowledge cannot, and how knowledge can and cannot be explored. YPAR literature is often “sanitized” by romanticizing or simplifying the process – practices are often not well documented or critically nuanced and are not theorized as fundamentally embedded within a context of dominant Whiteness. Following Burman’s (2001) critique of Western research, current YPAR studies are “insufficiently theorizing the ways we produce what we intervene within, with consequent effects on what we ‘discover’ and what we make of these ‘discoveries’” (p. 18). I hope to contribute to understanding these gaps through analysis of knowledge production practices with a specific focus on speaking back to, understanding, and decolonizing YPAR practices.

In this thesis, I will argue that dominant YPAR discourse and practice, while contesting adult-centric research, tend to overgeneralize from a monolithic view of youth. As a result, dominant YPAR discourse and practice has not adequately examined particularities of cultural locations, whiteness, and the construction of social identities. In addition, dominant YPAR has not sufficiently considered the ongoing impacts of colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism on racialized and Indigenous girls. Thus, practices of YPAR cannot be unproblematically implemented; just like other research practices, they are part of larger systems of power. Practitioners of YPAR must continually challenge and question their own positioning and practices within these larger systems. I will analyze discourses and practices within the Spaces of Encounter project – a feminist, anti-racist, intergenerational, girl-centered PAR with Indigenous and racialized<sup>1</sup> girls – using postcolonial theory to examine decolonizing YPAR praxis within a context of dominant whiteness and ongoing colonialism.

### *Context of this study*

My thesis will explore the recent Spaces of Encounter PAR program, which is located within a larger ongoing study called *Identity, Belonging and Community Solidarity among Indigenous and Racialized Girls and Young Women* initiated by principal investigator, Dr. Jo-Anne Lee. Spaces of encounter, a construct conceptualized by the principal investigators, includes the production of identities within one's self, amongst girls from similar ethnocultural minority or Indigenous backgrounds, across girls from various ethnocultural minority and Indigenous backgrounds, and the structures

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<sup>1</sup> I employ the terms Indigenous and racialized together in order to avoid replicating erasures of Indigenous girls, which have also taken place within anti-racist movements (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). These are not mutually exclusive categories (i.e. Indigenous people are also racialized).

of dominant culture within which these spaces and identities are negotiated, mediated and (re)produced. For clarity, I will use the term Spaces of Encounter to describe this PAR process and distinguish this project from the overall study. The Spaces of Encounter is a feminist, anti-racist, intergenerational, girl-centered PAR program intended to further the original research questions that explore issues of identity, inclusion/exclusion, (non)belonging and solidarity amongst and between Indigenous and racialized minority girls. In previous cycles of the larger study, the girls were divided based on ethnic identity categories (e.g. Latina, Indigenous, Mixed). As Lee (2006) suggests, these provisional categories became ‘real’ throughout the process, sometimes romanticizing and/or essentializing identity categories. This cycle of PAR sought to critique essentialist logic, analyze the (re)production of girls’ experiences and identities within specific contexts of place, and understand girls’ interactions in Spaces of encounter<sup>2</sup>. The goals of Spaces of Encounter were as follows:

- 1) Critically examine, explore and document practices, spaces, discourses and relations of encounter with “Other” girls;
- 2) Unsettle and explore state/official discourses of Indigeneity, multiculturalism, immigration and nationalism and the White/Settler/Aboriginal identity triad that dominates social relations, policy development and service provision; and
- 3) Share and implement strategies for solidarity and/or social change.

In order to reach these goals, the themes of this study included: images of the “Other” and stereotypes; social relations; land and belonging; and systemic rules that girls negotiate everyday.

The Spaces of Encounter study was intentionally designed for racialized and Indigenous girls to encounter one another in the relative absence of whiteness, a rare

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<sup>2</sup> Based on Notes from Research Planning session (June 11-12, 2009)

space in this city. As co-researcher participants, the girls and young women attending the program explored often rare spaces of encounter that they experience with other racialized and/or Indigenous girls and young women using various arts-based media. The particular geographical, historical and cultural context of this study, the locality of Victoria, is an unapologetic bastion of Empire seeped in English colonial culture. The landscape of Victoria is whitewashed, a city that benevolently claims Indigenous histories, geographies and cultures as its own, while denying complicity in the conquest of Indigenous lands. For Indigenous peoples and non-white/racialized settlers, the predominance of whiteness in Victoria, and the invisible, normalized, hegemonic nature of whiteness in Canada works to denaturalize and (re)colonize non-white citizens (Lee, 2007; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007). As a research facilitation team, our attention was also drawn to ‘encounters’ with new iterations of colonialism that emerged within/through the practice of PAR, which is the central focus of my thesis.

This project is based in a partnership with antidote: Multiracial and Indigenous Girls and Women’s Network, a community-based organization that works to increase the visibility of racialized minority and Indigenous girls and women in Greater Victoria. Antidote emerged first as a grass-roots collective as a result of earlier cycles of the larger study, and has become a non-profit organization with a membership of over 180 girls and women. As an under-resourced organization and only one of three organizations in the Greater Victoria Area that serves immigrants and refugees (and the only one that has a girl-women focus), antidote is systematically marginalized. In a report card conducted in 2001, reviewing services for racialized minority and First Nations girls and young women in Victoria, organizations that claim to serve all populations underserve racialized

and Indigenous girls and women, and the majority tend to make referrals to overburdened immigrant or First Nations services (Lee, 2004). In addition, immigrant and refugee settlement agencies identified that girls are underserved due to lack of financial support (Lee, 2004). When the project began, our main concern about engaging girls from the start of the planning was about how to compensate their time and providing honoraria for their contributions. Not only are racialized and Indigenous girls underserved, and services for minoritized girls underfunded, but racialized and Indigenous girls have other contributing roles that they must forgo in order to participate. For example, a previous PAR cycle in the ongoing project revealed the complex societal contributions of immigrant girls as cultural workers and caregivers in their families and communities (Lee & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010). In addition, their anti-racist activism is not valued in the same way as other community service/volunteering (De Finney, 2008). Often these roles go unacknowledged in mainstream practices, even though they are clear to those in racialized communities.

### *Gaps within the literature*

Although limited, research about the lives of racialized girls suggests that the challenges of “adolescence” are disproportionately higher for girls who live at the intersections of race, class, age, ability, sexuality, religion, language, citizenship and ethnocultural identity. Their complex realities cannot be understood without attending to these structural forces, nor without understanding the specific context and locality in which they live (Ajrouch, K. J., 2004; Dion & Dion, 2004; Durham, M. G. 2008; George & Rail, 2005; Lee, 2005a; Lee, 2005b; Lee & de Finney, 2004; Rajiva, M, 2006). However, it is rare in feminist literature for girls themselves to explore their intersectional

subjectivities. Even more rarely are racialized minority and Indigenous girls given space in these explorations (Weis & Fine, 2005). Rather, the majority of studies in the area are non-participatory analyses of white girlhood identities (Thompson, 1990; Tolman, 1996) or studies based on autobiographical retrospectives by feminist women scholars (Davies et al., 2001; Johnson, 2002; Vance 1984). Further, within feminist debates about transnationalism, postcolonialism and Indigeneity, racialized girls are often left out (de Finney, 2010; Hernández & Rehman, 2002). Likewise, the majority of youth participatory action research (YPAR) literature includes significant gaps: bringing to the forefront counternarratives told by young people, while often flattening the complexity of intersectional experiences, and submerging gender, race, and other dimensions within the all-encompassing, homogenous label of “youth” (Lee, 2005a; Maguire, 2001b). As a result, racialized and Indigenous girls and their experiences are often methodologically, conceptually, theoretically and practically left out of much academic knowledge production (de Finney, 2008). However, despite these multiple erasures, girls and young women of color are contributing to an emerging anti-racist, anti-colonial, feminist body of knowledge through autobiographical writing (e.g. Hernández & Rehman, 2002; Nam, 2001), participatory action research (e.g. Cahill et al., 2004; Lobenstine, et al., 2004), and girl-centered research (e.g. Gonick, 2000; Ormond, 2004; Rajiva, 2006). This study seeks to inform practices within this growing body of knowledge, as well as to the YPAR literature.

### *Research questions*

In my thesis, I analyze the ways in which this space was intentionally and deliberately created through practices that blurred, reproduced and/or contested dominant

discourses of YPAR. I define practices not solely as methods, which when reduced to a set of techniques can reproduce and reinforce unequal power relations (Kothari, 2001), but rather as deliberate, political and emergent processes (Cahill, 2007c). Taken in this way, practices become tools that mobilize critical and decolonizing conceptual frameworks grounded in an emancipatory knowledge interest (Cahill, 2007c; Herr & Anderson, 2005).

My goal in this thesis is to provide a critique of dominant YPAR discourses and practices drawing from my analysis of this girl-centered, feminist, anti-racist PAR project, *Spaces of Encounter*. In order to do so, I am guided by the following questions:

- a. How was this PAR intentionally and deliberately constructed? What forces, discourses and practices produced this space?
- b. What practices and discourses did we employ in this PAR that differ from or are similar to the mainstream practices of YPAR? What concepts and discourses help explain these differences and similarities?
- c. What can this process contribute to the broader knowledge base in YPAR? How can this process speak back to dominant and critical YPAR literature?

I paid attention to dominant discourses that are often dichotomously constructed such as that of research and program; theory and practice; university and community; insider and outsider; Indigenous and immigrant; colonial structures and decolonizing processes, etc. I also examine how the practices we used in this PAR reified and/or challenged categories, such as the construct of “youth” that is represented in official and popular discourse of youth participation and youth-centered processes, as well as that of “girl” as represented in feminist, girl-centered processes.

I employed participant observation to answer my particular research questions. I used data collected through field notes and audio/video recordings of planning and debrief sessions. In addition, I analyzed audio and video footage taken throughout the program to understand how these practices unfolded. My analysis was a multi-layered process – as part of the research facilitation team’s collective analysis, I participated in ongoing and retrospective meaning-making of our practices. In this thesis, I selected themes and situations related to my research questions based upon the frequency of their reoccurrence in the research facilitation team’s field notes and debriefs. Through these themes, I analyzed the practices within Spaces of Encounter in relation to dominant discourses of youth participation and YPAR that often negate the complex minoritized and gendered realities of racialized and Indigenous girls and women in Canada.

### *Conceptual Framework*

I came to my thesis writing with considerable trepidation and discomfort, because I do not want to simply critique the practices within Spaces of Encounter, but rather point to ways of recognizing the already colonized practices that were brought into this project. Not surprisingly, there was not a perfect process, with perfectly decolonized practices or outcomes. What emerged were the ways in which colonial formations continued to leak into practice. What stands out and what I hope to articulate in this thesis, are the ways that through a continuously evolving anti-racist, feminist, girl-centered, intergenerational, decolonizing approach, our research facilitation team engaged with these leakages, unpacking them, and continuously reshaped our practices even as they were infiltrated and folded over again and again by white noise. I employ the term *white noise* to refer to the ubiquity of whiteness and dominant Western ideologies, or as Brodkey (1996)

describes, “the din of common sense” (p. 194), which cynically denies that difference matters by dismissing it as superficial or maligning it as divisive. White noise functions as a sound of comfort that renders only familiar ideologies and beliefs audible to those that benefit from, and are immersed in whiteness (McKoy, 2000).

As a master narrative, *whiteness* must be theorized and examined as a socio-historical colonial construct that is ideologically and materially based and reproduced through dominant State-forms and practices. In this thesis, I use the term whiteness, not to describe skin phenotype or Caucasian identities, but rather as a socio-historical colonial construction within which the Spaces of Encounter took place, and through which we, and our practices, are constituted. Through the colonial project, whiteness has become an ideological construct that justifies exclusionary privileges, production of inequitable social structures, and inhumane treatment of the “Other”. Due to its invisibility and intangibility, white hegemony requires constant (re)production – defining and securing the scope of whiteness through multiple practices (Mawani, 2002). In this way, whiteness is a contextual process (Frankenberg, 1997), and in the location of Victoria (as opposed to larger, more ethnically diverse urban centres), it is more difficult to contest. At the same time, the paradoxical invisibility and hegemony of whiteness account for “its symbolic and political power” (Levine-Rasky, 2002, p. 7). Whiteness functions as the unnamed, but definitive norm – in other words, “it is not seen as whiteness, but as normal” (Dyer, 2002, p. 12). White noise seeks to “cover the tracks of its constructedness, specificity, and localness, even as they appear” (Frankenberg, 1997, p. 16), naturalizing whiteness. In this thesis, I argue that the predominance of whiteness

and the consequently “common sense” of white noise underlie dominant YPAR practices and discourses.

In order to examine the ways in which white noise intervened in our practices, I will employ a conceptual framework that is consistent with our methodological approach: namely, an anti-racist, feminist, girl-centered, decolonizing and postcolonial framework. Building upon the work of critical YPAR practitioners (e.g. Cammarota & Fine, 2008; De Finney, 2008; Torre et al., forthcoming), I try to examine our practices through these multiple lenses that are concerned with interrogating various absences/erasures of Indigenous and racialized girls from different angles, even though these theories are incoherent and in tension with one another. In this way, each theory offers a different view, and ways to see past the blind spots of the others. For example, feminist theory often subsumes girl, negating intersections of gender with age – thus requiring a girl-centered lens. Anti-racist theorizing has been critiqued for historically excluding Aboriginal people and perspectives (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Thobani, 2007) and so decolonizing frameworks are useful to address the complicity of anti-racist approaches in the (re)colonization of Indigenous peoples. This approach allows for a critical examination of multiple relations of power at the intersections of axes of gender, race, sexuality, class, age, etc. Similar intersectional approaches are typical to PAR that is conducted by critical race researchers (Cammarota & Fine 2008). Bringing this conceptual framework to my analysis serves to politicize the research process, challenge dominant ideologies and mobilize social justice activism. It is especially useful to bring girl-centered practices of social change/justice together with transdisciplinary theories

(e.g. postcolonial, feminist, decolonizing) that often are separated from one another, bridging critical practice and theory (De Finney, 2008).

In the literature related to practices of critical YPAR (e.g. see Cammarota & Fine, 2008), there is significant attention given to examining systematic oppressions in young people's lives, including the "controlling interests [that] may take on the form of white supremacy, capitalism, sexism, homophobia, or xenophobia" (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 3). However, these are rarely addressed within an explicit postcolonial framework of decolonization. Dr. Sandrine de Finney (2008) has developed a conceptual framework that is transdisciplinary and transtheoretical in order to address the significant gap in the literature of conceptual frameworks that effectively juxtapose youth- and girl-centered applied theories with more critical analyses (e.g. transnational, Indigenous, postcolonial). She combines applied youth practice, expressive participatory action research, girlhood studies, transnational feminisms, Indigenous epistemologies, and postcolonial theories in her dissertation work and continuing research in the area.

I draw upon postcolonialism (through the work of Marie Battiste, Sandrine de Finney, Stuart Hall, Jo-Anne Lee, Ania Loomba, Anne McClintock, Edward Said, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Sunera Thobani, etc.) to examine colonial racial domination, categorizations and hierarchies that are institutionalized in modern social, economic and political structures, governing both the daily lives of racialized and Indigenous girls as well as the very fabric of our YPAR practices. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues that:

assumptions that guide research designs tend to reflect the modernist oppositional binaries and dualisms, hierarchical classification systems, essentialist, fixed, homogeneous categories, and claims about truth and knowledge that underlie and perpetuate the elevation of western values, beliefs, practices and thought over those of all "Others" (p. 56).

Postcolonial theories map a field that seeks to examine and understand ongoing effects, transformations (e.g. neocolonialisms), responses, and resistances of/to European colonialism. Rather than indicating an end of an epoch (i.e. suggesting that colonialism is over), postcoloniality is always a partial transformation from colonial formations with ongoing “after-effects” (Hall, 1996, p. 248), shaped by locality (Loomba, 1998). Critiques of postcolonialism suggest that despite intentions to surpass a colonial theoretical model (and the binary system that comes with it), it reifies the binary of colonial/postcolonial by positioning colonial and postcolonial as mutually exclusive (e.g. McClintock, 1992). However, in our context in Canada, the colonial/postcolonial binary is blurred as we are located within the context of both independent British/French colonialism and as neocolonial power that continues to colonize Indigenous people (de Finney, 2008). Canada’s outstanding national sovereignty issues and problematic multicultural discourses work to manage racialized Others (de Finney, 2008; Thobani, 2007). Given this complexity, I will draw upon postcolonialism as a theoretical language to name and resist persistent and new forms of colonialism, imperialism and neoliberal discourses embedded in practices of YPAR as decolonizing praxis. I use the term decolonization as defined in the work of Jacquie Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty: decolonization is that which addresses the traces of the hegemonic that mark us as we struggle against hegemonic power structures (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Mohanty, 2003).

### *Challenging the Insider/Outsider binary*

In April 2009, I was approached by Drs. Jo-Anne Lee and Sandrine de Finney, to apply for an internship in partnership with antidote: Multiracial and Indigenous Girls and

Women's Network, a community-based organization that works to increase the visibility of racialized minority and Indigenous girls and women in Greater Victoria. Drs. Lee and de Finney are two of the principal investigators of the ongoing study *Identity, Belonging and Community Solidarity among Indigenous and Racialized Girls and Young Women*, of which this summer research program is a part. Blurring the boundaries between research and community-based organization, as well as researcher and community member, antidote was founded as a result of previous cycles of the study, as a space where racialized and Indigenous girls and women can come together.

In this study, I am a multiply located researcher. Having received the internship from the Office of Community Based Research, my role as Research Coordinator began in May, 2009. I had become a part of the ongoing evolution of the antidote community. My roles as Research Coordinator include coordinating the research documentation, training and supporting the team of research facilitators, participating in planning, facilitating discussion and activities at the summer program, and managing the data. In addition to coordinating the summer research program I was documenting the process and reflecting on our practices for the purpose of my thesis research. I submitted a short proposal letter to the antidote board, requesting their consideration for me to undertake my MA thesis based on this summer research program on May 11, 2009. After meeting with the board on June 8, I received final approval from the board members on June 13. My MA research is included in the ethics amendment submitted to the UVic Human Research Ethics Board and we received ethics approval on June 14, 2009 (File: 07-06-386b) (see Appendix 1). I recognize that at times these dual roles are confusing and so I struggled to keep the two projects distinct, while acknowledging that they overlap and

coincide, especially when we engage as a team in collective analysis of our practices. My dual roles do not place me in a position of power-over or undue influence over the co-researcher participants. I feel that these dual roles offer far richer and deeper insights than if I were not as fully engaged as I was in this research program.

Rather than typical researcher roles, the research facilitation team members were also participants. In addition to being researchers that share the responsibility of the project with girl co-researchers, we were also community members that share experiences as Indigenous and racialized girls growing up in small and predominantly white Canadian cities. As described in the following quote, the antidote community employs PAR as a tool or a process of activism. One of the research facilitators speaks about her deep investment in this project, and the personal relevance that it has for her:

*Like you're constantly sitting in classrooms where there's no relevance to your life and this is all about you and what you're going to do [...] this is something I've struggled with all my life, like being in a very strict family and being in like a very authoritative space and being the youngest and constantly being told what to do that it's the only place that you can actually be like 'no' and assert yourself and it can make the difference between success in life and not having success. [...] That's why we're doing this. Like the data is important, but the data is going to be used to make these changes, to make these policy changes, to make these funding changes, to make all these changes we need to make these spaces more accessible to the girls.*

In establishing an intergenerational research community that nuances “insider/outsider” status, this space of encounter was designed for the interaction of generations, building upon antidote’s intergenerational model that includes gurlz, sistahs, and aunties. In the quote above, the research facilitator describes how all of these generations are involved in informing and making change. Antidote does not have a solely girl-centered mandate, which situates it well to disrupt constructed divisions between adults and youth that are often reified within dominant YPAR discourses.

Antidote's intergenerational yet girl-centered approach in this process nuances mainstream conceptualizations of YPAR, rupturing the typical separation of youth from community, integrating specificities of gender, race, and age, as well as disrupting fixed exclusive categories of oppressed and oppressor, researcher and community.

As a visibly racialized male-presenting researcher, the only man involved throughout this process, my positioning was (re)produced in different ways in the project. I identify as an experiential stakeholder as a transgendered man; I have lived the majority of my life being perceived and positioned as a racialized girl/woman in a small, White-dominated city in Canada. With that shared gendered/racialized experience, I am both an insider and an outsider. Further, positioned as a co-researcher, facilitator and/or participant in different situations, with different people, through shifting discourses, I am an insider in this PAR process. At the same time, I do not claim a romantic relativist perspective which privileges insider knowledge, assuming that any "insider" will automatically have an appropriate approach or knowledge of the social reality in "their" society (Cahill, 2007b; Noffke & Brennan, 2004) and/or runs the risk of erasing differences and assuming that "inside" is static and the same for all "insiders". My experiences are at once both similar and very different from that of the girls and women that were involved – just as their experiences were similar and different from one another's. At the same time, as an insider, I have knowledge and a perspective that outsiders do not (Cahill, 2007b).

As an "insider" member of the PAR project, I have been uniquely positioned based on my role in the entire process and its design, my background in youth engagement and YPAR, and as a graduate student with resources (time) to document and

analyze the practices in this project. However, despite my previous experience with YPAR, this is the first intergenerational PAR process where I have had space to explore my own intersectional experiences and access to theoretical tools that speak to my own frustration of erasures of gender, gender identity, sexuality, and race. At the same time, because of my privileged positioning I continually stopped myself from doing this work, which in dominant YPAR discourses supposedly serves to open more space for the girl co-researchers, even as it distanced myself from a collective intergenerational process. As such, my analysis attempts to reveal some of these moments of struggle emerging from the complexities of my multiple positionings, and consequently how accountability to the collective process functions differently in different situations/contexts.

### *Overview of the thesis*

In Chapter 2, I will review the literature in which this study is grounded, covering various transdisciplinary fields. The literature review will contribute further to the conceptual framing and further set the stage for this study's methodology and analysis. In Chapter 3, I will describe the methodology for this study and provide details of the inquiry.

In the following chapters, I will present and analyze data related to the three themes identified in my analysis. In Chapter 4, I will challenge the easy assumption that arts-based methods are outside of the positivist research framework. In this chapter, I will also examine the ways in which white noise intervened and the complexities of decolonizing arts-based research practices. In Chapter 5, I will examine practices in this PAR process in relation to discourses of participation and the material consequences of these dominant discourses within the program. In Chapter 6, I will examine how colonial

concepts of time and teleological development emerged through practice, and opportunities for new and untimely engagement. Finally, in the concluding chapter (Chapter 7), I will reflect on the contributions and implications of this study, with a focus on future ontological directions for a decolonizing YPAR praxis.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will draw upon various bodies of literature in order to set the groundwork for my thesis. I cannot claim extensive expertise in all of these fields nor the scope to cover them in this thesis and so I will not do an exhaustive review of each. Rather, I will present a strategic review of the intersections that are pertinent to my analysis. I will begin by critically reviewing the dominant youth participatory action research (YPAR) literature and critiques. Informed and supported by mainstream conceptions of youth participation, dominant YPAR discourses serve to subsume gender, race, etc. within a homogenous “youth” category, erasing experiences of girls living at the intersections of these categories. Dominant youth participation discourses regulate participation and youth subjectivities, which are reinforced by helping professions (e.g. youth work, education, etc.). Based on normative logics historically used to justify racial and ethnic hierarchies, dominant youth participation and professional helping discourses and practice regulate young people’s “normal” development and control/correct “deviant” behaviors that do not conform to colonial, neoliberal standards. Thus, dominant YPAR literature is often characterized by a reproduction of neoliberal ideologies, the regulation of a homogenous “youth” category, and erasures of racialized and Indigenous girls.

Due to the erasures of minoritized girls within dominant YPAR, I will also briefly outline contributions from girlhood studies, which have emerged in order to address the problematic subsumption of gender in critical youth studies, and age within women’s studies (Harris, 2004). While useful in terms of understanding hegemonic discourses of

girlhood and girls' negotiations of these, the representation of girls as a homogenous group erases the specificities and uneven impacts of social forces on girls' experiences. Despite emerging work in girlhood studies exploring the heterogeneity of girls' experiences, and complex negotiations of raced, classed, sexed femininities, (Aapola et al., 2005; Gonick, 2006), girlhood studies also have gaps in terms of theorizing forces of colonialism, Indigeneity, etc., which are crucial for my analysis.

Finally, I will examine what Torre et al. (forthcoming) have termed “critical [Y]PAR”, which is informed by various critical theoretical frameworks, including feminist and critical race theories. The critical YPAR literature is most useful for my thesis analysis because it provides a conceptual framing that resonates well with this study. However, this study and my analysis add to this expanding body of literature postcolonial and decolonizing theories and approaches that examine neocolonialisms and work to resist ongoing colonial formations.

### *Interrogating youth participation as regulatory practice<sup>3</sup>*

In order to frame contemporary youth participation practices within late modernity, I will briefly describe the development of the concept of “youth”. The cultural construction of adolescence at the end of the nineteenth century emerged as a “social space in which to talk about the characteristics of people in modernity” and “to establish policies and programs that would help create the modern social order and citizenry” (Lesko, 2001b, p. 5-6). In this time of modernity, the development of adolescents was monitored by the state, researchers, and communities in the interests of producing

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpts from this section have been presented in a paper at academic conferences as well as in a co-authored article submitted for publication in an academic journal (see Khanna, 2010a, 2010b and Lee et al., forthcoming).

productive citizens for a modern nation-state, which was preoccupied with “nationalism, ‘civilization’, and racial progress” (Harris, 2001, p. 2). Youth were constructed as the models of modern civic values, expected to embody responsibility, rationality, and patriotism. Thus, the formation of the youth subject was shaped by dominant understandings of the liberal state. In addition to conceptualizing youth as a societal issue, adolescence was also being constructed as a biological and psychological stage. This latter concept is a form of biopower, a technology of power that regulates biological processes and produces a normalizing society (Skott-Myhre, 2008). Contemporary constructions of youth are built upon these conceptual foundations and have been reshaped by late modernity and neoliberal ideologies. Late modernity is characterized by a break with industrial modernity, shifting to complex, global economies, and from state welfare/support to privatization of services. The state has indirectly extended its role through an agenda of competition, privatization and reforming public institutions using “managerialist ideologies” (Besley, 2009, p. 173), including decentralization, devolution, delegation and codifying policy and accountability in order to extend government under the guise of local autonomy. Citizens must acquire the capacity to self-govern and self-regulate, and to take personal responsibility for neoliberal government failures to provide necessary welfare supports as their own failure to correctly manage their personal problems (Bessant, 2003; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). As inheritors of unpredictable, risky times, youth are constructed as best able to handle this flux due to their capacity for self-making and self-monitoring induced by the conditions of late modernity (Harris, 2001). Anita Harris (2001) suggests that girls have a special role in (re)producing the social order and values of late modernity: constructed both by feminist

principles of girls empowerment, and economic conditions that have increased girls' participation in education and employment, they are "doubly constructed as ideal flexible subjects" (p. 8).

In the contemporary Canadian context, these constructions of youth fit well with dominant (neoliberal) discourses of youth participation that shape practices of youth participatory action research (YPAR). In a critique of contemporary PAR processes, Steven Jordan (2009) states, "prevalent discourses of participation that define contemporary approaches to [Y]PAR and participatory research have been increasingly infiltrated and appropriated by neoliberal discourses that have profoundly reconfigured the social relations of participation in the contemporary period." (p. 19). I will briefly map these discourses of youth participation in the literature, identify their roles in the project of white nation formation and critique the ways in which they serve to exclude the complex, intersectional realities of Indigenous and racialized girls.

In the field of youth participation, Zeldin, Camino and Calvert (2003) identify three main rationales or justificatory discourses that underlie mainstream youth participation discourses: 1) Social justice and youth representation; 2) Youth development; and 3) Building civil society. The first, concerned with ensuring social justice and youth representation, is a liberal tradition built upon a rights-based approach systemically upheld by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was ratified in Canada in 1991 (Howe, 2007). Constructed as non-citizens (and not complete humans), children and youth do not have the same rights as their adult counterparts and so the Convention has been developed to protect them. The UNCRC outlines in articles 12 to 17, the rights of children under 18 years of age to express their

views in matters that affect them (article 12), to freedom of expression, and to have access to full information about situations that affect them (article 13), and various rights that support this participation (Covell, 2007; Campbell & Rose-Krasnor, 2007). Article 12 is most often invoked in relation to youth participation and includes a stipulation that the views of the child should be “given weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” This discourse is problematic because according to this logic, children deserve to participate in civil society insofar as it is (biologically/psychologically) developmentally appropriate, conferring gatekeeping roles upon adults, professionals (e.g. helping professions) and institutions (e.g. schools, hospitals, etc.) to dispense rights. Thus, a rights-based discourse serves to regulate which youth participate when, and how they can participate, while reinforcing a concept of youth that privileges biological and psychological development:

[T]he revolutionary idea of youth rights becomes separated from the actual practices of living and is conflated with the abstract world of ‘the law’ and with the scientific truths of ‘development.’ Youth rights become an abstraction based within legal codes and determined by biologically defined identities such as child, adult, or adolescent. These biologically defined identities and legal codes are presented as absolute and eternal facts of biology and human nature, when in fact they are culturally specific and relatively recent productions of Western capitalist society (Skott-Myhre, 2008, p. 163).

Child development discourses, based in empirical research on White, heteronormative, abled children, (re)produce Western dominant norms and legitimize categories of race, sexuality, gender, and age that justify labels of deviance attributed to the “Other” (Burman, 2008). Therefore, regulating youth participation based on normative child development serves to categorize and exclude, ensuring that certain young people (read: white, male, heterosexual, middle-class, older) are able to participate more than those that are deemed Other.

Youth participation as a right is enacted mainly through consultation with young people in order for youth to “have a voice”, but rarely to address power relations that position youth as already “voiceless”. Although the UNCRC claims to reconceptualize youth so that they are not constructed as parental property, vulnerable population in need of state protection, nor as “not yet” (Howe, 2007), these constructions continue to circulate through gatekeeping roles and practices driven by neoconservative public concerns about young people’s capacity to follow the normative developmental trajectories to responsible adult citizenship (Arneil, 2002; Burman, 2008; Tarulli & Skott-Myhre, 2006). These “not yet” constructions of youth are reinforced in the second complementary rationale for youth participation.

The second rationale for youth participation identified by Zeldin et al. (2003) is rooted in promoting youth development, or in other words, that youth participation (in civil society, in research, etc.) is a way for young people to actively participate in their own learning and therefore, a pathway for a young person’s healthy development (e.g. Dworkin et al., 2003; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Jenkins, 1996; Komro et al. 1996, Larson, 2000; McGee et al., 2006). Based upon a development-in-time episteme, healthy development is defined by normative processes for (universalized) youth, or alternative trajectories for (essentialized) minority youth (Gay, 1994; Lesko, 2001b). This rationale is interconnected with the first, as participation in decision-making and matters that affect youth are associated with positive development (Campbell & Rose-Krasnor, 2007). This rationale is limited to and deeply invested in neoliberal individual development: youth “practice” being good neoliberal subjects within participation opportunities until they are

perceived to be adequately prepared to do so in society and/or until they are adults. Thus, practices based upon this rationale include a structure of Vygotsky-inspired graduated opportunities, wherein once they are successful in one role, youth successively participate in new roles that require higher-order skills or responsibilities (Zeldin et al., 2003). Based upon this linear trajectory of development that positions adults as superior, young people are constructed as “adults-in-the-making” (Lesko, 2001b). Those that do not meet the demands placed on them by this individualizing model are deemed deficient/abnormal and in need of help/correction. Many helping professions (e.g. youth work, etc.), youth programs, and educational institutions (Lesko, 2001a; Lesko, 2001b) have adopted this linear model to monitor, evaluate, and produce self-governing youth subjects. This discourse of youth participation fits well with neoliberalism's agenda to download and privatize/individualize.

The third rationale for youth participation is based upon building civil society, or communitarian notions of balancing individual rights with responsibilities to contribute to the common good (Zeldin et al., 2003). In general, this rationale is based upon the notion that communities work better with diverse stakeholders that bring various valuable perspectives and competencies (e.g. Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Checkoway et al., 2005; Checkoway, 1998; Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Ginwright & James, 2002; Kirschner et al., 2003; Matthews, 2001; Sheir, 2001; Zeldin, 2004; Zeldin et al., 2000). This discourse emphasizes partnership models typically involving youth in adult-created institutional structures, and working together in more equitable power dynamics to influence decisions and outcomes (Zeldin et al., 2003). This last is most related to Freirean roots of YPAR, although it fetishizes (liberal) democratic inclusivity (Kincheloe, 2009). Further, it

ignores how state discourses (e.g. citizenship, multiculturalism, Indigenous status, etc.) and contemporary forces (e.g. nationalism, neoliberalism, neocolonialism and global capitalism) function to incorporate certain girl/youth subjects into the nation-state through participation agendas, while excluding others.

These three underlying justificatory discourses of youth participation are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing. In Canada, these dominant cultural ideologies and regimes of truth are reinforced by a combination of public social anxiety about youth disengagement, “at-risk” youth and a neoliberal commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Social anxiety about disengagement stems from a strange blend of neoliberal economics and social democratic concern focused on social capabilities (i.e. participation, citizenship, inclusion, community building/development). Narrow discourses of youth, such as individualizing constructions of the apathetic and disengaged youth dubiously dubbed as the “civic deficit” generation (Chareka, 2009; Chareka & Sears, 2006), “youth at-risk” (we might ask, at risk of what?), as well as a resurgence of liberal individualism, are at the root of public policy reform and popularity of youth participation (Bessant, 2003). This convergence has led to a deluge of youth participation interventions by governments and local organizations. These interventions - preoccupied with individual choice, responsibility and freedom - represent strategies for constructing good neoliberal subjects (Campbell & Rose-Krasnor, 2007; Checkoway, 2003) who can be successful in the mainstream/whitestream<sup>4</sup>. In this context, young people are required to adjust easily to change, risks and uncertainty despite discourses embedded in nostalgia of an imagined history of secure social order and certainty

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<sup>4</sup> The term “whitestream” describes the unmarked whiteness of the mainstream (e.g. Grande, 2008).

(Bessant, 2003). Those that do not have the “resiliency” to achieve success are deemed by the state, markets, and youth service providers to suffer from personal problems or flaws that lead them to unfortunate risk-taking and, consequently, to require help.

Despite the homogenous category of youth described in youth participation literature, highly racialized and gendered assumptions are embedded within youth participation discourse and practice. Racialized youth are constructed differently than white youth by at risk discourses, with uneven outcomes. For example, government policies and funding for research tend to link ethnic minority youth with high-risk status rather than competency (Spencer & Dornbusch, 1990). Girls are constructed as at risk through dominant discourses of the vulnerable, voiceless girl in need of empowerment and “saving”. This discourse implies that girls are responsible for getting/taking help in order to “fix” themselves (Aapola et al., 2005). Girl Power is another dominant discourse of girlhood that has been co-opted by neoliberal agendas. As a depoliticized and popularized discourse, Girl Power identifies girls’ agency with consumption, encouraging girls to do (and have) whatever they want as long as what they do reflects “the ideologies of white- middle-class, individualism and personal responsibility” (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 30). Those who are unable to “self-invent” themselves as good neoliberal subjects by participating appropriately and working hard are considered individually responsible for their failure (Aapola et al., 2005). As such, youth participation is a technology of governmentality, defined by Foucault (1988) as linking technologies of the self (and self-governance) to governing of the state.

Youth participation has been constructed as an oppositional response to the systemic exclusion of young people. However, as a result of state capture, grassroots

demands for greater youth involvement in decision-making and the field of practice (e.g. girl and youth participation) have become removed from their material base, and so have joined with dominant cultural ideologies and regimes of truth (Skott-Myhre, 2008).

Skott-Myhre (2008) describes this adapting infiltration and ongoing co-optation, stating that,

in the moment of total subsumption each and every social formation produced by resistance is immediately appropriated by the regimes of capital and turned to its own ends...by the time resistance or challenge could be mobilized, all the definitions will have shifted to accommodate, enclose, and incorporate the new knowledges made available from the new youth subjectivity or youth work practice (p. 129).

Due to the unassailable moral positioning and neoliberal enthusiasm for youth participation, it is difficult to challenge the terms upon which youth participate or critically examine the material consequences of dominant youth participation discourses. However, the youth participation discourses outlined above work to further the project of neoliberal subject formation and serve to individualize and responsabilize; privilege stages of biological and psychological development; homogenize ‘youth’ while ignoring, overlooking or sub/as/suming gender, sexuality, racial, ethnic or religious identities (Burman, 2008); exalt privileged nationals (e.g. Thobani, 2007); and “other” racialized and Indigenous girls all in a context of dominant Whiteness. Thus, official and formal youth and girl participation projects actually serve to manage claims of exclusion and non-belonging (Bessant, 2004; Bessant, 2003; Harris, 2003; Harris, 2001). Rather than disrupt the status quo that positions young people as marginalized, or address complex oppressions, dominant youth participation discourses within YPAR serve to de-politicize resistance and reinforce the status quo. In this way, dominant girl and youth participation

discourses and YPAR practices are infiltrated by neoliberal and neocolonial state logics even as they seek to promote democratic, social justice goals.

*Interrogating helping profession discourses as white noise*<sup>5</sup>

As seen above, the underlying theoretical rationales of youth participation are characterized by significant roles of the state, civil society, and the helping professions in regulating youth participation. Eurocentric child development theories are embedded in various professions that involve youth (e.g. youth work, social work, education, etc.), locating young people on a directional linear trajectory through which they are “self-actualized” once they reach adulthood. Cultural evolution and human development are discourses of fulfillment based on Hegelian notions of desire; each stage lacks something, is lesser than the following stage. In order to arrive at the next stage, that lack must be fulfilled. As such, the “savage” culture becomes more civilized as it follows the linear trajectory of Western civilization, but is always behind the West. Similarly, the young person is continuously monitored and judged as lacking (the psychological development and/or skills of adults). As such, adolescent development is synonymous with “becoming civilized, that is, becoming white, middle class, and, preferably, male” (Lesko, 2001a, p. 39). These normative theories are based upon empirical research on White, heteronormative, abled children, (re)producing Western dominant norms that have been universalized to describe and regulate the development of all children (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Carlson, 2000; Quintana et al., 2006). Normative child development theories serve to legitimize categories of race, sexuality, gender, and age and to justify labels of

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<sup>5</sup> Excerpts from this section have been presented in a paper at academic conferences as well as in a co-authored article submitted for publication in an academic journal (see Khanna, 2010a, 2010b and Lee et al., forthcoming).

deviance attributed to the “Other” (Burman, 2008). Professional practices based on these theories are constructed as technologies of government used to control and regulate young people. These technologies are used in different ways with different groups (age, race, gender, sexuality, etc.), embedding racism and imperialism in practices of helping professions such as child and youth work, education, health professions, etc. (Burman, 2008). As a consequence, helping profession practices enable the formation and reinforcement of deviant and normative groups.

Hans Skott-Myhre’s (2008) critical youth work examines how neoliberal and neocolonial logics structure the profession of dominant youth work. Skott-Myhre (2008) argues that regardless of their skin pigmentation, the youth work practitioner is “white”; youth work practices are informed by colonizing, imperial, neo-liberal discourses and this professionalization is associated with white privilege. Alternatively, Skott-Myhre (2008) suggests that youth is a category that is othered from adult (also see Giroux, 1996). However, this binary elides the heterogeneity of the ways in which white privilege is unevenly distributed both for youth and practitioners at the intersections of age, race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. This categorization and subsequent justification for assuming the superiority of adults is based on similar technologies of categorization that are the hallmark of colonial Western research (Tarulli & Skott-Myhre, 2006; Skott-Myhre, 2008; Lesko, 1996; Burman, 2001). Western capitalist scientism (or the logic of Western science that capitalism uses to justify imperialism) was foundational in “proving”/constructing racial hierarchies, positioning the non-European Other as lower on a developmental/civilization trajectory (Skott-Myhre, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

As a technology of discipline, whiteness is articulated with intersecting discourses of gender, class and sexuality, thus regulating the (European) white self. As outlined by Foucault (1977), the regulation and disciplining of the self through the creation of the marginalized “other” is part of colonial discourse that decenters the majority world, defining what the (white) colonizer is not and simultaneously what the colonizer must be. This self-regulation upholds the Enlightenment project by privileging rationality, reason, and productivity, and controlling the body to serve the industrial state. Thus the appropriately self-regulated and disciplined “white” youth worker/researcher functioning as an extension of the colonial project can easily distance themselves from youth/object of study. That is, adult researchers and practitioners are hegemonically constructed in relation to the “otherness” of youth. Said (1978) examines how the colonizing gaze constructs a framework based on “biological determinism and moral-political admonishment” (Skott-Myhre, 2008, p. 172) to view the “other”. These same forces of decentering, self-regulation and Orientalization are at the centre of constructions of youth as “foreign”, “impulsive”, “irrational”, “hypersexualized”, “lazy”, “dangerous”, etc., terms that have descended from constructions attributed to other subjugated others (e.g. people of color, GLBT populations, Indigenous people, women, etc.). In terms of racialized and Indigenous girls, these forces reify vulnerable, at-risk constructions and confirm the need for intervention in their lives.

In white settler societies, many youth participation programs (including dominant YPAR processes) tend to reinscribe colonial and imperial discourses that flatten the complexity of Indigenous and racialized girls’ lives, and continue to privilege white, Anglo-European ethnicities as naturalized citizen-subjects (McCallum, 2001; Sharkey &

Shields, 2008; Van Ngo, 2009). Consequently, state organized youth participation and positive youth development projects can be examined as a “whitening” process in keeping with Ong (1996) who asserts: “attaining success through self-reliant struggle...is a process of self-development that in Western democracies becomes inseparable from the process of ‘whitening’” (p. 739). In dominant spaces of youth participation, racialized girls do not fit the “youth” subject (male, heterosexual, white, middle-class) and in order to participate “successfully” in those spaces and be recognizable, they need to “whitestream” themselves and strategically use their cultural knowledge and Canadian social capital (Grande, 2008). As Fanon (1952) explains, in colonial societies, one must “turn white or disappear” (p. 100) – similarly in a society that presumes the superiority of adults, young people must become like adults or disappear. Significant institutional forces are involved in “making” different kinds of minorities with different kinds of social capital (Ong et al., 1996). These hegemonic forces reveal the multiple ways that the intersections of age, race, gender, and sexuality interlock to marginalize some young people (read: racialized, Indigenous, queer, girls) more than others within the white noise of professional practices of youth work and research.

*Constructions of minoritized (racialized/Indigenous) girls*

Racialized and Indigenous girls are under/problematically represented in discourses of youth participation, youth participation programs, the field of youth work, and child psychology. Unfortunately, erasures and problematic representations continue in feminist literature and girlhood studies, leaving Indigenous and racialized girls outside of these conceptual spaces (de Finney, 2008; Fine, 2004; Griffin, 2004). I briefly map out

literature in this area, not with the intent to be exhaustive, but in order to indicate the ways in which this literature reinforces/contests dominant youth participation discourses.

Historically, Western, Anglocentric feminist perspectives ignore intersections with age, race, etc. assuming that White middle-class women's experience are representative of all girls (Mohanty, 2003). Alternatively, the construction of a universalized and othered racialized minority girl that flattens intersections of race, age, gender, class, sexuality, ability, religion, language, and citizenship is another common epistemic recolonization (de Finney, 2008). It is rare in feminist PAR literature for girls themselves to explore their intersectional subjectivities and even more rarely are racialized minority and Indigenous girls given space in these explorations (Weis & Fine, 2005). Unfortunately, minoritized girls are essentialized in the literature as "victims of their own culture", situating Western culture as normative and progressive (Griffin, 2004). In this discourse, barriers to girl participation are understood as a failure to adapt, or are attributed to oppression of girls by their parents' cultures rather than as symptoms of colonial relations of power (Griffin, 2004; Lawrence, 2004). For example, in a study of a previous cycle of PAR within the larger research project that I am examining in this thesis, many girls had difficulty attending because they had other responsibilities at home, where often they were caregivers for their younger siblings. Speaking back to the mainstream interpretation that they were being "exploited" by their "culturally backwards" parents, they explored the ways in which their immigration to Canada had necessitated their contributions due to the financial/systemic marginalization and exclusion of their families as racialized immigrants. Further, the girls' social, economic, and cultural contributions to their families' survival went unacknowledged as alternative

forms of participation (Lee & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010). Critiques of this body of literature suggest that it fetishizes difference, while often ignoring or relativizing real social inequities (Mohanty, 2003). Some feminist scholars (e.g. Bertram et al., 2000; Brah, 1996; Griffin, 2004; Lee, 2006; Lee, 2004) demand a critical intersectional analysis (age, race, gender, class, etc.) that produces/recognizes multiple girlhoods.

As a response, the growing field of girlhood studies has begun to address this gap, but offers a limited range of discourses of girlhood. The most ubiquitous of these is the discourse of vulnerable girls to be “saved”, most popularly articulated in Mary Pipher’s (2004) book, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. Named after the character Ophelia in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, this discourse situates girls as at-risk, voiceless, and in need of intervention to become empowered, to be given agency and voice, and to decrease risk behaviors. Often constructed as voiceless victims of traditional, patriarchal culture, racialized girls are in greater need of “saving”. While this discourse is useful in terms of bringing to light social forces that position girls as marginalized (e.g. patriarchal formations, sexism, capitalism), racism is conspicuously omitted in Pipher’s study (Aapola et al., 2005). Moreover, many girls themselves do not identify with the Ophelia image of silence, anxiety, and lack of self-confidence (e.g. Baumgardner & Richards, 2000), which suggests that this discourse is more useful to those who are interested in intervening in the lives of girls (Aapola et al., 2005). Aapola et al. (2005) note that “the concern Baumgardner and Richards (2000, p. 185) have with the Ophelia industry, is that girls are being labeled victims of society and, by implication, passive dupes – whether or not they feel themselves this way” (p. 52).

Likewise, the “aggressive/mean girl” subject, and the overtly sexualized “party girl” subject have been popularized in the media and are also constructed as in need of intervention (Aapola et al., 2005). Discourses of girls as mean or sexual (i.e. at-risk and therefore in need of intervention) have uneven consequences for poor, racialized and Indigenous girls (Aapola et al., 2005). Whereas white middle-class girls are constructed as deserving of social sympathy and offered therapeutic interventions, racialized and working-class girls are more likely to experience encounters with the criminal justice system (Walkerdine et al., 2001). For example, in a US study (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2004), the increasingly prevalent “mean girl” risk discourse has heightened the attention given to girls’ offences. Girls that do not have the resources to remain out of view of the criminal justice system are targeted. As a result, arrest rates of racialized girls are disproportionately increasing (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2004). Minoritized girls are hypervisible, so it is no surprise then, that for racialized and particularly for Indigenous girls in Canada, these interventions tend to focus on pathologizing risk (e.g. pregnancy prevention programs, etc.). These initiatives patently ignore the systemic forces at play as well as the uneven effects on girls regardless of their positions of privilege and/or marginalization. The at-risk discourse constructs white, middle-class girls that are relatively quite privileged due to their positioning as victims in need and deserving of social concern. Consequently, girls that are socially, politically and economically disadvantaged are further marginalized. In other words, rich, White, heteronormative girls are constructed to be just as vulnerable (and apparently vulnerable in the same ways) and just as likely to be pathologized as those marginalized at various intersections of

race, class, age, sexuality, etc., ignoring disproportionate material consequences for younger, poor, racialized, Indigenous, and/or queer girls (Harris, 2001; Harris, 2004).

By negating history, particularly the history that engendered the ‘at risk’ reality, many liberals are able to safely display their presumed benevolence toward a particular subordinate cultural group that they have labeled ‘at risk’ without having to accept that, because of their privileged position they are part of the social order that created the very reality of the oppression they want to study (Freire, 1998, p. xxviii).

Negation, dismissal and trivialization of the realities of ongoing racialized violence against girls work to maintain the justification for “saving” racialized girls from “cultural oppression”, strategically deflecting attention from structural factors (e.g. poverty, racialized and gendered inequalities, etc.). As Yasmin Jiwani (2006) explains in a study with racialized girls in Vancouver, the girls identified racism as the dominant form of violence they encounter on a daily basis. However, in the whitestream, dominant Western culture is constructed as being emancipatory and egalitarian while minority cultures are constructed as oppressive. What is erased in this culturalized framework is the way in which the impacts of racialization on minority cultures and scattered hegemonies (such as the alignment of patriarchies of both minority and dominant cultures) produce outcomes of gendered violence for racialized girls. For example, in a study of Filipino girls in the United States, Espiritu (in Jiwani, 2006) reveals that, “the immigrant community uses restrictions on women’s lives as one form of resistance to racism” (p. 74). Thus, minority cultural communities are intensely constructed, in part, through a response to an exclusionary environment. Jiwani (2006) found that racialized girls in Vancouver have few places to turn to deal with issues related to racialized violence they experience other than their cultural communities. In locations such as Victoria, where many minority cultural communities are unavailable due to small and dispersed populations, there are

fewer avenues for racialized and Indigenous girls (Lee, 2006). This highlights the mostly unacknowledged social and structural constraints that racialized and Indigenous girls negotiate in their lives everyday, as well as the importance of context.

Another popularized discourse that is important to an analysis of YPAR practices is that of Girl Power, which names a range of social positionings of girls. Girl power has roots in the explicitly political Riot Grrl movement, which was historically founded by White (and often queer) girls reclaiming the punk scene. The contemporary Riot Grrl movement has taken advantage of new media and the internet, building a politicized and heterogeneous network involving zines, blogs, spoken word performances and other DIY activism (Aapola et al., 2005; Harris, 2004). Riot Grrl discourse has more recently been taken up by girls of color using anti-colonial, anti-racist feminisms<sup>6</sup>. De Finney (2008) locates the work of antidote within this contemporary iteration of Grrl-driven anti-colonial, anti-racist, feminist movement.

Girl power has various contextual meanings, interpreted by some as a “feminist ideal of a new, robust, young woman with agency and a strong sense of self” (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 39). Girl power can also be described as an overdetermined construction of girlhood as already empowered, pseudo post-feminist, neoliberal consumer. Despite roots in the Riot Grrl counterculture, girl power has become commodified and depoliticized, situating it well within participatory projects for incorporating girls into the State. “Girl power’s popularity is credited to its very lack of threat to the status quo for the ways in which it reflects the ideologies of white- middle-class, individualism and personal responsibility over collective responses to social problems” (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 30).

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<sup>6</sup> For examples, see *Colonize this!: Young women of color on today’s feminism* (Hernández & Rehman, 2002); *Yell-Oh Girls! Emerging voices explore culture, identity, and growing up Asian American* (Nam, 2001); and the Racialicious blog ([www.racialicious.com](http://www.racialicious.com))

Despite (or because of) the way in which it is based within a neoliberal individualism, girl power has become a widely used discourse in girl empowerment programs. Through this neoliberal discourse, girl participation and voice can be contained and regulated while espousing gender equality rhetoric. This regulation is particularly effective due to the gendered, classed, and raced discourse that interprets assertive girls that challenge the status quo as aggressive, rude bitches – bad girls (Curry et al., 2009). For example, a study in the UK found that young black girls and women are negatively stereotyped as “loud, naughty, confident, and overtly sexual” (Charlton, 2007, p. 124). Therefore, these interpretations of the “good” empowered girl work to dismiss critiques from the margins, particularly if they contest White, heterosexual, patriarchal, neoliberal agendas.

Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody (2001) reveal further problematics of this discourse in their study with working-class girls. Girl power discourses tell girls that they can do and be whatever they want, while ignoring social and systemic forces, such as a patriarchal labour market and an education system that reproduces economic marginalization (Walkerdine et al., 2001). Girl power suggests that girls can overcome any barriers and continually invent themselves if they have the right attitude and work hard, while the constraints of class, gender, race, sexuality, citizenship, etc. are problematically dismissed (Aapola et al., 2005; Harris, 2004).

Both the hegemonic girl power and Ophelia discourses imply that girl subjectivities are projects of continual and individualized self-invention, encouraging girls to work on themselves, to “go girl!” or to help themselves out of crisis and risk. Despite the increasing focus of “girl-fixing” (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 54) programming and resources, girls are not adequately represented in discourses or practices related to

their participation. Girls are denied complexity within dominant youth participation and girlhood discourses, reinforced by dominant notions of psychosocial development that fix racialized and Indigenous girls as abnormal, as Other to the dominant norm. Thus, discourses of minoritized girls that construct them as at-risk situate the risk in their “deviant” bodies, while concealing the structural and material exclusions and barriers to their participation. Further, both of these dominant discourses of girlhood conspicuously ignore racism; experiences of social exclusion and risk are attributed to an individualized failure to adapt rather than to systemic barriers related to race, gender, class, and citizenship (Aapola et al., 2005; de Finney, 2008). As a result, the uneven impacts of sociohistoric forces are hidden and/or ignored in much of the girlhood studies literature, reinforcing these social exclusions and shaping participation practices. These erasures continue within much of the dominant YPAR literature. As summed up by Griffin (2004), “if girls and young women have been and remain relatively invisible in most youth research, then some girls have been more invisible than others” (p. 30).

#### *Dominant youth participatory action research*

In practice, participatory research rarely follows the smooth pathway implied by theoretical writing (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1672).

Dominant Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is not a uniform practice. In the literature, it is a term used to refer to a variety of youth-engaged participatory research practices (Cahill, 2007b). However, there are some common threads based in the history of PAR that serve as foundational tenets. YPAR is described as research for, with, and by marginalized youth, working together as co-researchers rather than as the subjects of research. YPAR is influenced by traditions of social research and action (e.g. Lewin),

liberation pedagogy (e.g. Paulo Freire), and postcolonial studies (e.g. Orlando Fals-Borda, and Anisur Rahman) from the global South (or majority world) with roots in Tanzania, Colombia, India and Brazil among others during the 1970s (Hall, 2005; Hall, 2001). Budd Hall (2005) credits Orlando Fals-Borda for coining the term PAR, expressing commitment of activists/scholars to liberatory social change. Developed in response to the failure of Northern development approaches and limitations/exclusions of imperial positivist research, these social science methods build upon the notion that knowledge can take multiple forms and exists within the social, political and economic contexts within which they are generated (Gaventa, 1993; Park, 2001). Further, this knowledge of the world is generated through our actions and experiences of the world (Brydon-Miller, 2005; Habermas, 1971). Thus, PAR is concerned with the integration of research and action, and in this sense, YPAR may be difficult to distinguish from social action movements that are based within participatory inquiry. However, in dominant YPAR in Canada, these roots in anti/postcolonial movements have become muted and replaced by neoliberal ideologies and youth participation discourses.

YPAR is committed to democratizing the research process. YPAR researchers (e.g. Evans et al., 2010; Fine et al., 2007) have taken up the rights-based rationale in a more helpful way, drawing from Appadurai (2006), as “the right to research.” Despite the increasing importance of knowledge of the world, opportunities for gaining such knowledge are not keeping up – the means for gaining knowledge are increasingly concentrated to fewer “experts”, as the Western concept of research becomes progressively more professionalized. In light of this, Appadurai (2006) explains that,

it is important to deparochialise the idea of research and make it more widely available to young people with a wide range of interests and aspirations. Research,

in this sense, is not only the production of original ideas and new knowledge (as it is normally defined in academia and other knowledge-based institutions). It is also something simpler and deeper. It is the capacity to systematically increase the horizons of one's current knowledge... it is also tied to what I have recently called 'the capacity to aspire' (Appadurai, 2004), the social and cultural capacity to plan, hope, desire and achieve socially valuable goals. The uneven distribution of this capacity is both a symptom and a measure of poverty, and it is a form of maldistribution that can be changed by policy and politics (p. 176).

Highlighting both the need for building capacity to undertake strategic inquiries and construct knowledge, and the call to deparochialise the concept of research, Appadurai lays the ground for disrupting what is considered research, who is considered a researcher and more importantly, opening up the possibility that young people are *already* researchers.

YPAR situates lived experience as the starting point for investigation (Cahill, 2007b). It is a methodology predicated upon the idea that oppressed/marginalized young people have the knowledge to identify and address their own oppression and that given the tools, they can "liberate themselves" (Freire, 1970). Paulo Freire's notion of conscientization - or critical understanding of social, political, economic forces that shape our lived experience - is an influential one in the development of PAR and is employed to contest hegemonic conceptualizations of where social problems originate. However, centering those that are marginalized as the solution to their oppression may serve to again (re)locate the problem and the marginalization in them, again bolstering neoliberal enthusiasm for dominant YPAR.

Engaging young people in PAR challenges social exclusion and builds the capacity of youth to analyze and make change in their own lives and communities. YPAR

foregrounds “marginalized” youth voices, often identified as such on the basis that youth are

[under] increasing pressure to adapt to the requirements of the ‘new economy’ and as young people attempt to negotiate this neoliberal context, society’s anxieties about political and economic changes are projected onto their bodies and they get blamed for emergent social problems (Cahill, 2007b: 297).

While not all young people are marginalized in the same ways, youth as a group (if defined below the age of majority) are de jure excluded from various formal/official opportunities for resistance or to have influence in official decision-making processes that affect their lives. Dominant YPAR rhetoric centers young people, reifying the artificial colonial/capitalist division of youth from their community. YPAR as a framework regulates the definition of youth as a distinct category, based on the exclusion of young people from research channels/opportunities. This rhetoric and judgment is based upon a hegemonic conceptualization of youth, often regulating the possible subjectivities of young people.

The literature describes the ideal dominant YPAR as a research process that involves co-researchers in all stages of the process (e.g. Conrad & Kendal, 2009; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Foster-Fishman et al., 2010; Hiebert & Swan, 1999). Although limited, literature about YPAR that involves young people at a high degree takes a youth-centered approach, wherein young people define the research questions, are trained in research skills, and undertake an inquiry through the process of gathering knowledge, action and reflection as co-researchers in partnership with adult allies, and take action to effect social change (e.g. Cahill, 2007c; Cahill et al., 2008; Romero et al., 2008; Torre & Fine et al., 2008). This multigenerational (as opposed to intergenerational) approach works to maintain “youth” and “adult” categories. Arguably, what distinguishes

PAR processes from other methodologies is the focus on addressing power in terms of ownership and control of research and action (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). As with other PAR processes, YPAR must negotiate the challenges of unequal power dynamics and social inequities, but YPAR has the additional challenge that young people may understand researchers to occupy more authority and power simply because they are adults. Therefore, addressing positionality and attention to privilege is key in the YPAR process (Cahill, 2007c). In dominant YPAR, this is often limited to positionality in terms of age-based categories. However, YPAR projects (as other PAR processes with unequal power relations) tend to be located within a spectrum of participation practices, in which degrees of youth decision-making and leadership roles vary significantly, and may mask tokenism or dominant interests (Cahill, 2007c; Hiebert & Swan, 1999).

#### *Arts-based practices in YPAR*

In the literature, YPAR is frequently characterized by arts-based methods that work to engage young people, maximize participation and serve to be better matched to “developmental needs” of young people. One of the principles of YPAR is the recognition that there are multiple methods of producing knowledge of the world, which are more accurate at understanding the ontological complexity, nonlinearity and unpredictability of experience and being in the world (Kincheloe, 2009). However, what is distinctive about YPAR “is not the methods, but the methodological contexts of their application” (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1667). In other words, arts-based methods have been used within more positivist/conventional research methodologies, just as more conventional methods can be used in YPAR for social action.

Arts-based and other non-typical research methods are often designated as a “counter-practice”. As bell hooks (1995) suggests, “art is politically liberating due to its ability to defamiliarize the familiar and decolonize the imagination” (hooks, 1995 in Mullin, 2003, p. 206). As a way to fundamentally change research activities, arts-based methods claim to subvert masculinist ways of knowing, and tap into “tacit knowledge” that may not be assertable (Eisner, 2002, p. 12), bringing forth a more visceral and “unmediated” voice. Arts-based methods are intended to provide multiple ways for informal social constructions of knowledge that parallel existing parallel practices in communities and activist movements (Hall, 2001). Creative processes are touted to engage the disengaged, reducing alienation through the use of unconventional representations of an issue and promoting plurality by including diverse and contradictory views (Mullin, 2003). Further, the arts intend to disrupt the masculinist/rationalist division between feeling and thinking (Eisner, 2002; Clover, 2007), which can be more conducive to exploring complex experiences. In terms of action, arts-based methods have been described to enable empowerment through imagination of how things could be different and imagine solutions (Finley, 2003; Huss, 2007). Feminist PAR practitioners have taken up various arts-based methods in order to access/express embodied knowledge, challenge the mind/body dualism, politically reclaim the arts, provide counter-stories that are accessible to the general public, and undertake collective action and advocacy (e.g. Clover, 2007; West & Stalker, 2007).

Arts-based inquiry is not new, it has been used in various methodological, therapeutic and pedagogical frameworks. Conceptualized as a way to merge theory and practice, arts-based methods have surfaced within a reflexive turn in the social sciences

towards participatory action research characterized by artist and researcher activism. Research with marginalized populations has provoked concerns that have been termed a “crisis of representation” that challenged the ways in which research speaks for/about the “Other”, exploiting them and “leaving them voiceless in the telling of their own stories” (Finley, 2005, p. 682). Arts-based methods literature claims that involving marginalized youth in creative inquiry and expression can circumvent this “crisis” by foregrounding the “pure voice” of young co-researchers that can be found in their unadulterated artwork (Finley, 2005). Within PAR methodology, there is also a shift to collective meaning-making wherein the audience makes meaning from their emotive/affective experiences of art. This quality is described as a practice of hybridity and boundary-crossing that blurs the lines between researchers, participants, and audiences (Finley, 2005).

Arts-based methods put the tools of cultural production into co-researchers hands. Technological media and especially video are popular in the (Y)PAR literature as they are suited for self-representation, resisting dominant narratives, artistic expression, sharing learning, focusing on a topic and having fun (e.g. Evans et al., 2009a; Kindon, 2003; Riecken et al., 2006; Stewart et al., 2008). Video is constructed as cultural media with which “youth have an affinity” (Conrad & Kendal, 2009, p. 260). This enthusiasm for youth and technology aligns well with neoliberal constructions of youth; young people’s uptake of emergent technology is seen as evidence of their ability to handle the flux of the unpredictable, risky times characterizing late modernity (Harris, 2001). Arts-based methods seek to end the monopoly of the written word and opens up other cultural traditions (e.g. oral traditions) that are already part of community life. These methods are constructed as spaces for cultural exchange (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, Conrad &

Kendal, 2009). Thus, in the literature, arts-based inquiry is constructed as a method to work with women from different cultures so that they are not alienated by verbal articulation or “foreign” ways of exploration that characterize Western inquiry processes (Huss & Cwikel, 2005).

Feminist PAR practitioners highlight the importance of selecting the appropriate method and using it politically. For example, the mindful selection of art materials and media is used to reclaim and subvert types of media that have been associated with sexist and denigrating notions of the work/art of many marginalized groups (women, Indigenous peoples, etc.). For example, West & Stalker (2007) use fabric art, which has been marginalized and belittled as “craft” to explore issues of cultural identity in New Zealand, and Clover (2007) uses quilting to share women’s stories of sexualized violence. In these examples, the use of textiles and cloth materials have been used politically due to the intrinsic properties of fabrics and their marginalized status in the marketplace. The properties of fabric - cheap, soft, portable, and resilient – make them accessible, easy to share with diverse audiences across geographical divides, and associated with comfort and safer learning spaces. In addition, they can be artistically worked by those that are not typically considered as artists and are associated with the bodies of the wearers who are typically not those in power (West & Stalker, 2007). Further, fabrics are oppositional and have the ability to highlight dichotomies and complexities (Clover, 2007). These characteristics can be subversive when fabric arts are applied to engage in difficult issues of oppression and violence, using something familiar and comfortable to explore the unfamiliar and uncomfortable (Clover, 2007). At the same time, the context of the materials (as feminine and/or as marginalized) and the assumptions underlying the

“relational” value of arts-based methods (e.g. Huss & Cwikel, 2005) are problematic. In other words, the assumption that the relational nature of arts-based methods is inherently empowering and facilitates feminist social change serves to (re)gender research methods without critically unpacking the implications. These (re)gendered art practices thus serve to fix identities and homogenous definitions, rather than challenge hegemonic constructions of girlhood and/or the racialized Other.

### *Critiques of dominant YPAR*

Too easily in this contemporary conception of youth participation, YPAR is a methodology that either romanticizes and essentializes the perspectives of the oppressed, negating the heterogeneity across and among subjugated/marginalized groups, or it embraces facile notions of participation that serve as new and more hegemonically sophisticated modes of exclusion (Kincheloe, 2009, p. 120).

Youth PAR rhetoric of “participation”, “voice”, and the idea of “sharing” one’s experience are insufficient to open space for and/or acknowledge the importance of speaking back to, resisting and challenging problematic constructions of girls that subordinate the heterogeneity of/among racialized and Indigenous girls and women (Ellsworth, 1989). These YPAR buzzwords have become iconic metaphors (Bowers & Flinders, 1990) in both the literature and practice, historically and culturally grounded in critical pedagogies and participatory approaches to inquiry. As such, they have not been subject to scrutiny despite the misuse or misrepresentations of these ideas, or the discernment of these terms in other discourses (e.g. feminist theories). For example, through feminist conceptualizations of *oppositional* voice and intentionally anti-racist and intergenerational approaches, these iconic metaphors can be deconstructed and problematized. As Fine et al. (2007) caution, “youth research is becoming very popular these days. It is important then, that the political and epistemological rootings of youth

research are strong or the tip to becoming superficial and patronizing is too predictable” (p. 826).

Various practitioners (e.g. Grande, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) have critically observed that (Y)PAR practices are increasingly being defined by what Kapoor and Jordan (2009) call “an onto-epistemic Euro-American cultural modernization imperative with its attendant homogenizing and assimilationist cultural-educational-research implications” (p. 2). In contradiction to (Y)PAR claims of valuing and centering subaltern forms of knowledge, these practices serve to produce new forms of colonization. Further, practitioners identify an increasing co-optation of processes of participation for processes of control and discipline (e.g. Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Kapoor & Jordan, 2009; Jordan, 2009) and the professionalization of (Y)PAR practices (Kapoor, 2009; Kapoor & Jordan, 2009). These shifts belie (Y)PAR goals to democratize the means of knowledge production, excluding all but those recognized by Western standards as research experts, and using participation as a technology of regulation. Together, these characteristics of many contemporary YPAR practices serve neoliberal goals and reproduce hegemonic subject formation, through the “whitening” process of the good, heteronormative, neoliberal, citizen-to-be girl subject. The literature cautions practitioners that “the neoliberal discourse of participation [...] continues to appropriate and reconstitute PAR in ways that are antithetical to its expressed principles, inclusive practices, and values” (Jordan, 2009, p. 22). As practitioners/researchers, we must unearth the hidden ways that

the epistemological schema and ideological constructs of dominant power blocs subvert the democratic, anticolonial, and emancipatory dimensions of such critical theoretical/critical pedagogical research [and intentions that] fall victim to unexamined epistemological assumptions that reinscribed particular forms of white

supremacy, class bias, gender oppression, and colonial relationships (Kincheloe, 2009, p. 108).

Critiques from feminist and Indigenous research focus on the ways in which (Y)PAR reinscribes difference, and is not an “innocent” methodology that can automatically escape the same colonizing logics of positivist research (Evans et al., 2009b). As a fundamental problematic of YPAR, we must still consider how to work with the “Other” in a society immersed in and structured by racism without reproducing racialized identities and colonial representations of the Other. Constructs of marginalized youth or girl researcher, and/or “the oppressed” work to secure racial othering, feeding into the “damage” discourse and denial of complex personhood (Riecken et al., 2005; Tuck, 2009b). In other words, “why would research *with* ‘Others’ mean they are no longer produced as ‘Others’?” (Fischer, 1997 in Evans et al., 2009b, p. 899).

### *Critical YPAR*

As a response to critiques of YPAR, as well as those of youth participation approaches above, various collectives are undertaking critical YPAR that is informed by feminist, decolonizing, critical race and postcolonial theories (see for example, Cahill et al., 2008; Torre & Fine et al., 2008; Tuck et al., 2008). In social psychology, Martín-Baró articulated three urgent tasks that have been central in what Torre et al., (forthcoming) term critical PAR: 1) recovering historical memory; 2) de-ideologizing everyday experience; and 3) using people’s virtues/strengths and expanding notions of expertise (Torre et al., forthcoming). Following these tasks, critical YPAR challenges hegemonic notions about where social problems originate, promotes deep participation and provokes collective engagement, produces knowledge that awakens a sense of injustice, and

contests distinctions between theory and application, science and advocacy (Torre et al., forthcoming).

Critical YPAR is concerned with tracking historic and contemporary forces of domination and resistance and revolutionizing social policy (Fine et al., 2007). These processes are explicitly political: they seek to reveal uneven power relations and structural distributions of resources, and “trouble ideological categories projected onto communities (delinquent, at risk, damaged, innocent, victim) and contest how [Eurocentric/Western] ‘science’ has been recruited to legitimate dominant policies and practices” (Torre et al., forthcoming, p. 2). Critical YPAR appreciates these geopolitical power dynamics of knowledge production (Kincheloe, 2009).

This new wave of critical YPAR strives towards an intergenerational, feminist, critical and collective analysis of power that reveals dominant interests, and serves as formal resistance to social injustice that leads to transformation (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Critical YPAR embeds reflexive practices that focus on analyzing power dynamics within the YPAR process, and critically engages with young people’s experiences of oppression and their connections to historic and structural issues of race, gender, and class (Torre, 2005; Torre & Fine et al., 2008). These strong examples of critical YPAR recognize young people’s agency and competency, while at the same time recognizing that young people’s agency is mediated by hegemonic forces and disrupting the categories that essentialize youth (i.e. refusing to pathologize them as “at-risk” and/or to romanticize them as rebels of dominant culture).

Various theoretical frameworks inform critical YPAR methodologies. Feminist, postcolonial and critical race theoretical frameworks focus on issues of power, agency,

and representation using various intersectional lenses (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1999; Ayala, 2009; Burman, 2004; Crenshaw, 1995; Gore, 1992; Maguire, 2001b; Maguire 2004; Mohanty, 2003; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

### *Feminist Participatory Action Research*

Often critiqued for a lack of focus on gender, critical YPAR has been influenced significantly by feminist theory and practice. However, feminist researchers articulate that many PAR frameworks do not include feminist analyses, practices, or agendas (Maguire, 2001a). The foundational connections between feminism and PAR include shared objectives of disrupting power relations, rethinking purposes of research, and reworking the research and knowledge production processes (Maguire, 2001b). Maguire (2001b) suggests that a feminist perspective shares PAR's critiques of the traditional social science research paradigm, and enriches PAR by bringing a heightened focus to gender, multiple identities and intersections, voice, everyday experiences, and power. There are many feminisms, but they have some common tenets: women face oppression, which is experienced differently depending on multiple intersections of identity; feminists are committed to revealing and understanding underlying forces of oppressions; and feminists are dedicated to taking action in order to end oppressions (Corbett et al., 2007). Therefore, a feminist approach to critical YPAR theorizes gender, promotes emancipatory goals, and recognizes the way that gender is embedded in power structures, patriarchal systems and ways of thinking and producing knowledge.

A feminist lens brings an analysis of gender and intersectional identities to critical YPAR. Feminist PAR is not limited to gender oppression, but rather an intersectional approach recognizes that a social category (e.g. gender) is structured and experienced in

relation with other oppressions (e.g. racism, ageism, heterosexism, etc.). It also provides an understanding of the constraints and opportunities produced by the intersection of structures (of race, gender, class, etc.) (Burman, 2004). Thus, collaborative PAR work is constrained by racism, sexism, poverty, etc. and these oppressions are mediated by power in different situations (Maguire, 2001b; Maguire, 2004). The concept of intersectionality moves away from mutually exclusive categorizations and divisive identity politics, providing common ground for inclusive collaborative work such as critical YPAR. The concept of intersectionality and the ability to share and value everyday experiences is a starting point recognizing social relations, building coalitions while still articulating difference rather than reductionist sameness, and for mobilizing and politicizing people (Maguire, 2001b).

An important addition of a feminist perspective to critical YPAR is the location of our gendered (and otherwise marginalized/privileged) identities as researchers. Historically, PAR and action research (AR) theorists (mostly male) have not located how their gendered identities have shaped their practice. In particular, the work of Paulo Freire, while contributing greatly to deparochializing research, has been taken up in masculinist ways, embedding Eurocentric patriarchal language into contemporary PAR discourse (Hall, 1981; Maguire, 2001a; Naples, 2003). However, feminist PAR is committed to avoiding the production of more “alienated knowledge which leaves no trace of the conditions of its production or the social conditions from which it arose” (Maguire, 2001b, p. 65). In feminist PAR, the researchers are not anonymous; it is an impossibility to remove the personal self from the ethnographic self (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Maguire, 2001b). Having grounding in feminist theory alone is not enough, rather,

FPAR requires examining our own multiple identities as co-researchers and the resulting implications for our research (Maguire, 2004).

Dominant discourses of empowerment in YPAR treat power as commodity and empowerment is conceived as a transactional process, from adult to youth (Cargo et al., 2003). The emancipatory goals of feminist PAR involve empowering those with less power, releasing them from constraints of unjust and unsatisfying social structures that limit their subjectivities (Khanlou & Peter, 2005). Following Foucault (1980), conceptualizing power as something that circulates and is exercised within all relationships reveals uneven relations of power. Within this frame, rather than having as the goal to empower (i.e. in the sense of giving power as a commodity), critical YPAR practice would need to intentionally exercise power differently, and realign the “net-like” organization of power (Foucault, 1980, p. 98) to transform the configurations that constitute “agent of empowerment” and “disempowered other” subject positions. In other words, recognizing the contingency of subject formation (as an effect of power), and rejecting the individualism assumed in discourses of empowerment could disrupt hierarchical relations of power (Foucault, 1977; Gore, 1995; Gore, 1992; Grosz, 2002) while also being attuned to the ways in which they work in other contexts.

Empowerment, in this sense, is then defined as analyzing the causes of asymmetric power relations, acting to change unjust conditions, and individuals coming to a new power relationship with the contexts in which they live. A feminist approach promotes reflexivity to understand the complex effects of the exercise of power and implications in knowledge production, revealing the contradictory effects of empowerment. In other words, empowerment and disempowerment intersect: dominant YPAR processes that

attempt to empower can (will) disempower as well in different moments and for multiple subjectivities (Lennie et al., 2003). Paradoxically, this can “function to empower the already empowered more than those positioned in need of empowerment” (Burman, 2004).

A more reflective and nuanced approach reveals Foucaultian “regimes of truth” pervading emancipatory work that may be potentially oppressive in certain situations or contexts (Lennie et al., 2003). Thus, feminist-grounded PAR challenges practitioners to further uncover dominant discourses and self-reflexively question practices in terms of how they may be contributing to oppression and dominance (Maguire, 2001b). Dominant YPAR discourses are concerned with encouraging youth to have their voices heard. This is also true of FPAR and other girl-centered programming that is concerned with eliminating silence of girls’ voices and experiences (Harris, 2003). However, girls involved in politicized movements reject mainstream forms of youth participation because “they are highly suspicious of the privatized, marketized, and nonrepresentative nature of the neoliberal state and of the interests of those who may be eager to elicit their voices” (Harris, 2004, p. 178). In turn, silence may be required if the listener is not worthy (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001). In the same way that empowerment is not something done to or for, critical YPAR is not about “giving” voice, but rather about eliminating barriers and providing opportunities for oppositional (to the status quo) speaking and naming. A feminist approach is concerned with revealing mechanisms that keep people from speaking, such as censorship, suppression, intimidation, marginalization, trivialization, ghettoization, discounting, and gatekeeping (Maguire, 2001b).

*Anti-oppressive, decolonizing, critical race and postcolonial approaches*

Based in European imperialism and colonialism, “race, as a category, was linked to human reason and morality, to science, to colonialism and to the rights of citizenship in ways that produced the racialized discourse and racist practices of modernity” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 45). As a result, typical Western research methodologies are based upon colonial interpretations and appropriations of spiritual, political, social, psychological and cultural knowledge. Based on an understanding that all knowledge is socially constructed, an anti-oppressive approach is “not a process to discover knowledge, but a political process to co-create and rediscover knowledge” (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 261). Dominant YPAR processes, despite their emancipatory goals and valuing of different knowledge systems, may serve to further oppress and dominate colonized peoples through methodological colonization (i.e. YPAR methodology is not immune to new iterations of colonialism). In order to take an anti-oppressive approach, the gaze of research must be reframed and aimed towards the forces that produce subjects as Others, towards practices and relations of power including whiteness.

Dominant YPAR assumes that the researcher and the “researched” are one and the same, or at the very least, allied. Thus, mainstream YPAR’s starting assumption is that the researcher-researched have already developed a critical consciousness of power dynamics within society that outline the oppressor-oppressed dynamic and that they are starting from those in marginalized positions (Moosa-Mitha, 2005; Rutman et al., 2005). However, research and practice are not value neutral, and such a simplified relation between oppressor and oppressed does not adequately describe a complex context wherein multiple positionings, hybrid identities, neo-imperialism and ongoing

colonization are present in the research process. Alternatively, anti-oppressive approaches to YPAR research and practice focus on the location of the practitioner or researcher (Rutman et al., 2005), refusing to assume that they are outside of relations of power. Further, an anti-oppressive approach “challenges the practitioner or researcher to continually question his or her ‘location’ in terms of beliefs, values, identity, and power, as well as to identify ways in which he or she perpetuates those power imbalances. As such, the ‘location’ of the researcher is continuously examined and recognized as an integral part of the research process” (Rutman et al., 2005, p.157). Anti-oppressive approaches begin by examining beliefs, values, identity, power, etc. with the intention of challenging oppressions that are often invisible or hidden in the research process and methodology.

Decolonizing methodologies recognize and disrupt the colonial influences and roots of research methodologies (e.g. the Western concept of individual property ownership, which is extended to intellectual property). Decolonizing methodologies value Indigenous (and other Others’) knowledge and ways of knowing and expressing, removing enclosures or partitions that separate and marginalize the Other, with recognition of the historical effects of erasure, suppression, and discipline, or of current “benevolent imperialism” (Spivak in Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 70) that tokenizes marginalized voices. As an analytical framework, critical race theories (CRTs) explore difference and inequity using multiple (decolonizing) methodologies (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2008). CRTs and critical YPAR intersect, both recognizing that people (e.g. youth, girls) grow up in uneven racialized, classed spaces, with unevenly distributed resources and opportunities. Those historically/systemically betrayed communities

develop critical wisdom and tactics of subversion. Critical YPAR and CRTs are focused on change (political, theoretical, cultural, institutional, community and/or interpersonal), challenging discourses of “at-risk”, “victims”, and stereotypes of marginalized communities. Further, they make visible and “speak aloud the consequences of systematic structural and symbolic violence” (Fine, 2009, p. 3). In addition, critical race theories and critical YPAR both function to expand notions of expert knowledges, recognize multiple identities and loyalties, and similarly to FPAR, take an intersectional approach (e.g. YPAR addresses layers of participation), complicate identity categories (e.g. YPAR engages differences for more equal participation), and make visible the political nature of knowledge production (Torre, 2009).

Critical YPAR intersects with borderlands scholarship (e.g. Tuck et al., 2008), opening a “third space of possibility and conflict characterized by hybridity and complexity” (Ayala, 2009, p. 71), challenging dualism, essentialism, and humanism. These in-between spaces blur the boundaries and provide new theorizing spaces as sites to reclaim and legitimize knowledges of those that are systematically left out of the legitimated knowledge production (Anzaldúa, 1999). Critical YPAR and borderlands scholarship explore the politics of space, and inter-group relations in the “contact zone”, a politicized social space “where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt, 1991 in Torre & Fine, 2008, p. 24). Despite the historical colonial context of the problematic term “contact”, theorizing this PAR as a messy space of encounter allows an interrogation of social relations in these spaces beyond simplified binaries, an exploration of how subjects are

constituted in these relations, and also an examination of the “multi(ple/peopled) constructions of knowledge and research” (Torre & Fine, 2008, p. 25).

As a feminist, anti-racist, intergenerational, girl-centered PAR process, the Spaces of Encounter does not easily fit within existing PAR frameworks. Due to the integration of various critical theories and girl-centered practice with PAR, I locate the process described in this study as aligned more closely with critical YPAR literature, following the lead of various practitioners that include Michelle Fine, Caitlin Cahill, María Elena Torre, Julio Cammarota, and Eve Tuck, among others. I draw from and build upon critical YPAR frameworks, explicitly employing postcolonial theory in order to explore and analyze decolonizing PAR praxis within a context of dominant whiteness and ongoing colonialism.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I employ Sandra Harding's useful definition of methodology as "a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed" and method as "a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence" (Harding, 1987, p. 2-3). I will briefly describe the methodologies that inform the Spaces of Encounter project, the methods we used and procedural details, as well as the methodology, methods and data sources that I have used in my thesis.

Various theoretical concepts informed the methodology and practices undertaken in the Spaces of Encounter PAR process. Much of antidote's work is based in feminist, anti-racist and decolonizing practices that serve to name, theorize and mobilize from the intersections of racism and other "subordinations". The methodology of this study follows antidote's approach to activism, while seeking to maintain consistency across methodology, method, conceptual framework and research focus to ensure a high level of internal validity. For my thesis, as a project within a project, my analysis builds upon and extends the collective work of the research facilitation team as we reflexively analyzed relations of power within - and made meaning of - our practices.

#### *Youth Participatory Action Research*

My thesis is based upon, and uses data from, the Spaces of Encounter study. Therefore, I will describe the Spaces of Encounter methodology, of which my thesis is a subsequent cycle. As developed within Chapter 2, the Spaces of Encounter is closely aligned with a critical Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) methodological framework. As a feminist, anti-racist, intergenerational, girl-centered PAR process

invested in decolonizing practice, the Spaces of Encounter also contests and nuances many dominant YPAR tenets, which emerges in the analysis chapters of this thesis. As mentioned more in depth in Chapter 2, PAR describes a wide array of approaches, and is an emergent and responsive form of co-constructed praxis without prescription. As a highly contextual methodology, this PAR study was designed to place the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous and racialized girls at the centre of research, action and policy that directly affects their lives. We chose to use a PAR framework for this project because of epistemological and ontological consistencies with youth participation, feminist theory, anti-oppressive approaches, decolonizing methodologies, critical race theories and postcolonial borderlands scholarship (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1999; Crenshaw, 1995; Fals-Borda, 1979; Fine & Torre, 2004; Kovach, 2005; Lykes, 2001; Martín-Baró, 1994, Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). PAR challenges the narrow confines of Euro-Western definitions of what counts as research and who can be a researcher, not only situating research as an everyday practice accessible to those marginalized from the typical means of knowledge production, but also situating the marginalized “Other” as *already* knowledgeable. As such, PAR provided an opportunity for the girls and young women in the research project to identify and study social issues in their lives, share and reflect on their knowledge and experience, and create action for social change. At the same time, this project intended to disrupt homogenized youth-centered participatory methodologies by unpacking the generalized category of “youth” via intersecting identity categories such as “race”, “gender”, “sexuality”, etc., all of which are contested categories.

Despite the contingent aspect of PAR practices, there are several tenets that are foundational in the literature, and were important principles in this research design. These include the following:

- A collective process that eschews individualist claims to knowledge production of traditional objective researchers that exploit the knowledge of their 'subject'.  
Knowledge is multi-vocal and not necessarily coherent.
- A horizontal (re)distribution of power that addresses structurally asymmetrical power relations and recognizes the girls as co-researchers.
- A reconstitution of epistemic space that expands what 'counts' as knowledge and disrupts Western divisions between epistemology and ontology (Battiste, 2000).  
Knowledge is grounded in everyday experiences.
- Co-researchers participate in all stages of the cycle(s) of PAR.
- The process is cyclical in nature (e.g. reflection, analysis, action) and the methodology is critical of linear thinking or reductive causal explanations that assume minimal influencing factors.
- An iterative integration of theory and practice (i.e. praxis) that disrupts divisions between research/science, advocacy and activism.
- A critical consciousness (i.e. conscientization) that reveals links between micro-level experiences and macro-level forces, and de-ideologizes everyday experience.
- A process that is emergent and responsive.
- A political commitment to action and social change.

In addition, the methodological approach of this study borrows from feminist PAR, critical race theories and decolonizing praxis to develop an intersectional approach to research design, practice and analysis.

Ultimately, my framework is concerned with locating multiply positioned researchers and addressing power through an anti-oppressive, feminist lens, decolonizing methodologies and postcolonial theories that work to identify and disrupt multiple hegemonies that are embedded in discourses and practices of knowledge production. My thesis methodology extends across a living and evolving process of girl-centered PAR and research facilitation team-centered PAR that share all of the tenets and qualities as described. The latter involves the research facilitation team without the active participation of the girl co-researchers in the ongoing collective analysis of our practices.

### *Participants*

There are 4 types of participants:

- 1) The main participants of the Spaces of Encounter project were twenty-three girls and young women between the ages of 12 and 19 years of age that identify as Indigenous and/or as racial minorities living in Greater Victoria, British Columbia. Twelve girls self-identified as having Indigenous ancestry. I describe them as girl co-researchers to intentionally disrupt positivist notions of subjects as objects of research, while also recognizing that our disruptions were mediated and partial. The girl co-researchers were recruited through various antidote networks and contacts by the research facilitators. They were screened based on 3 criteria:
  - 1) Whether they self-identify as Indigenous and/or racialized;
  - 2) whether they have thought about issues and experiences related to their self-identity in Victoria;

and 3) whether they would be comfortable talking about these issues and experiences in a group. In addition, during recruitment, some of the girls responded about their interests and about types of activities and media that they would like to learn about.

A pre-program meet and greet was held for the girls and young women to meet each other and the research facilitators. During this meet and greet, we went over the consent form and provided time to answer questions about the summer research program. We invited parents and/or guardians of the girls and young women to join us to answer any of their questions about the summer research program and to go over parental consent for girls under 13 years of age.

- 2) The Gurl Leaders, who fit within the above category, are girls that have extensive experience with antidote, in terms of discussing issues related to their experiences as racial minorities and Indigenous girls and young women. As a result of their experiences, they possess significant experiential knowledge and critical perspectives about their experiences as racialized minority girls in Victoria. In addition, many of them participated in earlier phases of the larger research program, informing this phase based on themes that emerged from their earlier involvement. The Gurl Leaders had additional roles and responsibilities in designing and supporting the summer program based on their previous experience with antidote and their interest in taking on more engaged roles. For example, a small group of antidote Gurl Leaders that attended the summer PAR program provided input into some of the design and development of the program.

- 3) The research facilitators, including myself, were responsible for facilitating the discussions and workshops, and delivering the summer program. In addition to myself, the research facilitators were made up of four antidote staff including the executive director; gurlz club facilitator; Indigenous facilitator, and public relations/fundraiser. They bring various expertise and experience in feminist, anti-racist organizing and activism, girl-centered programs, media and public relations, and/or logistics and staff coordination. As racialized and Indigenous young women from various ethnic backgrounds including East Indian, Filipino, Métis, and Chinese respectively, their experiences as racialized women in Victoria bring experiential knowledge to the study. In addition, the staff (except for the ED) were students at UVic, and as a team, we brought with us academic backgrounds in women's studies, linguistics, education, geography, and commerce. In addition, we also had various partners involved in facilitating the program, including a professional videographer from MediaNet and an Indigenous counselor from Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services.
- 4) The principal investigators of the overall research program include three women faculty members in Women's Studies and Child and Youth Care, two of whom were also research facilitators. They come from Chinese, Argentinean and Indigenous (Maliseet) backgrounds, with varying experiences as racialized women in both large and small cities in Canada. They brought additional expertise in early childhood education, anti-racist and anti-colonial

activism/organizing, and girl-centered programming. For ease of description, I use the term “research facilitation team” to describe the research facilitators and principal investigators. Various relations of power were continuously shifting within the research facilitation team, which shaped our PAR practice. Our multiple positionalities (e.g. undergraduate student, graduate student, supervisor, principal investigator, staff, coordinator, executive director, sistah, auntie, facilitator, administrator, activist, volunteer, academic, among others) constituted us in complex power relations with one another. These included structures of power within academia, organizational structures within antidote, as well as those based on age, experience, and expertise – and of course economies of power that functioned complexly across all of these. Thus, decisions and practices were fraught with tensions that served to shape and limit PAR practice. The research facilitation team operated through negotiations that were never completely resolved, and so although we are all complicit in our practices, our agency in this complicity is partial and constrained.

### *Site and timeline*

The girls and young women recruited for Spaces of Encounter came from the greater Victoria area, located within traditional Coast Salish Territory. The greater Victoria area encompasses over 358,000 people based on 2010 census data. According to the 2006 census, 9,130 people out of a total population of over 75,000 (or 12%) identified as visible minorities (non-white settlers) in the City of Victoria (Statistics Canada, 2006b). 2,835 people (just under 4%) identified as Aboriginal and of these, 195 are girls between

the ages of 10 and 19 years (Statistics Canada, 2006a)<sup>7</sup>. Although the majority of the girls live in the city, this data serves only to outline the locality of the PAR process, not necessarily the localities of the lived experiences of all of the girls. As the context for this summer research program, these social statistics recognize the isolation of racialized and Indigenous girls in Victoria and challenge the generalizations about visible minority youth from research based in multicultural metropolises such as Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal where 40%-50% of the population are visible minorities (de Finney, 2010; Lee, 2004; Lee, 2005a; Lee & De Finney, 2004). As mentioned in Chapter 1, locality and context play a role in mediating social, cultural and physical exclusion of Indigenous and racialized girls. In Victoria, dominant whiteness is ubiquitous as a cultural system that is ideologically, historically and materially based and reproduced in dominant formations such as educational institutions, media, political systems, and urban geographies. As a result, there are few opportunities for racialized and Indigenous girls to “develop critical consciousness of their own racialized subjectivities, let alone those of other girls” (de Finney, 2010, p. 476).

The summer research program sessions took place at the University of Victoria campus, a space that cannot escape from whiteness. Our team arranged transportation (e.g. rides, bus tickets, etc) to and from the program to ensure that it is accessible to participants. Participants were expected to attend five program days spread across two weeks in July, from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm (to accommodate their summer school schedules). These program days occurred on July 14, 16, 18, 21 and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009. On the first four days, we explored the four themes of the project using arts-based methods and

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<sup>7</sup> A breakdown of gender, age, and/or ethnicity were not available for the Greater Victoria Area in census data.

focused discussion groups. The fifth day of the program was dedicated to producing various multi-media projects, as a culmination of various discussions, art products, skill building in various media, and footage taken over the first four days. These products are available on the antidote website at: <http://gurlz.antidotenetwork.info/blog/>. For a detailed description of the program itinerary, please see Appendix 2. The research facilitation team met for several planning meetings beginning in May, 2009 at UVic, as well as for debriefs between each of the program days in July, and again after the program was over in September.

A self-selected team of 5 girls/young women, research facilitators and a professional videographer participated in the editing team, which completed 4 mini video vignettes of their experiences at the program. The editing process occurred from Aug. 4-8 and Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009, at MediaNet, a community-based organization that supports and facilitates the use of video and film. Since then, the research facilitation team has been meeting to collectively code and analyze the data as well as develop a short video documentary to share the ways in which we made sense of our practice, which is due for completion at the end of April, 2011.

### *Methods*

For my thesis, I used participant observation to critically reflect on the research process by analyzing audio and video recordings of the images and voices of the research facilitation team during planning and debriefing, research facilitator field notes (including my own), as well as audio and video recordings from the research sessions with the girl co-researchers. Both the involvement of the research facilitation team as well as that of the girls were documented, and the movement of bodies of both the research facilitation

team and the girl co-researchers in front of and behind the camera disrupt typical categories of “observer” and “observed” – revealing multiple perspectives and experiences of the practices in this PAR process (Kendon, 2003).

Although my thesis focuses more closely upon the data generated from the planning and debrief sessions of the research facilitation team, I will provide an overall description of the arts-based methods used in the sessions with girl co-researchers during the Spaces of Encounter PAR in the next section. This description will serve both to describe the ways in which some of the data I analyze has been elicited and also as a way to describe and consider some of the practices used in this study.

#### *Arts-based methods*

The Spaces of Encounter program included arts-based methods integrated with focused discussion groups to explore the four main themes of the research project: stereotypes, social relations, land, and rules. In planning sessions, significant attention was given to thinking about the questions we posed and matching them with relevant methods. We used visual art, percussion, photography, video, and blogging throughout the process in different ways. These arts-based methods were used across the research process to share experience, to inquire into experience, to evoke meaning-making and analysis, as well as to communicate knowledge to other audiences. As part of our PAR methodology, these methods work to challenge hegemonic Eurocentric dualisms of mind-body.

For example, stereotypes were explored through the use of visual art – a stereotype wall where the girl co-researchers and research facilitators ‘reported’ on the violent words and stereotypes that they hear everyday. This was not only a way to

“collect data”, but a way to act, making these stereotypes “public”, writ large and free of the anonymous or unassailable ways that they circulate in other contexts. This was also an action to transform the words, subverting them by rewriting them, crossing things out, adding new meanings to transform the violence into new representations. As a visual-textual product, the stereotype wall is a large sheet of cloth that can be transported and presented to new audiences to generate ongoing cycles of knowledge sharing and analysis. Mask-making, which is described more in detail in a subsequent chapter, was used to explore questions related to social relations, how we see ourselves and others, and how they see us. The masks evoked analysis as we discussed, opening up new insights and understandings.

Percussion was an important element throughout the process of reflection, inquiry, and action in the Spaces of Encounter. The girl co-researchers and research facilitation team engaged in an Indigenous healing circle with Elder Marie Cooper and Elder-in-training Louise Milburn, the latter of whom led us in a women’s drumming circle and shared songs that were passed on to her from her Elders. We also engaged in a Japanese Taiko drumming circle with an elder from the antidote community. These experiences, while difficult to describe in the language of research method, engaged our bodies, opening up different kinesthetic ways of knowing that are often silenced in other research spaces where conversation- and writing-based work dominates. These experiences located us in the land, in intergenerational and multiracial relationships, and in communities. Through drumming, we were able to bring our bodies back into the process and engage across different cultural traditions.

Before the summer program, the research facilitation team talked about drumming and how to incorporate it in a way that it would not become just another (re)colonizing multicultural “sampling” of cultures, but rather would be a meaningful engagement with one another across difference:

*Just in terms of the drumming workshop, this is where the positive message of connectedness needs to be made: that we are all one people and there is something that connects us and it's our humanity and that drumming taps into that heartbeat – you know, that heartbeat that all drumming resonates with us in that way and connects us even though each culture expresses that connection in different ways. With drumming we can explore that connectivity in a really kinesthetic way, we can move our bodies, we can make sound and it's a non-verbal explanation, so you know, we have to set it up in that way and then we have to debrief it: “what did this feel like to you to be connected, not through your normal senses but through this very visceral embodied way?” and let them talk about that and that's basically giving another way of expressing a connection, about connection, another way for the group to express connection that isn't verbal, that isn't in your head, cognitive, but is kinesthetic, is affective. It hits other ways of knowing and learning. I just think it's an incredible activity so I see the connection very clearly.*

Our challenge was to admit “non-Western cultural production into the Western academy without side-stepping its challenges to metropolitan canons and thus perpetuating the ‘subalternization’ of third world culture” (Spivak, 1987 p. 254). The quotation above reveals the intentionality and reflection that characterized the choice of methods and the construction of this process, wherein the team continually tried to disrupt the dominant discourses (e.g. culture as commodity, romanticizing the Canadian multicultural “mosaic”, etc.) and construct a space that opened other possibilities of meaning.

Throughout the program, the process was also documented through video. Participatory video (PV) provided another type of data collection and observation, with girl co-researchers and the research facilitation team both in front and behind the camera. Girl co-researchers used video as a way to engage differently in discussion from behind the camera. This follows feminist PAR practices that situate PV as a way to destabilize

hierarchical power relations between researcher/researched rather than reproduce voyeuristic, “objective/objectifying” knowledge claims (Kindon, 2003). The footage was used as a data collection method (e.g. videotaping activities and discussions), as analysis (e.g. reviewing and editing video), and as communication products. The video footage provided material for girls to edit and produce short video blogs as action intended to explore and analyze further some of the themes and share them with other audiences. On the final day of the program, the girl co-researchers completed media products to add to the antidote Gurlz blog using video, photos, music, voice-overs, images and/or text. Developed in part as a media skill-building program, experts in audio-recording, photography, blogging, and video provided technical skills and some were available through the process to provide support.

Although the program was intended to integrate the development of a storyboard for a longer documentary video throughout, conceptualization of the documentary was left to the end of the program during the editing sessions. A team of five girl co-researchers worked with facilitators and our partner videographer to review footage, develop, and edit a documentary. Despite the extensive amount of video taken over four days, the footage proved to be a considerable constraint, not only because it was shot without a storyboard in mind, but also due to the selection available to the editing team. Only the aesthetic (read: dynamic and vibrant images) and high quality footage (e.g. clear image and sound) were uploaded by our videographer, often omitting footage with important discussion and content. Thus, the footage showed Indigenous and racialized girls at a fun summer-camp-like program rather than the substance that involved the

complex encounters between and amongst Indigenous and racialized girls within a context of whiteness.

The research facilitation team had presumed that this latter “story” was the one that the girl co-researchers would want to tell (and furthermore, would agree to by consensus), revealing preconceptions that shape practices of PAR. Instead, the editing team worked with the limited footage and developed four mini-documentaries about their experiences of the program from multiple points of view. An additional cycle of PV has emerged through the ongoing collaborative analysis by the research facilitation team, as we reflected on the ways in which our practices are steeped in white noise. As a result, we are currently working on producing a documentary that reflects on our practice. Regardless of limits of the footage, the editing process involves decisions about what to show the audience, and what messages to share, which are all influenced by complex negotiations within whitestream contexts. In other words, the messages are often very positive and diplomatic, carefully shaped and in some cases censored, due to the implications of making the invisible visible to whitestream audiences (Cahill, 2007c).

#### *Data sources*

As described above, the arts-based methods generated several sources of data. However, the data sources that I attend to in my analysis include: 1) Field notes, and 2) audio and video recordings.

- 1) Field Notes: The five research facilitators took jottings throughout the summer program sessions and wrote expanded field notes during ‘expression time’ and after the program. In addition, I took notes during several of the planning meetings prior to the program and some during debriefs. These field notes

describe research facilitator observations, interpretations of what was going on and reflections on practice.

- 2) Audio and video recordings: The morning following each of the five summer research program sessions, the research facilitation team debriefed about the previous day and planned for the following day. There was also a final debrief in September, 2009. These debriefs were audio-recorded (and some were video recorded), as were some of the planning meetings that occurred in May/June before the program sessions. My analysis focuses predominantly on this data, which revealed the ways in which the research facilitation team was discussing, planning and debriefing about practice. In addition, throughout the five summer research program sessions, audio and video data was recorded to capture the process and content of the discussions, arts-based methods, workshops and production of media. I used this data from the sessions to describe the context and analyze the unfolding and material consequences of our practices.

Recognizing that the meaning of the “data” can only be understood in relation to the context of the data production, being immersed in the process involved a reflexive, critical approach to understand tacit and discursive knowledge. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I will examine this “micro” context in relation to socio-political discourses of the larger context within which we are located, with methodological and practice-oriented implications (Burawoy, 1991). Moving along vertical levels of analysis from lived

experiences to state structures and forces establishes ecological validity within this study (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 in Torre et al., forthcoming).

### *Analysis*

My analytical process cannot easily be detached from the collective nature of PAR research, nor from the ongoing collaborative analysis of our research team, who have continued reflection upon our PAR practices. I will begin by describing the collective analysis of the research facilitation team, of which I was a part, and then I will describe my own analysis for this thesis.

Characterized by praxis that is emergent and co-constructed by nature, there are no fixed analytical procedures that can be prescribed for a comprehensive interpretation of such a rich amount of data. As collective ongoing data analysis, the research facilitation team divided the approximately 25 hours of audio and 18 hours of video footage for review amongst five continuing members of the research facilitation team. Each member initially coded data from the summer program as well as some data from our debriefs and planning sessions, which we shared on a password protected Google doc. On the Google doc, we were able to add codes to others' entries. Upon reviewing the codes together as a team, we began to "chunk" the codes, finding duplicates and nuances to group codes together and define higher-level codes and themes. As part of an ongoing collective analysis and critical reflection on our practice, members of the research facilitation team, including myself, have begun to edit a short video documentary.

In order to conduct my analysis for this thesis, I reviewed the lower and higher-level codes generated by the team in order to identify practice-related data using my research questions as a guide. In my analysis, I wanted to honor, and be guided by, the

work done by the research facilitation team. Therefore, I selected situations, moments, and themes related to the “doing” of PAR that were repeated most often in the field notes and came up more frequently in debriefs. I selected these because they signaled critical and sometimes troubling issues for the research facilitation team that required further analysis, resonated with prevalent themes in the YPAR literature, and addressed my research questions.

Although academically required to make knowledge claims that can be somehow attributed to myself alone, I am unable to do so without doubt and ambivalence, not only because I am accountable to our collaborative analysis, but also because I chose a PAR framework for research based in my belief that knowledge is co-constructed and ownership of knowledge is shared. Throughout our collaborative analysis, I have benefitted from the collective input and intellectual work of our research team, and ongoing consultation with them to ensure accuracy, which has shaped my own thesis considerably. At the same time, this process has been a site of challenge and power struggle that have been both productive and silencing. I have struggled with conflicting loyalties and interpretations, and how to be continuously accountable as a member of this PAR community while also meeting the requirements of my academic program.

To illustrate the complexity of knowledge production throughout the collective analysis and my own individual analysis, I have selected the most complicated example in terms of blurred intellectual ownership within my thesis. This example is based on a piece of data that re-emerged frequently in our debriefs and field notes, and is described in more detail in Chapter 5. The data consists of video footage of a debrief conversation about the “heavy issues” that some of the Indigenous girls were bringing up in the

program, and some concern about what to do about it. I had initially brought this video clip to the research facilitation team's attention because it had jumped out to me as a complex moment of care and control in the doing of PAR with racialized and Indigenous girls early on within my own "individual" analysis. As a research team, we collectively analyzed this footage, identifying helping profession discourses that emerged. This footage also became an important scene within our collaborative video-making. In my own analysis, I built upon the collective intellectual work and further examined the multiple ways in which Indigenous girls were being constructed in order to add another layer of analysis. This part of my analysis became further refined through a panel presentation, for which I received feedback from the principal investigators, and was refined yet again in a co-authored article based upon this panel. This is an obvious blurring of individual and collective analysis. In the rest of my thesis, I articulate my individual analyses that do not directly build upon our collective analysis, and/or I extend or contest the analysis we have done collectively. Furthermore, the analytical tools and approach that I have used have been heavily influenced by my participation in the collective analysis. Thus, I am unable to clearly define the border(s) between collective and individual knowledge production; the conceptual/methodological framework of this thesis troubles the colonizing individual/collective dualism that is typically found in traditional academic research. Instead, in my thesis, I conceptualize individuals as contingently and contextually constituted within collectivities by multiple discourses. However, maintaining the framework of this study complicates the ways in which I must meet my academic requirements.

I use the term “we” throughout my thesis to reflect the collective aspect of our practices and also to implicate myself. In my analysis, I have deliberately presented data related to our practice without attribution to anyone specific in our research facilitation team. This is due in part to the small size of our practitioner team in order to preserve some anonymity, and more importantly, because we all moved in and out of dominant colonizing discourses of practice at various moments during the program. Thus, we were all implicated in how we were making meaning and doing our practice, even as our team was multi-vocal, and rarely, if ever, in full agreement. This intentional strategy of anonymity/complicity is important in this situation because it acknowledges the complexity of the members of the research facilitation team, and works to critique essentialist logic. In other words, attributing particular dominant discourses to certain identities, or trying to guess who said what, might inadvertently and reductively presume that identities and practices are coherent, consistent and fixed based on individual positions – for example, the assumption that a background in education presumably explains the deployment of dominant pedagogical discourses. In addition, as mentioned above, due to the multiple ways in which power was always being exercised relationally and contextually, there were many disagreements that went unresolved, unspoken and or unnoticed, further complexifying this anonymity/complicity. By preserving anonymity, I hope to maintain complexity, contingency, and incoherence of identity even if it increases the ambiguity of my writing.

PAR fundamentally rejects positivist approaches to objectifying data and destabilizes hegemonic constructions of validity. Rather, responsiveness to emerging questions, continuous triangulation, and a shared conceptual approach are indicative of

valid claims. Our collective coding process allowed us to calibrate our codes, and contributed a high level of expert validity based on the breadth of different expertise amongst and across our research team including expertise that is simultaneously multidisciplinary, applied, theoretical and experiential (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Torre et al., forthcoming). In addition, our continuous process of moving iteratively between theory and participatory deconstruction of data (not to mention our flux between theory and practice throughout the program), contributed to the construct validity of this study (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Torre et al., forthcoming). In the same way, in my own analysis, I have built upon these codes and have also calibrated my own themes by basing them on the frequency that the research facilitation team returned to particular situations and issues. I triangulated my interpretations to ensure accuracy and reliability with a variety of sources including the research team, the documented voices of the girl co-researchers and community partners recorded in the data, the literature, as well as my own experience of YPAR over the past decade. The collective analysis, my review of the data and the literature review informed how I identified and selected consistent themes within the data. I have selected three main themes that both parallel and speak back to dominant themes within mainstream YPAR literature (either explicitly or implicitly), namely: 1) Decolonizing arts-based methods, 2) Youth participation, and 3) A development-in-time worldview. My analysis seeks to unpack and disrupt the dominant discourses that shape these themes and practices using my conceptual framework. These disruptions and tensions serve to demonstrate - in practice – the struggles of doing PAR within and among legacies of colonialism, state-sanctioned discourses of

multiculturalism, constructs of girlhood, practices of youth participation, and counter movements of resistance and decolonization.

## Chapter 4: Decolonizing arts-based practices in YPAR

In this chapter, I will attend to the ways in which neocolonial formations intervened in our arts-based practices. Arts-based methods are characteristic of many YPAR projects and are increasingly used in participatory research with minoritized youth. Arts-based methods claim to fundamentally disrupt positivist research, subvert masculinist research ideologies, and disrupt the mind/body dualism, which are all important in disrupting hegemonic research practices. However, acritical expectations that arts-based methods in participatory research are inherently empowering, useful or decolonizing simply reinstate YPAR practices as a new form of neocolonial hegemony. On the second day of our summer program, we were faced with the questions, “what is art?” and “what does art *do*?” in our practice. I will concentrate on this particular day to examine some of the complexities of decolonizing arts-based methods in practice, how practices both reproduce and resist dominant activity-based youth and girl participation discourse, and situate them within the framework of YPAR in a context of whiteness.

### *What is art?*

During preparations and program development, the research facilitation team had discussed mask-making as an intentional opportunity to recognize the multiplicity of subjectivities that we navigate everyday; as a skill-building opportunity with this medium; and also, as it connected to the theme that day (social relationships) and related questions we were exploring, including, “how do we see ourselves?” and “how do others see us?” The mask-making activity was constructed as a way to express something about

ourselves and how we understand ourselves, a description of ourselves that may not always be visible beneath the hyper-visible homogenized and stereotypical images of racialized and Indigenous girls and women, so prevalent in Victoria.

As a discrete “activity”, mask-making could not be parachuted into the process, nor are the outcomes predictable or reproducible. In other words, this activity needed to be conceptualized within an ongoing practice that is reflexive and intentionally politicized. Masks have elicited various lines of thought in anti-colonial and post-colonial politics and arts-based activism. Conceptually masks have played an important role as an anti-colonial tool: masks were used to mimic colonial white culture and recognize the dehumanizing effects of colonialism on subject formation, as Fanon discusses in *Black Skin/White Masks* (Fanon, 1952). The symbol of the mask has also been used to undercut colonial hegemony by revealing colonial discourses as relationally constructed by the colonizer *and* the colonized (e.g. Bhabha in Loomba, 1998). Further, the symbol of the mask has been used to describe the double-consciousness (Du Bois, 1994) of seeing one’s self through the eyes of the colonizer, as well as hybrid identities/subjectivities (Anzaldúa, 1999; Ayala, 2009; Bhabha in Loomba, 1998). Yet, despite these possibilities for exploring complex, colonial relations, the activity of mask-making itself is not enough to guarantee decolonizing potentialities without questioning definitions of art, art materials, and approaches to arts-based research.

At the beginning of the second day of the program, C, one of the girl co-researchers, arrived early wearing a beautifully designed purple dress that she had made herself. She approached all of the research facilitators one at a time, to share with us a beautiful felt sleeve that she had made to encase a single eagle feather. She had stayed up

late the night before to finish it and bring it in to share. In our field notes, the facilitators described how important this presentation was, as she shared her Indigenous artistry and conveyed its importance to her. One research facilitator notes:

*[...] I do not think I was the only one who was struggling to find words; there is something very defining about this moment, and it reminds us that this space is truly unique and unexplored.*

We had all realized that this was a significant moment/space that C had constructed, shifting our concept of art in practice to something unexpected. Yet, soon after this moment, we were again immersed in the program of the day and moved quickly into our planned activity: mask-making.

*What is art made of?*

Everyone broke out into small groups, each with a large tub of art materials full of the requisite and unquestioned pedagogical tools of youth participation programs, summer camps, and school classrooms: bright colored markers, crayons, sparkly glue, tissue paper, pipe cleaners and neon-colored feathers. We distributed pre-fabricated plastic white masks for each person to work on. These materials stand in stark juxtaposition with C's dress, feather and leather sleeve. Eisner (2002) points out that there is an important relationship between thinking and the materials that we use: "Each material imposes its own distinctive demands, and to use it well we have to learn to think within it. [...] Each new material offers us new affordances and constraints, and in the process develops the ways in which we think" (p. 13). What are the affordances and constraints of these materials and what are the cultural discourses that they (re)produce? The artificial colors and materials are far removed from natural environments, and serve to bring with them the weight of a consumerist society, not to mention the tacit

hierarchies and neoliberal expectations of mainstream pedagogical environments. What are the materials that we neglected to consider? Does leaving out natural materials limit what can be thought and implicitly communicate that nature is not artful?

As a “counter-practice”, arts-based methods can be “politically liberating due to [their] ability to defamiliarize the familiar and decolonize the imagination” (hooks, 1995 in Mullin, 2003, p. 206). However, if dominant oppressive epistemologies are unproblematically reinscribed, such as Eurocentric conventions and conceptualizations of art (which would not have included C’s feather or dress), or the imposition of a plethora of artificial and pre-fabricated materials (so familiar and unquestioned in dominant pedagogical spaces), the potential of decolonizing research through such practices is undermined. In conversation with Eisner’s (2002) question about affordances and constraints of materials, hooks (in Mullin, 2003) contributes something important about art – that decolonizing our imagination can subvert the dominant uses of materials, re-negotiating constraints and possibilities. For example, artificial materials may better resonate with the lived everyday realities of some of the girls and/or could be used subversively in cultural critiques of imperialism and capitalism, such as Brian Jungen’s *Prototypes for New Understanding* 1998-2005 series.<sup>8</sup> In this series, Jungen uses pieces of Nike running shoes to build masks that mimic traditional Indigenous masks. “Natural” materials may be more appropriate for meaning making and/or to defamiliarize the commercial. However, they may also serve to further romanticize so-called “traditional” or Indigenous cultures. Decolonizing arts-based methods requires considerations of context, meaning-making, and as described in Chapter 2, the implicit assumptions within

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<sup>8</sup> Brian Jungen’s *Prototypes for New Understanding* series were featured by the CBC on Nov. 10, 2005. (<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/artdesign/jungen.html>)

the materials so that they can be used politically and creatively (e.g. West & Stalker, 2007; Clover, 2007).

In juxtaposition with the presentation of her dress and feather earlier, C was hesitant to show or talk about her mask. Her facilitator commented in field notes that C was not very engaged with the activity from the start of the session, disconnected from the mask-making. Looking back, I feel as though we missed an opportunity to shift and respond; C had intentionally brought the artwork that was meaningful to her and already part of her life, a starting place for her to construct meaning in relation to the themes we were exploring with the group, instead of making a mask just for the sake of participating in the activity.

In dominant discourses of YPAR, there are tensions between individual agency and the collective. In YPAR, arts-based inquiry tends to privilege collective art-making and interpretation (e.g. Clover, 2007), and in so doing, can ironically decrease the flexibility of expression. In other words, everyone participates in the same type of arts-based activity based on an already prescribed question to collectively generate interpretations and meanings. Further, these dominant discourses of participation also privilege consensus and group action, marginalizing alternative dissenting voices, and multiple and contradictory perspectives (Cahill, 2007a). C had not “participated” in the mask-making activity. And yet, her intentional presentation of her artwork earlier that day had signaled that she was engaged, and “speaking” to us. Her subsequent disengagement from the mask-making could be constructed as an oppositional voicing – nuancing dominant notions of “participation” and “voice” to include non-participation as a form of resistance or acknowledge its effects in terms of disrupting of dominant

discourses. Framed as such, C's artwork generated a multiplicity of interpretations and new questions as well as alternative possibilities for action(s) in our practices as the research facilitation team deconstructed the process during the following day's debrief:

*C taught us a lot about shifting the space of encounter... the activity that we created was in fact a reassertion of the dominant discourse and she was outside of that and saying, 'look, this is another way that you can be.'*

This negotiation is an example that contests modernist/humanist notions of agency and instead recognizes that individual choice and "self-actualization" are significantly mediated and constrained by complex contextual forces. This is especially so for Indigenous and racialized girls in a context of dominant whiteness, where their choices are shaped and limited in many ways. Their strategic negotiations of these complex forces, such as C's navigation of the program, provide a more accurate picture of agency. Enacting a counter-story of agency within arts-based practices serves to "interrupt, contradict, expose, challenge or deny... refuse dominant constructions of social realities, reveal the fractures in structures, discourses and practices of domination and, indeed, change the subject" (Harris, Carney, & Fine, 2001, p. 6). Further, noticing C's agency through her negotiations opened new possibilities to decolonize our practices. Eisner (2002) suggests that in the arts, rather than ends (e.g. research questions) prescribing the means (e.g. art production), ends follow the means.

*What does art do?*

Problematic questions during the mask production, such as "What does that mean?" and "Why did you choose that color?" were forced and did not elicit any response. These attempts to draw out the "meaning" of the girl co-researchers' masks, as well as facilitator efforts to interpret and impose meanings were resisted.

As outlined earlier in Chapter 3, I have been careful not to single out or identify specific voices of our research facilitation team as we are all implicated in the data. However, I felt the need to break the pseudo-anonymity attributed to the rest of the data included in my thesis for this next story of our mask-making practice to make the context of this situation and my positioning more transparent for analysis.

During the mask-making, I looked across at one of the girl co-researchers' design for her mask, and said, "*[to me it looks] like a goalie mask, like in hockey?*" She quickly replied, "*Oh. I don't want to do that then.*" Even as the words left my mouth, my body immediately felt ill, and I wished to swallow those words that had imposed my own need as "competent" research facilitator to have an interpretation of her artwork and draw her into figuring out what her mask represented.

Within our process of deliberately constructing a space that opened up alternative possibilities and discourses, I had reified a dominant, masculine Canadian symbol of nationalist cultural identity, citizenship and belonging: hockey. The predominantly white Anglophile backdrop of imperial Victoria, the elite surroundings of the University campus, and the increasing patriotism inspired by the upcoming Olympics on unceded Indigenous territory are some of the multiple, partial contexts leaking into our space of encounter. These cannot be kept "out", because our space is constructed within/against/among the contexts of our community and history, shaping and being shaped by them. Yet, these dominant discourses can be intentionally muted to make space for differences, or they can be enhanced in order to name and deconstruct them. In this moment, I did neither, leaving this intrusion unquestioned. What is important here is that the "ill" feeling of stepping into that dominant frame can alert practitioners to

(re)deployments of white noise. In the facilitator field notes, these ambivalent or uncomfortable feelings emerge in different situations, often identifying moments when white noise seeps into the gaps of our methodological/epistemological/ontological framework.

As evidenced in elements of some of our mask-making sessions, arts-based methods can be situated within the same framework as typical positivist research, requiring an objective interpretation of the “data” as though it has an inherent meaning that is knowable. During our debrief of the mask-making, one of the research facilitators asked:

*How do we think about art? What is art? Are we thinking about art as more than art? Is that what antidote is all about? Can we challenge social constructions to modernist art? [...T]he way that contemporary art is thought is very different, but we are not doing that because we are looking at it as representational.*

The dominant discourse of both modernist art and positivist research inscribes artwork as a textual object within a particular discourse of representation (Atkinson, 2008). In other words, asking what the masks meant had depended on a modernist assumption of art in which the masks would function as a direct representation of an essential self, and so the masks would have some inherent (and coherent) meaning.

*[...W]e were trying to get to the inner psychological souls of the girls...is that how we understand them? Or do they actually construct meanings. [It's] a different way of looking at what we do.*

By asking these questions (e.g. “what does that mean?”), we enacted a psychological inquiry, using art as a vehicle to transmit their cognitive knowledge to us (e.g. Eisner, 2002) rather than understanding “identity as effect” (Aoki, 1993). Therefore, the question of how we understand what art *does* in our art inquiry practice is intricately tied up in how we understand the girls, identities, and ourselves.

Wearing our newly-made masks, our small group paired up in a theatre-based activity to “mold”/direct our partner’s body as though they were made of clay, to fit our interpretation of their mask. Through this process, we came to “embody” how we were “seen” by one another. S had resisted my interpretation (of a hockey mask) and inquiry into what her mask “represented”, but her partner “molded” S’s body, evoking a fish, and subsequently interpreted S’s mask as scales. S contributed to her partner’s meaning-making, suggesting that the scales were different colors because the sun reflects off of them in the water. Their co-construction of meaning was evoked by/through the mask and “molding”. This meaning was significant for them both, influenced by their interactions in that moment. In thinking further about power relations, have I overestimated my influence, while minimizing the agency of the girls to resist and reclaim the space? In our debrief the following day, we explored self/identity/meaning as a contextual construction in continuous flux rather than an essentialist conceptualization of the girls. Through this alternative discourse, the multiplicity of meaning(s) of art are flexible; (co-)constructed by reactions, resistances and interpretations; contradictory; partial and continuously evolving in that moment and in that context. Thinking about art in this way locates meaning outside of the art product itself, and locates analysis within the contextual co-construction that emerges from the *experience* of the art and art-making rather than in the detached “objective” interpretation of (and psychological analysis through) the product. This speaks back to the dominant YPAR and arts-based methods literature as described in Chapter 2, which is often concerned with getting to the “pure voice” of youth that is assumed to be represented in their artwork.

*Trespassing*

Completing my own mask and choosing what to say to the group, I deliberately described it superficially, safe and unassuming – the yellow feather represented my ultimate Frisbee team, the brown my skin. Why did I choose to censor myself? The literature describes debates about the role of the research facilitator in terms of addressing power dynamics and inclusivity across social inequities (Cahill, 2007b; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Torre, 2005), as well as the role of the art facilitator in terms of contributing expertise related to art technique (e.g. Clover, 2007, Mullin, 2003; West & Stalker, 2007), but rarely about their role in co-construction of meaning. As research facilitators in positions of power, how can we understand our roles in interpretation and meaning-making? As an adult, male-presenting facilitator, I did not know how to be a co-researcher while also leaving space for the rest of the group. Within a dominant YPAR framework, my role as an adult should be minimal in order to mitigate uneven power relations and ensure that the girl co-researchers have space to speak. As the only male-presenting facilitator, with the youngest team of girls, I had already assumed that my presence was an intrusion and could be seen potentially as inappropriate. This was heightened because not all of the girl co-researchers knew that I was transgendered, that I was transpassing. Although reassured by the rest of the research facilitation team that my marked status as racialized “Other” was enough to secure belonging in our space, this was an unusual presumption that gender had receded to the background in such a gender-specific space.

This situation elicits multiple questions that demand highly contextual responses. In terms of our relationships, what does my silence and superficial input contribute to, or

take away from our relationships as co-researchers together? How do constructions of youth participation and YPAR prevent me from being a more authentic co-researcher with the girls and how do these dominant discourses position me as more powerful and the girls as less powerful? How was I reciprocating trust and partnership with the girl co-researchers? Caitlin Cahill (2007b) describes deep participatory research as collaborative and reciprocal, wherein research facilitators as co-collaborators regularly share their interpretations, but clarify that they are speaking from their personal standpoint and experience “without making any claim to authority.” (p. 302). Yet, although practitioners may be careful to address micro-level power relations in this way, their contributions may carry with them macro-level power relations, for example, unintended colonial/imperial interpretations that make it difficult to construct alternative meanings.

### *Conclusion*

Our practices elicited collective meaning-making, explorations of our multiple subjectivities, and new interpretations. However, at different moments we were not able to escape modernist assumptions about art, nor the (re)colonizing pedagogical “norms” that slipped into our practices. This reflected a common difficulty in “admitting non-Western cultural production into the Western academy without side-stepping its challenges to metropolitan canons and thus perpetuating the ‘subalternization’ of third world culture” (Spivak, 1987 p. 254). Continuously working to disrupt constructions of girls and their art as objects for psychological assessment required an ontological shift, reframing identity as always emerging and grounded in historically produced and uneven relations (Anzaldúa, 2002; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). Despite contesting traditional research methods and the typical denigration of arts as inferior to masculinist rational

scientific knowledge, arts-based methods are not inherently located outside of positivist frameworks. Rather, without an intentionally decolonizing methodological/conceptual framework, arts-based methods within the “research engine” become a new form of colonial hegemony.

## Chapter 5: Decolonizing Participation

In this chapter, I take up the unquestioned claims of participation as liberatory practice in YPAR by interrogating participation discourse as governmentality. As described in Chapter 2, governmentality links the technologies of the self to governing of the state, predicated upon a neoliberal subject that is constructed as autonomous in order to govern one's self (Foucault, 1988). Dominant youth participation as discourse (including concepts of youth voice, leadership, empowerment, etc.) functioned to deploy these technologies of power/domination within our PAR practices.

As developed in the literature review, youth participation discourses are immersed in neo-liberal rationales that focus on child rights and protection, civic responsibility, and/or positive youth development. These justificatory discourses of young people's participation can work to shape participatory practices and exclude the realities of Indigenous and racialized girls: young people are homogenized although certain (read: white, male, heterosexual) young people are more equal than others; girls that do not meet the positive development model or the responsabilizing demands of a neo-liberal civic society are deemed in need of help/correction; and the structural barriers that girls experience are constructed as individualized deficiencies. These discourses of youth participation as well as mainstream girl discourses (e.g. girl power, at-risk girl) are unable to account for the complex everyday experiences of racialized and Indigenous girls as they engage in knowledge production, advocacy and activism.

As seen in the burgeoning field of youth participation and youth participatory action research (YPAR), the homogenous category of youth is reinforced and reshaped. As a result of realigning configurations of age, gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, class,

etc. in relation to contemporary forces (e.g. nationalism, neoliberalism, colonialism, and global capitalism), liberal politics incorporates certain girl subjects into the nation-state through participation strategies and agendas. Thus projects of youth and girl participation, empowerment, and leadership must be interrogated, disrupted and decolonized.

*Challenging “participation”: Where the girls at?*

In addition to homogenizing “youth experience”, dominant discourses of YPAR and youth participation also flatten the very concept of participation, obscuring its constructedness as a neo-liberal concept and, in so doing, precluding the need to contest its meaning. These discourses that privilege youth-led initiatives work to dictate how girls should participate in YPAR, limiting what can be recognized as participation (and what can be recognized as YPAR). Throughout our practice, intentions to problematize humanist assumptions about participants, to centre girls within intergenerational relationships, and to decolonize research were also layered with multiple, overlapping and contradictory understandings and conceptualizations of participation. Despite great care and mindful reflection throughout the extensive planning process, spending months developing the program, I struggled throughout and after the research program with what participation should, could, and did look like for the girl co-researchers.

During our process, the participation of the girls became a site of worry because they were not participating in typical or legible researcher roles, which was perceived as

a failure to ascend the linear “ladder of participation”<sup>9</sup>. One of the research facilitators speaks about her disillusionment remarking on the lack of girls as co-facilitators:

*[B]ut apparently it's going to be one of us with one of the research leaders.*

The “us” in this quote refers to the research facilitators from antidote who were each paired with one of the academic researchers. This process does not fit a typical YPAR framework (if there is any such thing); the girl co-researchers were not involved in the research process in definitive ways (e.g. defining questions, etc.). Paradoxically, as seen here, participation discourses function both to “democratize” the means of research by involving those that are marginalized by research (e.g. racialized and Indigenous girls) as well as to re-entrench YPAR methodologies in typical hierarchical research structures, requiring that some girls take on more of a “research facilitator” role than others in order to be perceived as authentic girl-engaged/led YPAR.

As the concerns of this research team member demonstrate, there was a significant lack of girl’s participation in the planning, facilitation and ongoing analysis of our research process. Throughout the planning, the Gurl leaders were involved in a very limited way, providing feedback twice during the development of the program; the girl co-researchers were involved in analysis throughout the summer program and video editing during the program; and a few girls facilitated discussion and short video interviews. However, the lack of their participation during the conceptualization of the research questions, and in the planning and debriefing of the program was clear. This is significantly different from other YPAR processes that I had experienced, and from processes that I have identified in the literature that contribute to a more critical wave of

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see Hart’s Ladder (Hart, 1992).

feminist YPAR, wherein girl participation began very early and in some cases, the PAR projects were girl-initiated (e.g. Cahill, 2007a; Cahill, 2007b; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Torre, 2005; Torre & Fine et al., 2008). It is therefore important to explore some of the complex forces operating throughout the process that mediated what participation looked like for the girl co-researchers.

Participation discourses function to obscure the systemic contexts within which YPAR takes place, and so are not helpful in understanding the underlying structures that influenced our practices and resulted in the lack of more girl co-researcher participation. Many forces are always at play in a complex system and ours was no exception, with forces across the long history of Girl Leaders in antidote, various cycles of PAR processes, organizational politics, academic structures, relationships and partnership complexities, and of course various scattered forces of domination (e.g. patriarchies, nationalisms, colonialisms etc.) linked to global power structures. Transnational feminists (e.g. Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Minh-ha, 1997; Mohanty, 2003) have elaborated upon the Foucaultian concept of governmentality to examine multiple forms of domination that unevenly shape the subjectivities of women and girls (de Finney, 2010). I will draw upon the concept of “scattered hegemonies” (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994) that describes these multiple, diffuse and mobile forces that shape girls’ participation.

In my past experience of youth-engaged PAR, using money leveraged from government funded student employment programs and foundations, young people were hired and paid for their contributions just as other staff and researchers were being paid to be there and contribute. This is not always the case since participation discourses based in positive youth development logics construct opportunities for young people to participate

as reward in and of themselves, benefitting young people individually by preparing/supporting them and giving them practice and skills that they will need to become “successful” adults. In other words, there is no need to remunerate them for their time and contribution of important knowledge and skills to the community. These serve to exclude all but the most privileged young people that can afford to participate without compensation. However, antidote was unable to hire girl leaders as co-facilitators/co-researchers due to limited funds and financial marginalization as an organization serving Indigenous and racialized girls and women. As a result, throughout the planning and conceptualization of the research questions and methodologies, the girls were absent<sup>10</sup>. The inability to compensate girls for their time in such an intensive process served to exclude them, highlighting this structural barrier for racialized and Indigenous girls, and for organizations that serve them. These barriers, in conjunction with liberal calls for equality, and downloading/individualization of responsibilities to community-based organizations had material outcomes in our practices, constraining girls’ participation, and subsequently our practice. Ironically, it was an ethics of care, commitment to their meaningful participation, and principles of equity that emerged in the data as reasons for not inviting the girl co-researchers to participate more intensively in the months leading up to the summer program.

Members of the research facilitation team felt strongly that the girls should not be asked to commit to volunteering a significant amount of their time and energy without offering them more than just the opportunity to be involved without valuing their contributions. The research facilitation team was being compensated (financially) and

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<sup>10</sup> Although physically absent, it is important to note that the planning and conceptualization of the research program were based upon findings and feedback from previous PAR cycles with various groups of girls, thus building upon a longer history of the community.

benefitting professionally/academically and therefore, compensating the girl co-researchers for their work was important to address these power asymmetries. Yet, dominant developmental discourses and a feminist ethics of care colluded as the decision was made on behalf of the girls rather than involving them to engage with this dilemma. In that way, this served to both contest dominant notions of the value of (white, middle class) youth's time, which implies that youth are privileged to be involved and gain the personal benefits of learning and being "empowered", while simultaneously employing those same developmental discourses to exclude girls from decision-making. By excluding girl co-researchers from this decision and conversation, these practices reinforced marginalization and missed an opportunity to address with them the unequal distribution of resources – a dialogue that may have yielded creative options that do not necessarily rely on money – and begun inquiry into the structures of the non-profit industrial complex that serve to camouflage white supremacy<sup>11</sup>, appease dissent, and maintain the capitalist status quo (Smith, 2007). Further, this would bring to bear the girl co-researchers' knowledge and experiences of unequal distribution and systemic barriers that they navigate everyday. These issues are not solely methodological, but are central to the "content" of this project, providing an opportunity for girls to politicize their own social conditions. This was a missed opportunity to undertake research and social action in the very process of bringing their knowledge and ideas about the implications of these systemic barriers in their own lives and in their participation in the project. Although I did not agree with this decision, I deferred to other team members due to their existing

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<sup>11</sup> In this thesis, I use the term white supremacy to describe situations and contexts in which whiteness is the unmarked norm and is assumed as superior (Frankenberg, 1997). In locations of white dominance, white normativity, etc., where whiteness "secures its dominance by seeming to be anything in particular," white supremacism has achieved hegemony (Dyer in Aanerud, 1997, p. 37).

relationships with the girls and did not question organizational decision-making about how the budget was disbursed. This reveals the ubiquity of contextual and relational power relations within the process, sometimes resulting in silence and censorship.

As seen in this unpacking of the structural context within which we practice PAR, participation as discourse serves to reinforce the homogenous categorizations of youth engaged in dominant youth participation initiatives. Funds go to white mainstream organizations, or when they are diverted to movements of social change, they work to reshape the movement to focus on “helping” the Other through social services in order to construct the appropriate neoliberal subject. Further, funds are concentrated to support “leadership” opportunities for activists to gain institutionalized skills for formalized roles as policy-makers, researchers, etc., which serves to “sublimate revolutionary movements into reformist ones” (Smith, 2007, p. 8). Thus, whitestreamed discourses of youth participation, voice, empowerment and leadership are (re)produced without end and we are again left with the question: Where the gurlz at?

### *Empowerment and Social Change*

In our planning and debriefing conversations, neo-liberal concepts of empowerment, individual choice and leadership emerged. During a debrief about each group’s different path through the process, one facilitator remarked:

*[...] It’s such an empowering concept to be twelve and have your facilitator ask you, ‘do you want to do this [activity]? Like, this is what I have planned, do you want to do this?’ and let them make the choice, right? And if they say no, then you don’t have to [...] It’s empowering when you’re twelve to have someone ask you, to have an adult ask you.*

Dominant discourses of youth empowerment in this conversation were problematically linked to age, limiting youth/girl empowerment to being listened to by adults and making

choices. As a neoliberal technology, the supposed freedom of choice serves to obfuscate not only the power relations that mediate choice (e.g. between adult researcher and girl co-researcher) but also the paucity of choice that is being allowed here. This closed question offers little possibility (as opposed to an open question asking what they want to do, and/or what they want to explore). Even more troubling is the notion that empowerment for a girl that is twelve years old means choosing whether they do something or not, that this is a benevolent exception to the rule and that usually a twelve year old girl would not have a choice about what she does. In fact, the implicit assumption here is that she should feel especially privileged to be offered this opportunity by an adult in her life. This neo-liberal, humanist stance on agency positions the adult as “agent of empowerment”, able to confer power as property to the disempowered receiver (Gore, 1992). Despite recognizing the hegemonic structural barriers and exclusions that girl co-researchers face in many contexts in their everyday lives, these discussions also fixed them as disempowered, and prescribed and controlled the choices that the girls could make about the program.

Recognizing action and social change as an important part of PAR, for some, the goals of Spaces of Encounter included empowering girl co-researchers as agents of social change – and at times, situating the (girl) subject at the centre of the solution.

*[...] it's really important for these girls to understand that you have to go beyond just talking about these issues, you actually have to do something about them, right? [...] Like you're constantly sitting in classrooms where there's no relevance to your life and this is all about you and what you're going to do [...] like this is real life and this is your chance to do something with it and that is powerful when you're frickin' fourteen...well at any age, but definitely when you're younger and that's why its really important for me to be patient with the girls to do what they want us to do because they get such few places to tell you how it's gonna be.*

A liberal notion of girl's agency reflects ideologies of white noise, placing responsibility on those in marginalized subject positions to take action (Mikel-Brown, 2005) - that "this is all about you and what you're going to do". As seen in Chapter 2, empowerment strategies fix girls' identities in ways that maintain inequalities, relying on constructing self-identity, self-discovery, and self-problematization that fixes the subject as powerless or weak (e.g. the Ophelia discourse). Thus, differences in needs or interests are produced by the very practices of empowerment that are deployed (Masschelein & Quaghebeur, 2006). Not only is this based on a Freirean assumption that naming one's own (essential) "reality" is empowering and liberating, thereby according (liberal) agency to change the conditions in which they live, but also a critical decolonizing desire for creating a space for minoritized girls to analyze and challenge the social conditions that are hidden/silenced by neoliberal contexts in their everyday lives (e.g. in classrooms).

*Prescribed spaces: Leadership*

This space of encounter was deliberately prescribed as a decolonizing space, but was continually interrupted by prescriptive practices embedded in white noise and neo-colonialisms. During our debriefs, opportunities for leadership were prescribed, assigning certain girls to specific groups, and conveying the dominant message that girls have a responsibility to participate in order to be recognized as good citizens-in-the-making:

*So part of me feels like we should create a separate group that is for these girls that we're talking about and then provide them with some leadership opportunities throughout the rest of the research camp. So if that means, um, co-facilitating one workshop with the four of you or if that means, um, you know, we could think about, and this would be an even faster participation too.*

This debrief during the program reveals efforts to involve some of the girls in "leadership" roles as the program unfolded. However, since we had not invited girls to

define how they wanted to participate, our facilitation team continued to prescribe the ways that girls could participate. The following discussion returns to concerns about the girls' participation as researchers, moving through various discourses of care, youth leadership, empowerment, control, all with intentions to shift the exercise of power. However, these dominant discourses are saturated with white noise, recolonizing possibilities through nuanced forces that shape and constrain how power can be exercised.

*D: Yeah, I think it would be really cool if they [girls from Gurlz Club] could be co-facilitators, it would make a lot of sense to me because I think there's a reason why they did come to that [planning] meeting the first time and why they came to the meeting the second time, that's because they wanted to take the initiative, especially [...] and [...], they really wanted to do it. [...] I think they maybe thought they were going to have more tasks to do as a youth leader. [...] I think for the more quiet ones, I think it would be really cool to actually get 'em to do the recordings and stuff like that so that they could be part of the discussion, but because they don't really want to talk so much in the beginning, getting them active and taping everyone would be really good and then in that sense I think it would really empower them. [...]*

*B: So what would you see their role look like?*

*D: Not necessarily asking the same probing questions that we ask, but just, I don't know, I think, letting them know that...[long pause] I guess asking them the same questions that we do ask, yeah, like being able to lead the conversations, I think would be good. What do you think?*

*A: [sound of disagreement]*

*D: Not lead it specifically like "ok, now this is what it is", but like give them the opportunity to actually ask the questions, like, ok, actually I take that back because if they were asking, "have you ever experienced that", that would create a weird dynamic with the girls.*

*C: One idea would be that you go to them and ask them that we are challenging you to another position and what do you think you can do, and what you feel comfortable with and you might get different girls who are comfortable with different things and they are very articulate, like yesterday when you were doing the rules, I mean they know the rules of a focus group very well, they laid it all out there, they won't have any problem with not knowing how to ask questions and*

*things like that. I think that the rules were quite sophisticated. I think going back to them rather than defining the role and telling them “this is the role that we have given you” [...and asking] “what do you think you can contribute?”*

In this discussion, the ways that dominant discourses of participation and research work to control PAR are evident as the conversation opens up and then confines the ways that the Gurl leaders can participate as co-researchers. Considering the Gurl leaders as co-facilitators shifts and works towards flattening the power relations between the Gurl leaders and research facilitators. However, problematic discourses about empowerment, participation and assumptions about the girls intervene, prescribing how the girls can be co-facilitators, with the “quiet ones” doing the “recordings and stuff like that”, and the ones that “wanted to take the initiative” asking “the same questions that we do ask” and “being able to lead the conversation”.

Within this discussion, efforts to shift power relations are complexified further by the tension of the potential “weird dynamic” that would result from the Gurl leaders asking about experiences of their peers in the research program. This not only reveals and acknowledges the significant power relation between the “askers” (research facilitators) and the “responders” (girl co-researchers) as they have been constructed, but also a tacit acceptance that girls cannot be askers whether they are facilitators or not because it would be “weird” for them.

At the same time, this conversation denies that the Gurl leaders are already in shifting unequal power relations with the other girl co-researchers due to their preceding membership within antidote, experience with antidote programs and familiarity/comfort with the research facilitators and with each other. Asking, “what do you think you can contribute?” opens space for a multiplicity of possibilities and acknowledges the

knowledge and skills that different girls bring. However, this invitation is in tension with being brought into an already ongoing planned program.

Disciplinary processes of subjectification, facilitated by youth voice, youth participation and youth leadership discourses reveal this hegemonic conception of YPAR as a conspicuous mode of governmentality. In other words, there is no “pure” unmediated YPAR as all youth participation is mediated through techniques for shaping subjectivities (Cairns, 2009). Participation as discourse can serve to depoliticize YPAR and reproduce hegemonic power dynamics, as in the suggestion above for girls to ask “the questions that we do ask”. For example, is YPAR more authentic if young people are seen to be leading research regardless of whether their contribution is fully compatible with neoliberal objectives, colonial processes that homogenize and “democratize”, and their resistance takes a depoliticized form of conformity?

Also, as often happens in dominant youth participation strategies, “leadership” roles fall repeatedly on a small core group of young people. Leadership, narrowly conceived in this way, tends to concentrate opportunities on those who have already proven themselves as articulate, knowledgeable and committed in ways that can be perceived by the youth worker/researcher. As a result, models of advisory groups, committees, etc. tend to exclude young people that are not easily legible in terms of typical criteria for successful development/whitening (Ong et al., 1996, p. 739). As developed in Chapter 2, development criteria are embedded within colonizing frameworks, and in order to be recognizable in these ways, youth must “turn white or disappear” (Fanon, 1952, p. 100; also see Burman, 2008, McCallum, and Ong et al.,

1996). As seen in the following quote, talk about girl leadership is limited to the existing antidote Gurl's club members, those who were deemed as experienced and articulate.

*Now here's another place where the Gurl leader advisory group can play a role in the sense that if they are collecting impressions, they could be the advisory reflection panels so what happens at the end of the day, we ask them to reflect on what happened today and then open up conversation and so it's not our summarizing of it, but their summarizing of it and they open it up and then it's girls talking to girls about what they saw and all age levels, and you know, they can actually take charge of that part of it and it's a closing.*

In the quote above, the conversation turns to implementing leadership opportunities, managing/designing the girls' participation to further regulate the program. This prescription also ignores alternative ways in which girl co-researchers were already leaders within the process. The conversation then continued to practice and our responsibilities as facilitators.

*Facilitated of course - that doesn't absolve ourselves of the responsibility for tying it together [...] and we have everyone involved in giving permission for that happening [...] if we're going to ask them to take on these things, we have to support them and they have to be guided and facilitated [...] keep in mind that we have an additional layer that we have to give support to.*

In this way, girl's "leadership" could be understood as an add-on element, rather than as a way of being and doing this process of participatory research. Taking on the responsibility for the girl co-researchers to participate and lead signals how we undertake the devolved responsibility of addressing the anxiety of policy makers and researchers in Canada that have dubbed youth as the "civic deficit" generation (Chareka, 2009; Chareka & Sears, 2006). The anxiety and efforts to facilitate "leadership" reveal how dominant discourses of PAR and youth participation function as elements of the decentralized monitoring and constantly shifting standards that characterize a society of control. Thus,

YPAR claims of democratizing knowledge fail to recognize the ways in which practices are determined and controlled by state logics under the guise of social justice.

However, that is not to say that YPAR cannot be decolonizing; PAR is an important methodology for doing the kind of work that antidote espouses – building intergenerational, multiracial and Indigenous solidarity in Victoria – and it will continue to be employed to move forward and take action. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) speaks to this difficulty of necessary critique with simultaneous necessary action on the ground:

Whilst Western academics may quibble about the success or failure of the emancipatory project, and question the idealism which lies behind it, there is a tendency to be overly ‘precious’ about ‘their’ project as a universal recipe that has to be followed ‘to the letter’ if it is to be effective. Furthermore, this stance assumes that oppression has universal characteristics, which were independent of history, context and agency. At the level of abstraction, this is what has to be argued in a sense, but it can never be so on the ground (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 186).

### *Research/Program*

Reductive hegemonic conceptualizations of research and program further complicated our relationship with PAR and shaped participation. The following quote reifies the artificial division between research and youth program:

*Any research has a focus...a purpose. That's what makes this different than a program. A program you can just run and whatever the girls want to do you do [...] And that's the difference between a focus group and a discussion group.*

This binary constrained the ways that girls could participate (i.e. only trained research facilitators led conversation), further responsabilized the research facilitators for the outcomes of the project (i.e. success was dependent on facilitators’ research skills), and distanced research from girl-led programs and vice versa. The artificial division between research and program was predominant in our practices and served to re-colonize research, preventing the very equalization of girls as co-researchers (not to mention the

equalization of academic and community-based researchers) that we were striving to reach. Said's (1978) notion of "positional superiority" helps to interrogate the relationships between research and imperialism, wherein research becomes an exclusive activity of the educated colonial elite and Indigenous intellectuals (p. 7). Hegemonic discourses of research and program mutually articulate one another. For example, they polarize what is considered action (i.e. the former is concerned with systematic, organized inquiry and the latter is concerned with participant interests and community development). At the same time, these discourses of research and program work together to reinforce and increase the intensities of problematic care/control dynamics (i.e. simultaneous and competing anxieties to involve girls, "extract" data, and structure the process to prescribe these outcomes).

Conversely, some of our planning conversations were based in alternative conceptualizations of research and program, and their close integration:

*For this, for me, the act of working together and engaging, for me is the data that I'm really interested in. So for me, I'm not really interested in this time around with stopping that and having really open discussions on the side.*

During planning, we conceived the research questions, open discussion and action (i.e. collaboratively making a video documentary throughout the process) as all part of an integrated research program:

*Like if the energy goes to making an amazing video, rather than having a lot of discussions that don't lead to that [...], so the discussions happen in the midst of making the video, I'd be happier than saying 'Well this afternoon you make the video and in the morning you have to meet and talk'.*

Disrupting the borders between research and program can help to construct the girls as already doing research everyday as they navigate multiple contexts and forces, outside of both the research engine and the non-profit industrial complex. In this conceptualization,

research and program are integrated, positioned both as something that “has a focus...a purpose” and that “the girls want to do”.

### *Care/Control*<sup>12</sup>

Drawing from feminist research concerned with eliminating silence, not only about girls’ circumstances, but on the part of girls themselves (Harris, 2003), there is a recent enthusiasm for girl’s voice. The call for “authentic voice” of the Other has been co-opted as desire for the Other and absolution on the part of dominant culture (Lather, 1998). Freire (1982) explains that naming one’s reality lies at the center of the PAR framework: “[...] the silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world.” (p. 30). While Freire is quick to identify marginalized participants as subjects rather than objects, the burden is placed solely upon the shoulders of “the silenced” to speak, rather than upon the forces that silence. This Freirean call to action has been perverted through girl participation discourses, which define the problem as silence (implied to be compliance), and therefore the solution is for girls to speak (implied to be resistance). In either iteration, silence cannot be a form of resistance and action, making their complex resistances to scattered hegemonies *un-visible* (Gordon, 1997). This incitement of girls to voice in dominant discourses determines their participation as articulation of their narratives, which are then regulated and controlled (Harris, 2003).

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<sup>12</sup> Excerpts from this section have been presented in a paper at academic conferences as well as in a co-authored article submitted for publication in an academic journal (see Khanna, 2010a, 2010b and Lee et al., forthcoming).

We had intentionally constructed a politicized space where girls could speak about issues that were structurally silenced in other contexts and where they could “come to voice”. One of the girl co-researchers, who has been involved extensively in antidote, comments on how this space was different than other contexts in Victoria, revealing significant knowledge about how dominant multicultural discourses are used to reduce the complexity of girls’ experiences and deny issues of race and ethnicity in other spaces.

*A lot of time when we’re having these discussions outside where people say that “Oh, whatever you say we don’t, it doesn’t matter what ethnic group you’re from, that whatever you say matters.” But I think when you’re having a discussion like this, it matters, what you’re saying relates to your ethnic group because your point of view comes, you’ve been treated, people see you as your ethnic group sometimes and because you end up feeling... When you say it in a group like we had at the camp, everyone understands what you’re talking about. But if you say the same thing in a group of people that say “Oh, it doesn’t matter to us what ethnic group you’re from, we’ll treat you the same way”, then it kinda takes away the reality of it, because your reality is just like the same as everyone else when it’s not the same as everyone else.*

She reveals a sense of common ground and familiarity with the frustrations of negotiating dominant whiteness and intercultural relations that opens a space for these experiences to be spoken and understood. Paradoxically, despite inviting girls to speak, there was some concern about what the girls were sharing with us. Talk amongst some of the research facilitation team revealed a search to become “equipped” with ways to “deal” with the challenging everyday realities some girls talked about during the research program. These conversations turned to “troubling” and “troubled” girls, which relied on dominant neoliberal practices of caring or helping professions of the “white” youth worker (Skott-Myhre, 2008). Through these professional discourses, the feminist ethic of care that was foundational to building interpersonal relationships and mitigating hierarchies of power, required that we take responsibility for the experiences that were being shared in the

program. This was a patronizing betrayal of the trust that we sought to establish with girls who we had encouraged to talk about their lived realities. Further, these problematic relations of power emerged particularly in relation to a (generalized) anxiety about Indigenous girls in the project:

*I'm really worried about how to [...] deal with some of the issues that some of the Indigenous girls bring up. They're really heavy, and a lot of these girls have very tumultuous family lives and I don't know what to say or do in those situations. And it makes me feel horrible [...] so I don't know if anybody has any tips or any ideas...*

In this concern for the girls and hearing their “heavy” stories, dominant discourses of the at-risk Indigenous girl emerged. This dominant risk framework silences resistance by eliciting stories of loss and disempowerment without interrogating the social conditions that underlie them. Alternatively, “resilience” and strategies of resistance are romanticized and commodified as a pure youth voice (e.g. youth empowerment, girl-power) as though unmediated by social forces. Thus, voice becomes a technology that manages girls into narrow discursive positions (Harris, 2003; Giroux, 1996). Rather than learning how to encounter one another in the relative absence of white noise, this deployment of care and control reconsolidated relations of power, undermining our intentions for involving the girls as partners in research.

Our discussions continued about two Indigenous girls who did not return on the second day of the project, reflecting contradictory care and control positionings. We had been unable to reach them and could not track down their guardians, appointed by the child welfare system. Expressions of concern revealed the ubiquity of white noise and resulting logics that pathologize Indigenous girls in care as at-risk within a context of hegemonic patriarchal nationalism. These logics are clear in government and civil society

agendas that are predominantly concerned with Indigenous girls in terms of preventing teen pregnancy, teen suicide, substance use, etc. Anxiety about the "safety" of non-attending Indigenous girls could be complicated further by seeing it as a response to risk discourses that position Indigenous girls as non-conforming, hypervisible deviant bodies who already have a proclivity to engage in "risky" behavior, bodies *already* at risk (Jiwani & Young, 2006).

Although racialized and Indigenous girls and women experience a significantly disproportionate amount of structural violence in Canada, neoliberal victim discourses locate responsibility for violence in their bodies, rather than seeing this violence as endemic to white colonial social structures (Monture-Angus, 1995). Reflecting on this ambient white noise later using a decolonizing, anti-racist feminist framework to challenge our expressed moral anxieties, we were able to situate our response of concern within a colonial legacy of "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 2000, p. 4), where Indigenous girls and women are constructed as more at risk of racialized and sexualized violence (Acoose, 1995). These vulnerabilities to risk lend weight to a perception that they need heightened protection and surveillance by caring professionals.

Such logics of vulnerability and risk associated with Indigenous girls and women are circulated widely in our location, which is geographically and discursively proximate to the infamous Highway of Tears<sup>13</sup> and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside where dozens of women, mainly Indigenous, have been reported missing or have been murdered. These same logics of risk have been used to erase racism in the case of the murder of Reena Virk, a young woman of South-Asian descent, that occurred in Saanich in 1997 (Rajiva &

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<sup>13</sup> The Highway of Tears is a stretch of road (Highway 16) in central and northern British Columbia, Canada, where over thirty women, mainly Aboriginal, have been reported missing or have been murdered.

Batacharya, 2010). So, the question remains: Why were we concerned particularly about these Indigenous girls and not about other racialized girls that missed a day of our program? Logics of vulnerability and myths of multiculturalism not only obfuscate racialized violence, but also how white supremacy works in different ways upon girls from different ethnic backgrounds. Within the logic of genocide and colonialism in Canada, Indigenous girls must be constructed as always already disappearing and/or at-risk of disappearing so that claims of settlement and ownership of property can be rightfully made (Smith, 2006). Alternatively, as in the case with Reena Virk, the logic of Orientalism is used to construct racialized settlers/immigrants as an “exotic” and inferior outsider, and as a threat to Canadian national identity (Smith, 2006). These different discursive positionings emerge in various ways, informing how we understand racialized and Indigenous girls and how we work with them in PAR processes.

In Canada, a white settler society deeply invested in denying inequity and upholding the myth of “successful” multiculturalism, racialized oppression and violence against Indigenous and racially subordinated girls, is continuously framed as an aberration or an “isolated incident” rather than as a prevalent and everyday occurrence embedded within a hegemony of racism, colonialism, and patriarchy (Rajiva & Batacharya, 2010; Thobani, 2007). As such, YPAR practices cannot be understood without being positioned within larger socio-historical contexts of hegemonic white nation formation. Further, YPAR practices must recognize multiple underlying logics (e.g. genocide and colonialism, Orientalism, etc.) that are employed differentially upon different racialized girls. As a post-script, the two girls returned the following day, explaining that they did not attend because they were at soccer practice.

Therefore, practitioners must be aware that, as Skott-Myhre (2008) suggests, “such a system of [categorization and] ‘care’ becomes a project designed to digest those on the outskirts, to convince both the [girls] and [ourselves] of the benefits of buying into the dominant social system.” (p. 128). Further, this system of “care” problematically requires practitioners to focus attention on those in need of care rather than on the forces that position them as such. YPAR practices are not neutral. We were all part of the community and part of antidote, but there is no denying that as adult researchers and staff, we had more control over the program. Our own multiple positionings in this project challenge the assumptions about reductive binary insider/outsider positions, research/program and exclusive academic/community divisions, but these divisions still intervened in our program. Forces of whiteness, through discourses of academia, helping professions, neoliberalism, neocolonialism, etc. acted upon us. Rather than regulation and control as “care”, practice must be concerned with interrupting dominant colonial rhythms in PAR using anti-racist, decolonizing, feminist, intergenerational and girl-centered approaches to disrupt the State-form rigidities as they coalesce. In contradiction to sanitized or romanticized accounts of dominant youth PAR processes, this practice can be described as a necessarily “messy” syncopation, a rhythmic flux of decolonizations and recolonizations embedded in white noise.

## Chapter 6: Becoming Untimely

In this chapter, I will build on one of the themes that emerged in our collective analysis in relation to program regulation: namely, the regulation of time. Dominant colonial, psychological and capitalist concepts of time functioned to close down possibilities as they emerged in our practice, deploying biopower, or the discipline of the body and subsequently the regulation of the population (Foucault, 1978). As developed in the previous chapter, this is another manifestation of white noise in our process emerging through modern professional discourses of youth work, which are based upon biopower and the colonial practice of “categorizing whole groups of people into developmental disciplinary frameworks” (Skott-Myhre, 2008, p. 172). Similarly, the modern profession of research has, in relation to studying the Other, been preoccupied with a development-in-time episteme (Lesko, 2001a). These professional discourses articulate and mutually constitute one another, and were deployed through our practices. I analyze our practices to unpack the regulation of time; to conceptualize our practices as rhythms of white noise and disruption; and to consider disruptions of colonial time as decolonizing practices of feminist, anti-racist, and girl-centered PAR.

### *Colonizing time*

In order to contextualize this chapter, I will briefly outline the conditions within which a development-in-time epistemology and ontology has evolved. The temporalization of experience – that all change occurs through and in time – arguably defines the modern world (Kosselleck in Lesko, 2001a) and modern practices (i.e. youth work practices as described in Chapter 2). Western teleological notions of time prioritize

their outcomes, contributing to a worldview where newer is better. This dominant worldview, combined with predictable linear directional progressions and evolution, underlies frameworks of Eurocentric normative development and civilization, positioning some (read: white, middle-class, heterosexual, male adults) as superior to others (Lesko, 2001a). These frameworks serve to spatialize time, connecting space and time so that those considered more “developed” and “civilized” could distance themselves from people that are less developed and civilized, even if they live in the “same” time (Lesko, 2001a).

Spatializing time has a further consequence: the possibility to divide and commodify time. Negri (1996 in Skott-Myhre, 2008) recognizes “time is the heartbeat of capital” (p. 51) in a society that increasingly requires time to be productive and have a market value. The concept of adolescence is historically and socially determined by the development of capitalism (Lesko, 2001a; Skott-Myhre & Gretzinger, 2006; Skott-Myhre, 2008). Adolescence was introduced in the early 1900s to defer entry of younger (male) workers into the labor market. This strategy functioned to regulate and control the flow of workers for early capitalists to control the productive capacity of society, limiting the number of workers that had access to the means of production. As a result, production has become a social privilege held back from young people and especially from girls. In order to justify this deferral and shift the gaze away from the capitalist system, the reason for the deferral is identified as a lack (of skill, capability, judgment, development) located in the bodies of adolescents (Skott-Myre, 2008): “The discourse on adolescence, like colonial discourse (Bhabha, 1994), omits material conditions of existence and focuses solely on the psychological state of youth to position the psychological traits as the

logical source of the social structural inequities, or the reasons adolescents have to be controlled.” (Lesko, 2001a, p. 55-56).

Not only are adolescent bodies constructed as lacking biological and emotional maturity, the linear progression of adolescent development is extended, without clear markers of time that are characteristic of theories of early child development. Instead, an indefinite lack of skill development produces adolescence as a time of indeterminacy (Skott-Myhre, 2008), expectancy (Lesko, 2001a) and risk. Youth participation strategies have been initiated/co-opted by the state to fill this time of deferral, indeterminacy and expectancy, in order to keep young people on a path to good (white) adult citizenship.

### *Predictable progressions*

In the previous chapter, there was a clear concern about what participation should look like for the girl co-researchers. Very early on in planning, there were conversations that anticipated and projected difficulties in relation to time, participation and outcomes. In the following quote, the salience of time and voice emerges in preparations for the production of a video documentary.

*Don't underestimate the time it takes to come to the content, and that is the critical part of it. To be clear on the themes that they want to take up, because they're going to be all over the map and it's going to take a long time. Everybody will have their own passionate thing that they want to do "we should do that", or "I want to tell this story" and we had agreed that it was going to be a consensus collaboration so they're going to have to negotiate and that might take 3 or 4 hours of "why should we do that?", "that's not my experience", "yeah, but I know that when I came, this happened to me", or and so the quiet girls may not say anything and you'd be spending your entire time [...] just trying to manage that they all have voice in the process.*

As described in this quote, there was an expectation of intense negotiations of shifting power relations, non-reducible multi-vocality, and the heterogeneity of girls' experiences

and interests that would position girls “all over the map”. Although mindful of the unpredictability of the process and uncertainty of how the content would emerge, much of our preparation was concerned with teleological planning of how to “come to the content”. Our efforts were invested in the unfolding of our blueprint, progressing stage by stage through an accumulation of knowledge and realizing the expectations of our process, which was already prescribed by previous cycles of PAR and a research agenda.

One of the principal investigators describes this plan:

*[...S]o now [based on previous cycles of PAR] we've got the story about this [state-structured divisions of identities] and we were asking questions about identity, but we didn't get to how they comingled or interrelated [...] we just didn't get there. That's where I'd like to end up. How we get there I don't know, but we really need to think it through.*

This assumed progression did not leave much space for unpredictable, sudden, surprising difference or change that characterizes the emergence of the new. How could we prepare for contingent, precarious, non-linear leaps and assume that these were the stories that girls wanted to tell? And how could we do so while also continuing to build upon previous cycles of PAR to advance social action? Further, how could we build on a continuity that was evident to the research team who had followed the previous cycles, but would not be evident to girl co-researchers, most of whom were new to antidote? Ultimately, we wanted to encourage consensus collaboration that welcomed multiple voices, and included contradictory and minority perspectives and experiences. As a result, much of our practice was preoccupied with anticipating unpredictability and investing our time to “manage that [the girls] all have voice in the process”. This preoccupation had problematic consequences as will be discussed in the following section.

*Timeless categories*<sup>14</sup>

In order to maximize girls' voice and the depth of discussions, the research facilitation team divided everyone into smaller groups, separating the twenty-two girls and eight facilitators into four groups. Initially, we grouped girls so that each of the four groups included a mix of those girls that had been at previous antidote programs and those that were new to antidote, as well as a mix of racialized settlers and girls Indigenous to Canada<sup>15</sup>. As a result, the groups were diverse across various categories of identity. This mixture was an effort to intentionally disrupt the reinscription of essentializing ethnic identities that occurred in a previous cycle of PAR, wherein the girl co-researchers were divided into groups along ethnic lines<sup>16</sup>. The previous cycles informed our practices in this cycle. However, that is not to say that we were able to solve the problematics of essentializing categories from previous cycles, but that we were instead confronted by projects of whiteness and problematic configurations in our practice that emerged in different ways.

Despite efforts to have "mixed" groups and disrupt multiple borders of identity, our practices quickly imposed new definitions on the groups based on our growing assumed knowledge about the girl co-researchers. At the end of the first day of the summer program, some of the research facilitators felt overwhelmed and challenged to be

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<sup>14</sup> Excerpts from this section have been presented in a paper at academic conferences as well as in a co-authored article submitted for publication in an academic journal (see Khanna, 2010a, 2010b and Lee et al., forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup> I use these terms to describe the group mix because the terms 'racialized minority' and 'Indigenous' are not mutually exclusive, nor are the terms 'racialized immigrant' and 'Indigenous'. Some of the girl co-researchers were Indigenous to other countries although their Indigeneity was not often a recognized or accessible subject position for them in Canada.

<sup>16</sup> During the previous PAR process in 2003, the girls who participated were divided by ethnicity, with an Indigenous group, a Latina group and a 'mixed' group that consisted of various ethnic minorities, mainly from Asian heritages. Although intended as provisional categories for facilitating discussions, these identity categories became 'real' through the research process (Lee, 2006).

inclusive of all of the girls in multiple ways. During our debrief the following day, we were faced with many questions that arose based on the existing groups: How can we ensure all the girls' (assumed) needs are met? How can each girl come to voice about her life? How can we cover topics that (we perceived) some girls would want to engage with and that some would not? All of these questions rested on assumptions about the girls' needs, interests, and experiences. Even as we tried to develop a space where complex intersectional experiences could be uttered across difference, we were unable to escape from (re)constructing categories, (re)building borders and defaulting to dominant developmental discourses to make the girls legible to practices of control and capture.

This was revealed in some of the talk about the girls:

*And I'm just thinking here of the smaller discussion groups when you have 5 people in and the dynamics in our group yesterday were very awkward with the younger, it was 3 and 2, 2 older and 3 younger, and it's not even age too, it's also the experiences that girls have and [...], I found your girls to be, as you said, sheltered and not really even aware of some of the...stereotypes that have been slung around. [...]. Oh yeah, they all will experience these issues, but they'll experience them in their own way according to their, um, developmental period in experiences.*

In the absence of provisional group categories, categories of age, development and ethnicity were imposed. Despite efforts to disrupt essentializing categories, the quote above homogenizes a group of Indigenous girls recruited by one of the partners, revealing the ways that universalizing ethnic categories re-emerged and how they structured our practice. In this quote, ways of articulating and languaging knowledge were recognized whereas silence or lack of understanding of the term "stereotype" was assumed to be a lack of awareness about stereotypes and racism. Despite a commitment to decolonizing our practices, this essentializing discourse reveals the ways in which anti-racist practices tend to privilege particular types of knowledge, while often excluding Aboriginal people

and perspectives (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). As a deployment of whiteness, connecting the girls' experiences with racism/stereotypes to age and developmental stages rigidified this practice within dominant youth work and youth studies discourses. Through these discourses, the quote above assumed that "normal" development involves progressively more understanding of experiences with stereotypes/racism and that age is directly related to knowledge and articulation. However, in our conversation, these problematic assumptions were challenged on an ongoing basis, using an intersectional lens to question underlying discourses about linear development and progress:

*Even though the experiences [of stereotypes] are different, the analysis might be [similar], like going over stereotypes and certain definitions and ideas like that with the 12 year olds would be good because even though they have experienced it, it gives what they've experienced a name.*

Critical YPAR contests the notion that knowledge "comes with age", which positions younger girls as less knowledgeable than older girls and/or women. However, these were always temporary/partial disruptions or mut(e)ations of white noise and this developmental notion of knowledge emerged through subsequent attempts to ensure participation.

*Well, what about, because we also talked about yesterday about dividing the groups based on ability and skill-level and analysis and age and stuff like that. Is that something that people are still interested in doing? Because if that were the case, then we would have a very different conversation with a group like [...] and some of these other girls who have had a lot more analysis of the issues and keep them engaged in a different way and, you know, keep the shy girls engaged in a different way.*

These individualizing and colonizing discourses infiltrated our feminist anti-racist practices, seeping continuously into talk about the girl co-researchers, which categorized them based on essentializing assumptions about their ability, their level of analysis, age, shyness, and developmental stage. These imposed developmental categories had material

consequences for the girls, our analysis and our ongoing practices, including a re-division of the groups. In an attempt to fulfill our commitment to principles of participation within the constraints of the program, this response to the so-called problem, was to re-divide the groups in such a way as to maximize what could be spoken about, to maximize the number of girls who could “come to voice”, and ultimately to make it easier and more efficient to facilitate conversation. As Lesko (2001a) explains, the “developmental framework is simultaneously colonial (with privileged, invisible viewers and hypervisible, temporalized, and embodied others) and administrative (ranking, judging, making efficient and productive)” (p. 41). By categorizing the girl co-researchers and dividing them along lines of development, we deployed colonial time, fixing identities in space and presuming a time-dependent, linear developmental framework through which the girls are assumed to be progressing.

As a consequence, these intersectional categories became “real”, fixed in time, convenient to prohibit “awkward” encounters, and prescriptive in terms of which group could speak about what and how, and which groups could not. For example, one of the groups included older girls with the presumption that they would be able to speak about issues of sexuality and sexual orientation that may have been prohibited or exclusionary in groups with younger girls. These subsequently became shorthand categories in gridlock - “older girls”, “younger girls”, “Nish’s group” - wherein characteristics were attributed to the whole group of girls, convenient for analysis. Colonizing conceptions and regulation of time, or in this case, “timelessness” function “to consolidate the fiction of a seamless stable identity in every space” (Puar, 2005 p. 127).

*Regulating (un)timely bodies*

Young people are positioned as living in “expectant time” (Lesko, 2001a, p. 51), waiting for the future, and managed through youth participation discourses to increasingly be active and exercise power over life events and their environments in accordance with their development/socialization (i.e. capacity). Risk discourses about young people reflect an anxiety about degeneracy, positioning adolescence as the boundary between civilized and savage. Youth are always at risk of imminent atavism, an anxiety that has a different intensity with regards to the racialized girl subject in this locality (Lesko, 2001a). Nancy Lesko (2001a) defines this heightened anxiety and subsequent surveillance and discipline using the Foucaultian concept of the panopticon<sup>17</sup>. She uses the term “panoptical time” (p. 39). Material practices of panoptical time involve additional surveillance on girls’ timely physical and psychosocial development, which is understood in contemporary scholarship and practices through problematic trajectories of development (e.g. Erickson’s psychosocial stages, Piaget’s cognitive development stages). Girls that are untimely, behind or ahead of their timely development, are considered abnormal in particular gendered ways (e.g. “immature” or “precocious”) (Lesko, 1996), and thus excluded from certain conversations. For example, assumptions that younger girls were not capable or interested in talking about sexuality and sexual orientation (or that it was inappropriate/uncomfortable) and alternatively, that older girls were interested and ready, regulated this conception of girls’ timely development.

Yet, this does not negate the importance of making a space for intersections of gender, race, and sexuality, a place where “belonging” is not jeopardized by speaking

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<sup>17</sup> The panopticon is predicated upon the design of a prison overlooked by the guard’s watchtower. Since the prisoners cannot see whether the guard is present and watching, they must assume that the guard is always there, and self-govern their behaviors accordingly (Foucault, 1977).

about all three as it is in many other spaces. The intentional construction of the groups, while re-inscribing problematic categories, also arguably enabled conversations about sexuality and set the stage for one of the girls to “come out”.<sup>18</sup> These conversations may not have taken place without the deliberate grouping and privileging of topics related to sexuality. Rather than focusing on queer-as-sexual-identity in the group (e.g. the visibly “out” facilitator/staff and girl co-researcher), which would locate queerness solely on practitioners’ bodies and their visibility, what is helpful here is understanding the queering of the space and of our practice. In other words, we conceived a space of encounter that was intentionally made to defy white, straight, adult expectations (e.g. Driver, 2007, p. 2).

### *Regulating bodies in time*

Regulating girls’ bodies and their timely development have become characteristic and often invisible practices in youth-engaged work. So too, various practices of managing girls’ bodies in time were embedded in our process as we “herded” girl co-researchers from one activity to another:

*...getting everyone somewhere and getting them sitting down, like that is just a half an hour in and of itself, right, like...and especially with the number of girls that came yesterday, I felt like it was, it took that much time just to settle them down.*

Scheduling became a central part of the planning process, as each day was set out with every minute booked, leaving little room for emergence, synergy, or the unexpected that cannot be contained. Foucault (1977) comments on this bodily regulation, aptly using

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<sup>18</sup> “Coming out” has been celebrated as a self-actualizing moment of modernist identity development, assuming a coherent identity. However, it is important to note that coming out is not “an equal opportunity endeavor” (Tilsen, forthcoming, p. 10). Coming out narratives inscribe and validate privileged (white, male) GLBT liberal subjects, and function as a technology of Western “homonormativity” (Puar, 2005; 2007).

economic terms: “the various chronological series that discipline must combine to form a composite time are also pieces of machinery. The time of each must be adjusted to the time of the others in such a way that the maximum quantity of forces may be extracted from each and combined with the optimum result” (p. 164-165). In the quote below, it is clear to see how our PAR practice was often seeking to fill up the time in order to maximize what could be done in just a few short hours (also see for example the detailed itinerary in Appendix 2).

*So I just want to take a look at the way that the day is structured, day 2, 3 and 4 are basically structured the same way. So we have 1 to 1:45 hang out and eat, 1:45 to 2:15 large group activity. 2:15 to 2:30 is the energizer or ice breaker. 2:30 to 3 is the media skills workshop, 3 to 5 is the small group workshop, 5 to 5:30 expression time and 5:30 to 6 is closing. So I think this needs to be drastically adjusted because of the fact that, even [...] and I were talking about just the drumming exercise, the large-group activity from 1:45 to 2:15 whether that would be enough time.*

The State, through institutions such as schools, and increasingly through civil society, controls time through various practices including strict schedules, normative judgment and ranking, age segregation, etc. to minimize “tendencies toward degeneracy” (Lesko, 2001a, p. 44). This requires regulation of “free” time because any unstructured time is potentially risky and out of control - anxiety that can be seen in the following quote during our planning session before the second day of our research program.

*[...S]o I think we could really use that [mask-making time] as expression time too and then maybe give only 15 minute expression time because I don't think a lot of them are going to spend half an hour, um, if given, totally just doing something, like writing in a journal. I don't think they're going to do that for half an hour, they're going to go and talk to each other, or they're going to go to the Munchie bar and buy Slurpees. So, I'm pretty sure because half an hour is way too long for them to just be like sitting around, even if they have musical instruments, you know?*

The surveillance and assumptions in the quote above parallel colonial discourses within which misallocation or improper use of time (i.e. time that is not used to move in a linear

and therefore progressive direction) signals degeneracy. Indigenous peoples were studied and observed during colonization, and the improper and unprogressive use of time are still used to justify exclusion of Indigenous and non-Western peoples in various areas including education, employment and land development (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

Postmodern capitalist time is always available for appropriation. In other words, free time is available for capture through the rhythms and tempos of global capital production – all “leisure” time can be measured, divided and is available for purchase (Skott-Myhre, 2008). As a result, other possible rhythms and tempos of creative expression time in our program were under threat of capture. This is another manifestation of white noise as a soundtrack beneath our practices. However, through our ongoing debriefs every other day, we attempted to unpack regulation and disrupt white noise in our practices.

The following day of the program, we loosened the agenda as a response to the feedback about the lack of time. There was a much more relaxed feeling during that third day of the program as reported by the research facilitators in field notes and debriefs about that day. On that day, we had invited an Elder, Marie Cooper, of the W\_SÁNEC (Saanich is the anglicized form) nation and an Elder-in-training, Louise Milburn from the Anishinaabe, to share some teachings related to that day’s theme (land) with the girls.

After two days of feeling rushed, we decided to relax our agenda and take the time that was needed. Louise led us through a drumming circle, as well as healing songs that have been passed down to her from her Elders. The comments and reflections in the field notes and debriefs of that day revealed observations and understandings of the participation of different girls – that some of the Indigenous girls were leading and expressing their knowledge of drumming circles, taking on familiar roles of caring for

Elder Marie's needs, passing out the drums, and helping Louise during the healing songs. Other girls that presumably had less exposure to Indigenous drumming circles were moved to participate and during the healing song, volunteered to lie beneath the drum as Louise and her helpers move the drum over their bodies. This shift to a less rushed pace was an intentional and mindful one that was nourished throughout the day by the change of location, the outdoor space and sunshine, the increasing comfort level that had come with the first couple of intense days, and the presence of an Elder and the drumming workshop at the beginning of the day – a difference contingent on many elements and intensities. At the end of the afternoon, we left plenty of time for journal writing or other “expression time” to hang out, play music and chat. A large group of the girl co-researchers convened in the corner of the large room, with the musical instruments, and together began singing various pop songs using lyrics and guitar tab from a laptop. Concerns about “free” time and the need to constrain it in order to prevent the girls from being bored, not doing anything that we had planned for them, or “misusing” time are based in problematic discourses about young people as outlined above. These practices are intended to capture free time and work to prevent the kind of the important emergent musical convergence that occurred that afternoon.

### *Colonial times*

From the first day of the summer program, we situated the process in an anti-racist framework, brainstorming labels and stereotypes that we had heard, seen, spoke. Written on pieces of paper and taped to one another's backs, the girl co-researchers and research facilitation team encountered one another and through our interactions, we tried to hint at what label was on others' backs, even as we tried to guess our own. In a strange

combination of a familiar icebreaker, the likes of which you might see at various typical “youth” events, and a serious display of subaltern knowledge, we faced each other’s labels with varying degrees of discomfort and curiosity: coconut, gangsta, terrorist, slut, chink, nigger, drunk Indian, dyke, Indian time.

“What’s ‘Indian time’?” asks one of the girls in the large circle during the activity debrief. One of the Indigenous girl co-researchers responds:

*Like the only time I really hear Indian time is if I’m late, like they’re like, “Oh, [...] is on Indian time” because like, back in the day, First Nations didn’t have watches or times, they just got there when they got there. And like, I think people are getting to know that now, they’re just like “Oh, they’re on Indian time, which is late” [...] And then like, I think it’s frowned upon like when people are late, they call it Indian time because I think that some people frown upon Natives [...]*

An Indigenous research facilitator adds,

*That’s exactly what it was, it’s a historical time that dates back to contact time when they were starting the fur trading back and forth. So to, our people, they would go out, but there were certain times of the seasons that you would go out and get certain animals and then we would bring them back to the trading posts, but the White man would be there for days waiting and waiting and waiting, wondering why First Nations weren’t there at the time they had predicted and said that they would be there at because they were waiting. And eventually a couple of terminologies came into use. Indian time means that they are always late and never on time and never can follow a certain order, so that’s where the whole concept of ‘Indian time’ had come down to and when you look at any different terminology and different labels, they do have a history that comes from someplace.*

As seen earlier in this chapter, tensions related to dominant constructions of time played a large part in the structuring of our practices both in terms of how we understood the girls and how we structured the flow of the program. However, this conversation about “Indian time” in the first session, while not intended to speak back to the program, could have informed the ways in which we were constructing these spaces of encounters. How can we attend to different durations in our practices? How does the timeliness

described in the conversation – the possibility for us to “get there when we get there” rather than impose a linear progression of activities that does not have room for unexpected detours or shifts – become part of the responsiveness of our practices? How does the knowledge that we share become integrated immediately and accurately in our practices?

Despite dominant discourses about the colonization of Canada that situate colonial times in the past, these girls and young women situated colonization as ongoing in the present by contributing this knowledge about “Indian time” and unpacking colonial regulation. Colonial time regulates our practices, assuming a common time and duration that applies universally to everyone, every process, in every context. This has been contested through global demonstrations by Indigenous peoples in various protests and standoffs wherein Indigenous worldviews about the earth conceive of durations that exceed typical human lives and require time frames of several generations, which are at odds with Western capitalist time frames of stock markets, oil exploitation and economic growth. Decolonizing is not about rejecting Western knowledge, research or practices, but about centering worldviews that have meaning to those typically marginalized from knowledge production/mobilization (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) and thus function to open possibilities. Sara Ahmed (2002) suggests that “through attending to the multiplicity of the pasts that are never simply *behind* us, through the traces they leave in the encounters we have in the present, that we can open up the promise of the ‘not yet’” (p. 559).

In many ways, I understood that our practice intended to disrupt the “past tense” not only of colonization, but also of Indigenous peoples themselves. Andrea Smith (2006) describes genocide of Indigenous peoples in North America as one of three pillars that

work together to uphold heteropatriarchal white supremacy. This pillar locates Indigenous peoples as always disappearing so that they cannot contest settlement and ownership of the land by White (and non-white) settlers. Our practice involved considerable attention during the planning stages and throughout the program to prevent unintentional erasures by partnering with an Indigenous community-based organization and collaborating with Elders and other Indigenous members of the community who generously shared their time, knowledge, advice and experience. We intentionally approached our partners to ensure visibility of Indigenous women from the community, not as a strategy for “representation”, but in order to ensure that the experiences of Indigenous girls would be kept at the forefront within our process. In a deliberate intergenerational space, although they were unable to be present at the whole program, these women and Elders kept the space open to colonial histories and Indigenous knowledge. This was especially important as the rest of our research team and antidote members (including the Gurl leaders) were predominantly non-white settlers. Various postcolonial theorists refer to disruptions of this “past tense” in contemporary contexts of dominant whiteness as “hauntings” (Bhabha, 1994 & 1997; Chambers, 2001; Gordon, 1997 & 2004; Spivak, 1999). Avery Gordon (2004) describes a haunting as:

an experience or a phenomenon in which the normal divisions between past, present, and future are not holding up because things and people and knowledge that were supposed to be gone or not-there are making their presence known and felt, almost always in disruptive and unsettling ways. Haunting is precisely what makes the present waver, what makes it not quite what you thought it was (p. 24).

Bhabha (1994) suggests that this disruptive haunting time “fractures the time of modernity” (p. 252), hybridizes the present and serves to connect memories of colonial

conflict with subtle forms of neo-colonialism that have become diffuse and invisible within globalized iterations of imperialism.

*(Un)timely practices*

(Re)viewing the video footage of the summer days of our program, it strikes me how much of the video looks like a typical summer camp on campus. We were aware of the ease with which we slipped in and out of dominant conceptualizations of youth programming, and on the surface, could not escape them. The images in the video are full of sunshine and trees, markers and icebreakers. A banner was spread on a stand outside on the patio and girls were writing on it with colorful markers. Panning across the patio, popular music with a strong beat, laughter, and images of groups of girls in conversation make it seem from a brief glance to be just another summer camp. Zooming into the words on the banner, they are the words that the girl co-researchers hear, see and speak everyday. The girl co-researchers are reporting on the stereotypes and hate language that is present in their lives – the misogynist, racist, homophobic, colonial, sexist, transphobic, xenophobic, ableist, and other “isms” and phobias. This reporting positions the girls as knowledgeable selves in terms of how they are being constituted and/or are constituting their peers as “Other”. During the second part of the stereotype wall activity, the girl co-researchers transform the words, shifting them, subverting them creatively, for example, transforming “terrorist” to “theorist”. The music and the sunshine, the laughter and conversations continue despite the heinous words on the wall. The presence of racialized and Indigenous girl co-researchers writing these words on a banner on the University campus in Victoria in the middle of summer is an untimely practice.

Reflecting about what labels and stereotypes girls had reported, written and discussed, one facilitator remarked that, “*generally people were sticking to the stereotypes within their cultures.*” Another research team member responds:

*That’s so interesting to me because it speaks to the whole theme of the whole camp, like it was a space of encounter and all the politics and tensions that come up when you try to talk across groups about the stereotypes we have about each other, who can say which words, who can say which things, and who can claim back what. That’s what comes up [...] that happens so much in those activist circles too, like it’s always the angriest person who silences everybody else, going like “you can’t talk about my people this way”, “we’ve been the most oppressed” and then no one else can talk [...] so how would we facilitate that, because isn’t that the goal of antidote? Not to like shit all over each other?*

It was difficult to speak across difference and examine hegemonic oppressions as multiple, overlapping and discrete without resorting to a hierarchy of oppression. During discussion with the girl co-researchers about the label activity, the word “nigger” was spoken aloud in the context of identifying how various hurtful labels circulate. As we moved to smaller groups, a couple of the girl co-researchers whose ethnic backgrounds are targeted by this racial slur were very offended about the way that the term was being said aloud. Even more so, they were concerned that others did not have knowledge about the severity and history of the term, and identified it as more oppressive than other terms (e.g. chink, etc.). In a small group, we discussed other racial slurs that also have long histories in the oppression of many populations. By discussing these other terms and their histories, our practice worked to provide knowledge from different perspectives, but justifying all claims to oppression is not enough to challenge the oppression hierarchy or ultimately work towards challenging logics of white supremacy. Despite acknowledging the significant presence of anti-Black racism that continues to emerge in various ways in

this locality<sup>19</sup> we did not address the ways in which anti-Black racism and this hierarchy of oppression are supported by imperial/colonial logics of capitalism and property, which benefit from maintaining a racial hierarchy for commodifying workers. Even more importantly, in our efforts to be “inclusive”, we did not situate anti-Black racism in relation to other oppressions (e.g. Orientalism, genocide/colonization) (Smith, 2006) in a way that could move us beyond “shitting all over each other”. This situation reveals a significant gap in analytical tools and knowledge that would benefit the work of antidote, as well as others.<sup>20</sup>

As our small group adjusted our own group guidelines to address the use of hurtful terms, the two concerned girl co-researchers made the “untimely” demand to have this conversation with the larger group to bring it to all of the girls. However, the program schedule again took precedence as we moved directly to writing on the stereotype wall, all of us reporting on the stereotypes and words that we see everyday, again including the term nigger. Despite another opportunity presenting itself on the wall, we still did not integrate this necessary conversation into the stereotype wall activity. Instead, we tried to look for another time to do it, trying to fit it into the next day of the program, rather than letting the thread of important content flow and take the space and time it needed. Sara Ahmed (2002) suggests that speaking across difference requires locating difference in the “mode” of encounter rather than the body of the Other:

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<sup>19</sup> At the time of this program, a young biracial man in Courtney/Comox, B.C., just a few hours drive north of Victoria, was attacked and beaten by four white men. Having training in martial arts, the young man was able to eventually fight off his attackers. The attack was filmed by a bystander and disseminated online. Despite the clear use of racialized hate language, the attack was quickly hailed as an ‘isolated incident’ (see <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/07/07/bc-courtenay-hate-crime-reaction.html>).

<sup>20</sup> For example, Andrea Smith’s (2006) conceptualizations of the ‘Three pillars of white supremacy’ examines how racialized activists can organize across difference to address the integrated structure of White heteropatriarchy.

Such a politics based on encounters between other others is one bound up with responsibility – with recognizing how relationships of power mediate and frame the encounter itself. A politics of encountering gets closer in order to allow the differences between us, as differences that involve power and antagonism, to make a difference to the very encounter itself. The differences between us necessitate the dialogue, rather than disallow it – a dialogue must take place, precisely *because* we do not speak the same language. The ‘we’ of such a collective politics is what must be worked for, rather than the foundation of our collective work. In the very ‘painstaking labour’ of getting closer, of speaking *to* each other, and of working *for* each other, we also get closer to ‘other others’ (p. 570).

Thus, recognizing how power relations within our practice (e.g. who decides when we can speak about what) and the ways in which our practice shaped the encounter revealed the need for this dialogue. Unfortunately, the two girls that brought up this concern chose not to return to the program, again reminding us of the importance of timeliness. This was a missed opportunity where we could have engaged in deconstructing underlying logics of different oppressions and how they are interconnected and often complicit in maintaining white supremacy (Smith, 2006). As we debriefed the day, a research facilitator recognized the rigidity and control of time in our practices, as well as the benefit of hindsight:

*When I said flexibility [...] I wasn't so much thinking that we have to do other programs, but I was thinking about content flexibility. [...] when this issue came up in your group, about the n-word, you still can continue with the program, but maybe you need to talk about that particular issue in whatever you are doing. So you have your plan and you know the next one [activity] will be the stereotype wall or whatever, and it was there when maybe it needed to be addressed. I'm saying it now, it's not like I'm saying it's other people's fault, because I didn't think of it yesterday, but I was thinking about it last night. And that's what I meant by flexibility, it's not so much that now you've got to scrap your program [...] but how you can bring in and have a continuation and flexibility in that way.*

Our time was programmed from that first day of the program, precluding important and unexpected explorations.

### *Programming time*

Our practices could be described as a changing rhythm of movement that disrupts the easy binary of structured and non-structured, clean and messy, and the problematic assumption that these are opposites within our program. Conceptualizing white noise as an overriding rhythm, the research facilitation team struggled to make other rhythms possible by identifying the forces that were continuously shaping our practices. This was evident in the debrief after the second day of the program:

*What was really going on was the dominant discourse about programs took over and it took over unbeknownst to us and now we're stopping and reflecting on it so I think this is a really good moment to go back. We're actually doing really important work right here to say that this is exactly how these unwritten rules govern our lives and exactly what we're asking the girls to do, we're discovering ourselves. How far down this road we had to go before we jerked ourselves back, and say, "what are we doing?"*

Together, we reflected on the ways that the dominant discourse of programs was quietly present in our practices. These included: linear processes for learning skills out of context (e.g. media skill workshops preceding discussions and production), familiar program formulas of moving from one activity to the next, and prescriptive steps leading to expected outcomes, among others. Foucault (1977/1995) describes the temporal elaboration of an act as an “anatamo-chronological schema” of bodies, suggesting that “it is rather a collective and obligatory rhythm, imposed from the outside; it is a ‘programme’; it assures the elaboration of the act itself; it controls its development and its stages from the inside [...] Time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power” (p. 151-152). In other words, control and discipline of the body occur through a web that sustains the “programme”, rather than through continuous commands to act. Our research facilitation team was not being surveilled or directed by anyone, yet,

we were acting within the rhythm of a “programme” from the bottom up. The challenge in our practice was to disrupt these “programmed” spaces in the moment of their deployment. However, I suggest that often our attempts to disrupt and decolonize these spaces occurred after the fact, as we discovered for ourselves the “unwritten rules” that were governing our practices. As we tried to respond after they happened, our efforts became prescriptive yet again, and so the practice of disruption must be intentional and ongoing.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have analyzed how a development-in-time episteme underlies our PAR in multiple significant ways. Connecting seemingly benign program decisions and practices to colonizing structures of division, categorization, governmentality and measures of deviance and progress, this analysis reveals an underlying oppressive Western ontology of time. As a central problematic in this PAR process and within dominant YPAR discourses, our practices were able to de-essentialize some identity categories temporarily, while reinforcing others. Although framed within an intersectional approach, practicing intersectionally to unfix identities was challenging, particularly when some identity categories emerged as more significant than others in different contexts and situations. Jasbir Puar (2005, 2007) argues that intersectionality presumes components can be disassembled and named, and thus functions to stabilize identity (rather than disrupt essential constructions) across space and time. In this way, intersectional practice can become co-opted as “a tool of diversity management and a mantra of liberal multiculturalism, [colluding] with the disciplinary apparatus of the state – census, demography, racial profiling, surveillance - in that ‘difference’ is encased

within a structural container that simply wishes the messiness of identity into a formulaic grid, producing analogies in its wake” (Puar, 2007, p. 212).

In addition, as a consequence of this teleological linear and hierarchical framing, the process and outcomes were prescribed even though unpredictability is essential in constructing new knowledge and action. Alternatively, the *untimely* - or that which is specific, unexpected, and cannot be contained within the progression of time - defends “the right to a nonprojected future” (Biehl, 2010, p. 336). Elizabeth Grosz (2005), inspired by Deleuzian ontology calls for a futurity that does not situate girls as future feminists, women, adults, or citizens, but rather demands a radical feminist politics that is directed at engendering a future that is unlike the present “without being able to specify in advance what such a future entails” (p. 182). In order to unfix (Y)PAR practices, an alternative ontological framing is needed, which I will explore in the next and final chapter.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### *Contributions and Implications*

I am very grateful to have been a part of this process and community. I am humbled by this experience and what I have learned from working with the girl co-researchers and with the research facilitation team. I believe that this reflexive analysis contributes to the field of critical YPAR *practice*, which is marginalized in academic research and rare in the literature. One of the validity measures of PAR involves measuring impacts on the community within the project, and I am confident that this study contributes to the community of practitioners who, already marginalized by their use of participatory methodologies, are further marginalized by their work as/with co-researchers at the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, etc. However, I am ambivalent about how my thesis contributes to social change in the lives of the girl co-researchers and due to the limited scope of my study, I can only speculate about what impacts they have experienced.

Speaking back to mainstream YPAR literature, this thesis clearly demonstrates the ways in which dominant participation, youth development and helping profession discourses are employed to regulate, silence, pathologize and exclude racialized and Indigenous girls. My analysis makes visible, through practical and concrete evidence, the unintentional, subtle and invisible ways that practices are already colonized and embedded in white noise. Practices that assume fixed identities, and prescribe universal conceptualizations of how youth should participate in knowledge production/construction are unable to open space for racialized girls to engage politically or socially beyond the

status quo. Simply involving racialized girls in mainstream mechanisms of YPAR does not ensure that they are meaningfully engaged, paradoxically positioning them “as conduits for the reproduction of one-dimensional multicultural encounters, [...] at once hyper-visible in their difference and invisible as complex subjects” (de Finney, 2010, p. 478). Immersed constantly in white noise, their experiences, realities and activist dialogues are preemptively silenced by dominant discourses of youth participation and multiculturalism. It is not surprising then that racialized and Indigenous girls are often disengaged from these mechanisms that support dominant social systems (Harris, 2001). Their disengagement from the whitestream is pathologized as a symptom of a “backwards” culture to avoid acknowledging the systemic exclusive forces at play. Further, girls’ alternative forms of participation that contest the status quo, such as anti-racist activism and cultural education/caregiving are undervalued (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Lee, 2010). In light of these subtle and not-so-subtle erasures, in a previous cycle of PAR, Sandrine de Finney (2008) calls for a reconceptualization “so that we may form and implement marginalized methodologies, broaden our epistemological choices and support girls’ peripheral strategies of engagement” (p. 285).

In response to her call, this feminist, anti-racist, intergenerational and girl-centered PAR was successful in opening up a non-mainstream space of encounter that defied white, straight, adult, masculine, (neo)liberal norms in multiple, although partial, ways. Our practice involved creatively working the gaps within our transdisciplinary conceptual framework through which white noise continually leaked in. My analysis contributes to a decolonizing praxis that serves to address the traces of the hegemonic that infiltrate practice even in the struggle against hegemonic power structures

(Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Mohanty, 2003). This decolonizing praxis involved the “active withdrawal of consent and resistance to structures of psychic and social domination” (Mohanty, 2003, p.7), critique of the discourses and values of capitalism and their naturalization through neoliberal ideology, engagement with everyday lived experience in relation to hegemonic power, and engagement with collectivities premised on democratic practice. By documenting and analyzing the struggles within PAR practices of working within and among legacies of colonialism, neoliberal discourses, constructs of ‘at-risk’ racialized girls, and dominant practices of youth participation, this study contributes a messy decolonizing complexity to sanitized and acontextual mainstream YPAR literature.

This study also implies future directions in YPAR that must consider the ways in which knowledge production/construction practices continually build hegemonies and are governed by scattered neocolonial and neoliberal state forms and structures. With a history of exploitation laden with imperial values, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) suggests that “‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p. 1). In our planning conversations, we considered how dominant colonial research discourses and practices were potentially alienating our partners:

*The term “research” is so loaded, so triggering for so many communities. [In other projects with Indigenous communities] we’ve had to watch our basic language in the way we approach any discussion [methods, etc.] We’ve started using words like “capturing stories”, “documenting teachings”, we talk a lot more about protocols and ownership. Our language [in this process] hasn’t necessarily been inclusive of those concerns. We know that we care about these things, but someone listening may only hear the research engine [Emphasis added].*

Articulated through vocabulary and discourse, these alienating concepts and values have significant material consequences. The question then, is: How can we locate research and

inquiry outside of the official “research engine”? The research engine is assumed to be located only within academic institutions, but due to increasing downloading of state regulation to civil society, we find this same engine working in the non-profit industrial complex. The non-profit industrial complex is based upon mutual relationships between technologies of the state and “surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements” (Rodriguez 2007, p. 8). Therefore, the research engine “is revealed to be not one but multiple, overlapping, intersecting systems or relations that are historically constructed and recreated through *everyday practices* [italics added] and interactions and that implicate the individual in contradictory ways” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 104). Understanding the reproduction of the research engine through our everyday practices, reconceptualization involves not only a methodological and epistemological shift, but also a different ontological framing, as suggested in the previous chapter. For example, my analysis revealed tensions between an intergenerational and girl-centered approach to PAR. As described in Chapter 5, the participation of girl co-researchers was limited, and they did not participate at all in the research facilitator team debriefs. In other words, the girl co-researchers were excluded from the meaning-making happening amongst the research facilitation team. Despite the structural and ethical barriers used to justify their exclusion, these missed opportunities suggest that there is much to learn from YPAR discourses that focus on disrupting structural exclusions and asymmetrical power relations based on age and creatively eliminating systemic barriers to participation. However, rather than depending on deficient models of liberal democracy and equality, Eve Tuck (2009a) and Sandy Grande (2004; 2008) suggest that looking to Indigenous paradigms may be more useful. Grande

(2008) suggests that using an ontology/epistemology of sovereignty, which Tuck (2009a) describes as “recognition and full realization of rights to social, cultural, and spiritual (tribal) identities and to our own envisioned political development. It is a call for respect for our integrity as a whole, significant, contemporary civilizations with long histories [...] and even longer futures” (p. 56). Balance, as one of the root metaphors of sovereignty, clarifies that responsibility and power cannot be equally shared, but rather that everyone has different gifts, knowledge, roles, and responsibilities. Together, “*as a whole*, they act in balance to each other” (Grande, 2008, p. 86). Starting from a place of balance within a collective can serve to counter dogmatic liberal notions of equality (Tuck, 2009a). Thus, critical YPAR, and similar frameworks that integrate critical theories with girl-centered (or youth-centered) practice can not only broaden epistemic space, but also reframe paradigmatic space. Ontology is a way of being that guides our practices, our understanding of “what the world is like - what the world consists of, and why. Another way of thinking about ontology is to think of it as a world view” (Strega, 2005, p. 201).

#### *Future ontological directions for practice*

Due to a theoretical resonance (but not necessarily coherence), feminist theorists (e.g. Braidotti, 2006; Grosz, 2002 & 2005; Ong et al., 1996), PAR practitioners (e.g. Tuck et al., 2008; Tuck, 2009b), and critical youth work theorists (e.g. Skott-Myhre, 2007 & 2008) have taken up Deleuzian concepts in order to describe an alternative worldview to guide practice. Deleuzian concepts also have a resonance with Indigenous worldviews. For example, Cindy Blackstock (2009) suggests that as quantum physics catches up to traditional Indigenous knowledge, they reach similar conclusions regarding the

interconnection among all things, both human and inhuman. Deleuzian ontology is a worldview of “becoming”, or a world of continual differentiation that is constantly in flux. Rather than a progression towards an ideal, reality is a flow of variations.

Although I do not intend to make an exhaustive argument here, nor will I undertake a rigorous review of the critiques of Deleuzian philosophy due to the limitations of the scope of this chapter, I would like to suggest some directions for further development in the field of YPAR, building upon the work of Elizabeth Grosz and Hans Skott-Myhre. Specifically, these pertain to the difficulties and gaps within our own framework of practice: a) The insufficiency of intersectional practices to unfix identity; and b) The dominance of embedded Hegelian discourses that form the basis for minoritization.

### *Unfixing identity*

Despite our efforts to disrupt them, our practices served to maintain identity categories and re-entrench categories of age, race, gender, sexuality, etc. However, these categories of identity are leaky and rather than attempting to capture the leakage and control the contingency of identity, what if our practices were to welcome leakage? Skott-Myhre (2008) suggests that a radical youth work would encourage and make space for this “overflow”. This involves paying attention to the ways in which the subject creatively produces itself as an effect of multiple forces, noticing movement outside of stable identities, and enhancing that movement.

The dominant theory of subject formation collapses into identity politics, wherein the subject can become a subject only through recognition of the other, and that identity can be both bestowed/taken away. In this Hegelian framework, autonomy and identity are

paradoxically dependent on an “Other”. Alternatively, Deleuze flips this relation by seeking out forces or (Nietzschean) wills to power instead of identity. In this reframing, the subject is defined as such because of its capacity to act and be acted upon (rather than identify and be identified). Thus, the subject is conceived within bodies and forces. Grosz (2005) suggests that we develop “an account of subjectivity, identity, or agency at the mercy of forces, energies, practices that produce an altogether different understanding of both politics and identity” (p.88). What this means then, is that difference (e.g. racial difference) is understood as material, evolutionary forces that are not in our control, but through which we nevertheless act and are effected (Grosz, 2005).

The concept of assemblages better describes this contingency of subject formation and offers a useful political and theoretical frame to destabilize and deprivilege binaries of identity. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe assemblages as interminglings and interconnections of bodies, actions and affects, with both territorialized/reterritorialized sides that stabilize and “edges of deterritorialization” that destabilize (p. 88). As such, rather than identity categories, race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc. are elements of an assemblage of material bodies and cultural discourses subject to deterritorializations and reterritorializations. Skott-Myhre (2008) describes the moment of the body as “a disruption in the temporality of development because the body lives only in the moments of its own becoming. That is to say, the body can only produce itself in a particular moment of contingent time. The body assembles itself in every moment out of selected components of all of the available elements of that moment. [...] In each of these contingent selections of composition, the body stops time” (p. 56).

Additionally, Puar (2007) suggests that assemblages offer “the temporality of always-becoming (continual ontological emergence, a Deleuzian *becoming without being*)” (Puar, 2007 p. xxiv) and are “more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency” (p. 212). Thus, this alternative theory of subject formation unfixes identity from recognition of the minority within a majority standard, moving from a teleological “becoming” (youth/girl to adult citizen) based on lack, to a becoming-minoritarian that is a movement of deterritorialization away from fixed identities, that continuously overflows the majority standards and oversteps the fixed minority identity (Braidotti, 2003; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Tarulli & Skott-Myhre, 2006). This anti-Hegelian conceptualization of contingency serves to deterritorialize practices predicated on teleological processes in time.

#### *Anti-Hegelian processes*

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer useful conceptual tools - striated and smooth space - to think about timeliness and flexibility, suggest processes that are not hierarchical or developmental, and to better describe and complexify our understanding of our practices. Deleuze describes striated space, or that within which the State controls movements, speeds, and regulates circulation with fixed paths and well-defined directions. This control functions to move a body from one point to another along a fixed trajectory (e.g. adolescent development, cultural evolution, modern progress, a program moving youth from one activity to the next, etc.). This is the space of rigid practices. Arborescent models belong to striated spaces, like trees or flow charts that restrict movements in well-defined directions. In this Hegelian model, ideas are related to other ideas in a progressive and predictive linear fashion, where people progress from one stage

to another in a prescribed way. Order is imposed through program regulation, designed as a linear progression through time. As an example, we tried to confine topics of discussion based on a linear schedule of our day, a local movement from one specified point to another – using a linear spatialization of time to control emerging encounters.

One of the State's fundamental tasks is the production of striated spaces, as seen in the ways that movement is regulated and ceases to be “the absolute state of a moving body occupying a smooth space, to become the relative characteristic of a ‘moved body’ going from one point to another in a striated space” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 386). In Canada, this can be seen in the ways that reserves have confined Indigenous lands, British surveying “reorganized” the river lots of western Canada, state border laws, immigration laws, the education system, and in the colonizing ways we think about our world. These same technologies of striation are delegated to civil society, inadvertently implemented through YPAR and youth participation strategies. Thus, decolonizing our practices also requires disruption of striated space and ongoing movement towards smooth space.

A smooth space is different in nature, but always exists in a mixture with striated space. Rather than regulating the movement of bodies through space, smooth space involves a moving body occupying space, a turbulent flow at unpredictable speeds and directions. Rhizomatic multiplicities belong to a smooth space. Rhizomes, as opposed to arborescent models, are characterized by multiple connections; any point connecting to another regardless of the distance between them (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). In relation to participation and leadership, the decentralized control of the rhizome is better suited to the participatory nature of (Y)PAR. History can thus be understood, not as a linear

progression or unfolding blueprint, but as unpredictable change. In a smooth space, for example, unexpected conversations could have flowed and held the space that was needed, simultaneously affecting all parts of our program in unpredictable ways.

Practices in smooth space do not prioritize outcomes, rather, they prioritize the trajectory that arrives at a possible outcome. To be clear, the passage to smooth space does not preclude intentionality or focus (e.g. of a research question). Rather, practice can focus on changing and increasing non-linear connections between ideas, and subordinating points (e.g. steps, schedules, destinations, outcomes) to the intervals and trajectories that bring us to these points – the interval is the substance that determines the rhythm. As such, smooth space would disrupt the rhythm of white noise. Smooth spaces produce changes in rhythm that may be generative, but are not guaranteed to be liberatory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

### *Final words*

The conceptual framework for this study made it possible to interrogate and address scattered hegemonies within our practices and multiple erasures of Indigenous and racialized girls in knowledge production/construction. Folded into a PAR methodology, this girl-centered, anti-racist, feminist, decolonizing and postcolonial conceptual framework brought together the typically disparate fields of youth and girl-centered practice with critical theory in a generative way. As a result, research practices are rigorously politicized through a decolonizing praxis. Considering the ways in which white noise filtered through shifting gaps in this framework, it is important not only to develop new questions, but also consider other worldviews from which those questions can emerge. According to an ontology of becoming, (Y)PAR practices must be concerned

not with identities, but rather with forces that act through us, as well as through the non-human, non-living world. These forces act upon and produce subjects in continuous flux, contingent on specific moments, situations, histories and contexts. In this ontological framework, our practices would not be concerned with “empowering” girls, facilitating their participation through a program, or maximizing their “voices”. Instead, conceptualizing PAR processes as constitutive of new subjectivities (Cahill, 2007a), our practice would focus on affecting and aligning forces in PAR processes so that they do not “position” Indigenous and racialized girls as marginalized, and so that they produce new and unexpected assemblages for girls to take up (Grosz, 2002 & 2005; Lee et al., forthcoming). In other words, (Y)PAR practice must be concerned with intentionally interrupting scattered hegemonies and colonial rhythms so that emergent trajectories and movements in smooth space are possible.

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## Appendix 1: Ethics approval

Human Research Ethics Board  
 Office of Research Services  
 University of Victoria  
 Administrative Services Building - 2nd Floor  
 Tel (250) 472-4545 Fax (250) 721-8960  
 Email ethics@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

### Human Research Ethics Board Modification of an Approved Protocol

<u>Principal Investigator</u>	<u>Department/School</u>	<u>Supervisor</u>
<b>Jo-Anne Lee</b> Faculty	<b>WOST</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<u>Co-Investigator(s):</u>		
Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Asst Prof, CHIL Sandrina de Finney, Asst Professor, CHIL Angela Polifroni, Project Coordinator, WOST Linley Faulkner, RA, WOST Sinead Charbonneau, RA, WOST Gabriela Duhard, RA, WOST Julie Lee, RA, WOST Randi Rosso, RA, CHIL Winnie Chow, Project Coordinator, Anti-dote	Manjeet Birk, Project Coordinator, Antidote (community partner) Nishad Khanna, Research Coordinator, EDCI, UVic Melanie Matining, Research Assistant, Antidote (community partner) Elaine Alexie, Research Assistant, LE, NONET, Child and Youth Care, UVic Asma Antoine, Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services	
<u>Project Title:</u> <b>Identity, Belonging and Community Solidarity Among &amp; Between Indigenous and Racialized Girls and Young Women</b>		
<u>Protocol No.</u> <b>07-06-386b</b>	<u>Date</u> <b>11-Jun-09</b>	
<i>For modifications to an Approved Protocol, your protocol approval period remains the same as your original certificate of approval.</i>		

### Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

**This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Extensions and/or amendments may be approved with the submission of a "Request for Annual Renewal or Modification" form.**



Dr. Richard Keeler  
 Associate Vice-President, Research

07-06-386b Lee, Jo-Anne

## Appendix 2: Detailed Program Description

**We're Just Sayin' In the Summer: Detailed Itinerary Day 1**

Theme: Stereotypes

<b>Time</b>	<b>What</b>
10:30 am	Set Up Meeting (transferring supplies)
12:15pm	Meeting new girls (consent forms)
12:45pm	Meeting at Bus Loop
1:00pm	Welcome Prayer Introductions of team/project Introduction of videographer and video cameras (CONSENT refresher) Introduction Icebreaker Introduction of counselor and her role
1:15pm	Explain and distribute food cards & Tour of SUB Structure of day Eat!
2:10	Name Icebreaker
2:15	Icebreaker: Stereotype Labels Activity -everyone writes a label on a small paper and puts it into the box -facilitators stick labels on each person's back -mingle and address each other based on the label (1 sentence) to help them guess the label on their back -Debrief
2:35	Division into family groups (Dinos and Crayons) -icebreakers, group guidelines -Codenames: everyone
3:15	Tableau of Research/ PAR Goals of Project in Family Groups
3:30	Stereotype wall (neg/pos) on sheet with markers -have some music playing (music and speakers) -re-write/change the words to become empowering
4:45	Blog Intro
5:00	Digital Café 3 groups – 5 minute intro and handout 1. radio, (CFUV) 2. video 3. expression room: (and 3 minute freewrite) -Sign up sheets for the 3 groups (radio, video/images, blogging)
5:45	Closing Collect everyone's boxes Remind them about our first activity at 1pm on the 16 <sup>th</sup>
6:15	Departures End of day: Upload files onto media hard-drive

**We're Just Sayin' In the Summer: Detailed Itinerary Day 2**

Theme: Social relations

<b>Time</b>	<b>What</b>
10:30 am	Set Up Meeting (transferring supplies)
1:00pm	Opening Plenary Welcome, Opening Prayer
1:10pm	Structure of the Day: Theme Potential Media Presence Today New Divisions of Groups Icebreaker Hangout and Eat
1:45pm	Large Group Percussion Activity
2:30	Photography skills
3:00	Masks and Theatre- Tableau and Stills
5:00	Expression Time
5:30	Closing Plenary -reminder to bring image/object that represents home Collect everyone's boxes with food card and journal Remind them about our first activity at 1pm on the 18th
6:15	Departures End of day: Upload files onto media hard-drive

**We're Just Sayin' In the Summer: Detailed Itinerary Day 3**

Theme: Land

<b>Time</b>	<b>What</b>
10:30 am	Set Up Meeting (transferring supplies)
11:00am	Order Pizza
1:00pm	Welcome
1:10pm	Icebreaker Hangout and Eat
1:45pm	Large Group Activity Elder teachings Indigenous Drumming and Healing Workshop
2:15	Energizer
2:30	Video skills
3:00	Portrait and Landscape
5:00	Expression Time
5:30	Closing Collect everyone's boxes with food card and journal
6:15	Departures End of day: Upload files onto media hard-drive

**We're Just Savin' In the Summer: Detailed Itinerary Day 4**

Theme: Rules

<b>Time</b>	<b>What</b>
10:30 am	Set Up Meeting (transferring supplies)
1:00pm	Icebreaker
1:10pm	Hangout and Eat
1:45pm	Large Group Activity Taiko Drumming
2:15	Energizer
2:30	Radio skills
3:00	Rules discussion
5:00	Expression Time
5:30	Closing Collect everyone's boxes with food card and journal Remind them about our first activity at 1pm on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Reminder late finish for last day
6:15	Departures End of day: Upload files onto media hard-drive  (filename: NameDateKeyword)

**We're Just Savin' In the Summer: Detailed Itinerary Day 5**

<b>Time</b>	<b>What</b>
10:30 am	Set Up Meeting (transferring supplies)
1:00pm	Icebreaker
1:10pm	Hangout and Eat
2:00	Blogging
2:30	MAC Lab Digital Café 3 groups: 1) Video/images 2) Sound 3) Other options: powerpoint slideshow with music, Garageband, comic life, etc. (rest of team)
5:00	Expression Time
5:30	Party and Showcase Dinner and Sundae Party Goodbye Celebration
7:15	Departures End of day: Upload files onto media hard-drive