The Importance of Creative Methodologies:

Exploring the Pedagogical Possibilities of Creative Methodologies within Settler-Colonial Education Systems

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Abstract

My Major Research Paper (MRP) explores the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies within settler-colonial education systems. Driven by my own experiences and backed up by extensive research, I explore the reasons why creativity, creative pathways, and creative methodologies need to be included within settler-colonial education systems. I conduct my research by drawing on theories of intersectionality, feminist postmodernism, and affect theory. To get my results, I explore topics such as inclusivity, accessibility, racial inequalities, healing, pedagogy, and art history. My research also draws on a variety of examples of creative methodologies, such as music, poems, craft, graffiti, paintings, scrapbooks, comics, visual memoirs, sculptures, and more. At the forefront of many of my examples are Indigenous, BIPOC, and other non-Eurocentric creative knowledge productions. To further explore the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies, I use a creative methodological framework for the scope of my paper. I accompany my MRP with three feminist artworks that I created: *What Were They Wearing?, Table Talk*, and *More Than Numbers*. By including these artworks, my goal is to provide a firsthand exploration of creative methodologies, how they can be used, and how they can be effective pedagogy. I passionately explore the many pedagogical possibilities that creative methodologies have as I am driven to have them welcomed, honoured, and accepted within settler-colonial education systems.

Keywords: The Arts, creative methodologies, decolonization, feminism, healing, intersectionality, BIPOC, accessibility, art history, race, emotions.

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this Major Research Paper to all the people who have, throughout the years, supported my passion for creativity in a world that often seems to try and discourage and undermine it. I remember each of you, from the smallest moments of support to the largest; each one has gotten me to where I am today.

I also dedicate this Major Research Paper to creative thinkers. Through the examples included in this research, may you finally feel as if you see your creative self being represented, especially within academia. May you leave knowing that you are valid and your creativity has the potential to change the world. Never stop creating.

Artists rebel against the world because their sensibility reveals to them an alternate possible world. - Amy Mullin, 2020, p.206

The paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious, one begins to examine the very society in which they are being educated.

- James, Baldwin, 1963, p.17

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Introduction

My name is Vanessa Ervin and I regard myself as an artist[1], activist, musician, academic, researcher, and feminist. Ever since I can first remember, I have loved the Arts, music, and creativity. My upbringing taught me the values of creativity and to honour the amazing abilities of the Arts[2]. I pursued my passion for the Arts throughout all avenues of my life, constantly standing up for its validity. However, I was/am often met with backlash and degrading opinions held towards creativity and the Arts. I never doubted the validity of the Arts, but society made me feel that I had to force myself into other fields and career paths. I did not succumb to this external pressure and applied for graphic design and visual arts programs at multiple post-secondary schools. I passionately decided to go to Lakehead University for an Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts minoring in Women's Studies. Afterwards, I continued with my love for education, learning, and the Arts by applying to Master's programs in Women's Studies. When applying, I specifically wanted to pursue a Master's with a creative pathway (creative research paper combined with creative artworks). However, through the application process, it became apparent to me that this option did not exist in standard Master's programs. This still did not stop me and I decided to search for a 'loophole' within the education systems. I decided to email professors directly at the universities to ask them if they would supervise a creative pathway if I attended their school. Most professors wished me well but did not want to go out on a limb to support a pathway that was technically not offered by the school. Ironically, even the University of Ottawa

[1] If you are interested in learning about more of my artworks or following my artist social media accounts/website, please feel free to email vanessaervinsart@gmail.com

[2] The Arts are a variety of practices and methods that involve the "engagement of senses and emotion as well as intellectual processes" (Noblit, 2020). This involves, but is not limited to mediums such as "short stories, novels, experimental writing forms, graphic novels, comics, poems, parables, collages, paintings, drawings, sculpture, 3-D art, quilts and needlework, performance scripts, theatrical performances, dances, films, and songs and musical scores" just to name a few (Leavy, 2015, p.4).

informed me that they would not be able to 'accommodate my desire for a creative project at this time'. So, I pushed harder, resulting in the Vice-Dean of Social Science and the Graduate committee agreeing to meet to discuss my determined goal of a creative pathway. I then met Shoshana Magnet and Andrea Fitzpatrick who both passionately agreed that they would support my creative pathway internally. This solidified my desire to attend the University of Ottawa for my Women's Studies Master's, write this very essay, and follow my creative passions.

My dream for my creative MRP is that it causes the implementation of creative pathways and creative methodologies to be offered as a standard within education systems. My lived experiences have taught me that creativity and creative pathways are often – wrongly – not welcomed because they are neither understood nor regarded as valid, important, effective, or intelligent. These negative attitudes towards creativity drove me to write this essay that explores the many possibilities that creative methodologies have. I encourage creative individuals to never give up on their passions and demand the systems around them to see the validity of the Arts. Whether you are a student (such as myself) who continuously pushes to get a creative pathway accepted or a professor (such as Professor Magnet and Professor Fitzpatrick) who supervises a creative pathway that is not (yet) offered, I hope that acts such as these educate people on the validity of the Arts and make creative pathways and creative methodologies offered and accepted.

Contextual Framework

Within the context of my paper, it is important to define what settler-colonial education systems are and why I specifically focus on them. As explored by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, settler-colonial education systems can be understood as systems that are founded on and cultivate knowledge that "is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices"

(Smith, 2021, p.2). Settler-colonial education systems are institutions that continuously perpetuate imperialism and colonialism through the use of rules, regulations, beliefs, and the construction of knowledge (Smith, 2021, p.7). As researched by Smith, some questions that can be asked when defining what makes a settler-colonial education system includes, "Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up?" (Smith, 2021, p.11). These questions help bring to light what goals and intentions the education system has. When it comes to settler-colonial education systems, asking these questions reveals that their goals and intentions are rooted in the dominion and whitewashing of Eurocentric superiority. As Marie Battiste explores within her research, settler-colonial education systems are deeply rooted in "generations of exploitation, violence, marginalization, powerlessness, and enforced cultural imperialism on Aboriginal knowledge and peoples" (Battiste, 2013, p.25). Settler-colonial education systems reproduce forced assimilation through a variety of tools, such as "media, books, laws, and values" (Battiste, 2013, p.26). In addition, Battiste shows how settler-colonial education systems "perpetuate a biased construction of the strength of colonialism posing as globalism, Eurocentric institutions, economic survival of the nation, cultural institutions, and reasoned democracy" (Battiste, 2013, p.32). Eurocentric education systems place themselves superior over all non-Eurocentric ways of knowing deeming all forms of Indigenous knowledge as inferior (Green, 2017, p.9). The reason why I focus on settler-colonial education systems is because Non-Eurocentric cultures and systems already have a long-standing relationship with creative methodologies as opposed to settler-colonial education systems that often reject creative methodologies (Green, 2017, p.13). I focus specifically on settler-colonial education systems as they continually deny their part in colonialization,

whitewashing, racism, white supremacy, and more. Thus, my research aims to show that there is a need to deconstruct the entire foundation, structure, ethics, practices, and pedagogy of settler-colonial education systems.

My paper is also cognizant of not romanticizing creative methodologies as perfect decolonizing agents. Although my essay explores how creative methodologies have many possibilities for helping decolonize settler-colonial education systems, they are certainly not exempt from colonialism or perpetuating colonization. A great example of creative methodologies falling prey to colonialism is by looking at the Group of Seven. The Group of Seven were 1920's painters who are famously known for their iconic depiction of 'empty' Canadian landscapes and identity (O'Brian & White, 2017, p. ix). The Group of Seven are known as a part of the famous art canon[3] and included, Lawren S. Harris, J.E.H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Frederick Varley, Frank Johnston, Franklin Carmichael and A.Y. Jackson (The National Art Gallery of Canada, n.d.). However, The Group of Seven should not actually be idolized for their discovery of Canadian wilderness or as an icon for Canadian life (Cole, 2016, p.69). In reality, The Group of Seven were endorsed and supported by patrons such as the National Art Gallery of Canada to falsely portray land as empty and open to being claimed (O'Brian & White, 2017, p.21). They would often return with their completed paintings to market to European settlers even though Indigenous Peoples already owned and occupied the land they painted (Carubia, Dowler, & Szczgiel, 2005, p.213). The history of The Group of Seven can be explored much deeper, however, for the scope of this paper, this is just a summary to understand how creative methodologies have and can perpetuate colonialism. The Group of

[3] The Art history Canon is "defined as a body of works traditionally considered to be the most significant and therefore the most worthy of study…by critics and defenders alike as an expression of a universal standard of quality" (Brzyski, 2007, p.1).

Seven is a perfect example of creative methodologies being used as a tool to further perpetuate colonialism as they silenced Indigenous identities and exploited Indigenous land for Eurocentric agendas and domination. This is not an isolated event either, and their perpetuation of colonial violence continues still. For example, The Group of Seven is highlighted as part of the *Indigenous and Canadian Galleries* within the National Gallery of Canada (The National Art Gallery of Canada, n.d.). The (grotesque) irony is that the Group of Seven has been placed within the *Indigenous and Canadian Galleries* while their paintings were actively taking away Indigenous lands, identity, and culture. As this example shows, my paper remains cognizant that creative methodologies are not perfect decolonizing agents. While keeping this in mind, my paper continues to explore that if creative methodologies are used critically and correctly, they have many effective and valid pedagogical possibilities.

Theoretical Framework

For my research, I use Kimberlé Crenshaw's theories of intersectionality, feminist postmodernism, and affect theory. These three theories equip my research with tools that help explore the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies in settler-colonial education systems. I use Kimberlé Crenshaw's theories of intersectionality as it allows my research to see the complexities of social divisions and power relations within people's identities (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p.788). Crenshaw's theories of intersectionality and creative methodologies allow multiple viewpoints providing my research with the ability to be more inclusive, diverse, and accurate (Vaart, Hoven, & Huigen, 2018). I use feminist postmodernism as it enables my research to discuss the topic of multiple truths (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.43) and challenges the dichotomous[4] way of viewing colonial knowledge as superior to Non-Eurocentric

[4] Dichotomy or dichotomous refers to "a division into two mutually exclusive or contradictory groups or entities" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

knowledge (Neeganagwedgin, 2021, p.19). Lastly, I use affect theory as it allows my research to discuss multiple viewpoints and challenges colonial knowledge being seen as superior. Affect theory allows my research to explore how emotions/affect are important within research (Brennan, 2004, p.3) and provides the ability to include and study non-tangible data that was previously excluded (Malchiodi, 2003, p.xii). Affect theory also helps show the pedagogical possibilities creative methodologies have to deconstruct settler-colonial, capitalist, and Eurocentric ways of constructing knowledge (Smith, 2013, p.274). Overall, using these three theories allows me to conduct research on creative methodologies and their pedagogical possibilities in a more critical, intersectional, and inclusive way.

Intersectionality

One of the theories my research uses is Kimberlé Crenshaw's theories of intersectionality. Theories of intersectionality analyze the complexities of people's identities in relation to power and social divisions such as gender, race, sexuality, class, age, ability, and social class (Cho et al., 2013, p.788). Theories of intersectionality view the multiple layers of a person's identity, how each of these layers affect each other, and how each of these layers relate to power structures and oppression (Collins and Bilge, 2016, p.2). For example, I am an able-bodied, cis-gendered, middle-class, white woman. In order to understand my identity and how it relates to power structures and oppression, I cannot look at each feature separately (race, class, gender, or ability). To understand power relations, oppression, and my identity, each of my social divisions must be considered together (race + class + gender + ability). As explored in Lisa Bowleg's research, intersectionality rejects "conceptualiz[ing] people's experiences as separate, independent, and summative" (Bowleg, 2018, p.314). Intersectionality shows the reality that each identity layer is affected differently by social power dynamics (Cho et al., 2013, p.788).

For example, Bowleg explores her identity of being a Black + lesbian + woman through an intersectional lens. If not for intersectionality, an analysis would determine that since Bowleg and I are both women our experiences will be similar. However, intersectionality highlights that Bowleg's experience is not *just* as a woman, but that her identity is interlocked with all her experiences of being a Black + lesbian + woman. Although we are both women, my identity, experiences, power relations, and oppressions will be different. As a white + able-bodied + cis-gendered + middle-class + woman, I am privileged in a variety of ways that Bowleg is not (Yuval-Davis, 2002, p.199). Thus, as explored by Bowleg, it is not possible to dissect someone's identity in order to see a "primary-source of oppression" as they are interconnected and affect each other (Bowleg, 2008, p.314). Intersectionality allows me to conduct research to help understand and analyze the social inequalities and social identities within the social world we live in. Crenshaw's theories of intersectionality allows my research to highlight that people's identities are complex interlocking social divisions within power relations and identify why this is important to conduct research with this in mind.

My research is cognizant of how modern uses of intersectionality are criticized for becoming whitened renditions. Theorists such as Sirma Bilge and Jennifer Nash challenge some renditions of intersectionality, as they fail to achieve "intersectional reflectivity[5] and accountability, and promote their own kinds of silencing, exclusion or misrepresentation of subordinated groups" (Bilge, 2013, p.406). Unfortunately, intersectionality can be misused by people to portray a false sense of inclusivity, diversity, and equity (Bilge, 2013, p.406). For example, Lorde expresses that intersectionality has/is used by white women to ignore their privilege by defining the category of 'woman' through their own experiences (as white women),

[5] Reflectivity (or reflexivity) is "a way for researchers to account for their personal biases and examine the effects that these biases may have on the data produced" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.3).

therefore, making BIPOC[6] experiences a deviation (Lorde, 2007, p.125). Audre Lorde explores how white women problematically "focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class, and age" (Lorde, 2007, p.124). Lorde brings awareness to the importance of using intersectionality as a way of seeing systems of oppression and not about finding differences. Furthermore, Jennifer Nash highlights how:

> Intersectionality recycles Black feminism without demonstrating what new tools it brings to Black feminism to help it fashion more complex theories of identity. Black feminism has, since its inception, sought to use Black women's experiences to demonstrate the shortcomings of race/gender binary schemes (Nash, 2008, p.9)

Cornelia Butler's research echoes this point by stating that "Black feminists had long been among the first theorists and activists to recognize that gender and race are mutually constructive and interlocking modes of experience and social construction" (Butler, 2007, p.15). Despite intersectionality's inception, white people have positioned themselves as the standard for intersectionality and have ignored BIPOC contributions (Lorde, 2007, p.123). Through these whitened renditions of intersectionality, BIPOC are often "treated as unitary and monolithic entit[ies]" by reducing them to ideas of "marginalization" and "social subordination" (Nash, 2008, p.8). As a result, white renditions of intersectionality have undermined, silenced, discriminated, misrepresented, and oppressed many BIPOC (Bilge, 2013, pp.406-407). It is crucial to deconstruct and acknowledge the power that whiteness can have through/by intersectionality (Bilge, 2013, p.413). When implementing intersectionality, it is important to critique if it is being used to self-benefit white feminists and ignore BIPOCs' contribution/analyses. Through my research, I think critically about both my use of intersectionality and how it plays a part in dismantling whitewashed intersectionality.

[6] BIPOC is an abbreviation that stands for "Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Crenshaw's theories of intersectionality allows my research and artworks to see the complexities of social divisions and power relations. As explored by Vaart, Hoven, and Huigen, creative methodologies and intersectionality provide researchers and participants with a more inclusive and diverse way of engaging, expressing themselves, and conducting research (Vaart et al., 2018, p.5). As further expressed by Vaart, Hoven, and Huigen, creative methodologies are intersectional as they expand the ability to "reveal power relations, (often invisible to those in privileged groups) raise critical race or gender consciousness, build coalitions across groups, and challenge dominant ideologies" (Leavy, 2015, p.24). I created *What Were They Wearing?, Table Talk,* and *More than Numbers,* as an able-bodied, cis-gendered, middle-class, and white woman. Although I aim to be progressive, intersectional, critical, and diverse when I create art, it is crucial not to deny my social divisions. My social divisions affect how I interpret the content of my artworks, the way I make art, my privilege, the power dynamics and oppression I experience, and the way I absorb the world around me. Intersectionality shows that people's experiences, identity, power relations, and oppression are all unique (Cho et al., 2013, p.788). Therefore, the content of my artworks could be expressed or interpreted differently based on who is viewing it and what their social divisions are. Through intersectionality, this reflexivity is crucial to acknowledge when conducting research. Intersectionality dismantles the power solely being given to the creator/artist, by giving equal power to the viewers. By dismantling this power dynamic viewers are able to make their own meanings, viewpoints, and interpretations. Hence, it is beneficial and crucial that my art be able to welcome others' viewpoints, experiences, and interpretations of my artworks. Using an intersectional creative methodology allows my artworks to be interpreted differently depending on people's social divisions and acknowledges that people's experiences are unique.

My research also uses intersectionality to challenge and decolonize the western systems of knowledge, education, and learning. Outside of Eurocentric[7] ways of learning, many other forms of pedagogy/knowledge are silenced, undermined, and assimilated within education systems (Battiste, 2013, p.14). By using an intersectional creative methodology, I challenge current systems and demand that all knowledge productions and education need to be accepted. For example, many Indigenous and BIPOC traditions and cultures are learnt and passed on through art, observations, storytelling, and pedagogy; however, these would not be seen as 'academic' or welcomed in the eyes of settler-colonial education systems (Battiste, 2013, p.14). Therefore, through my creative methodology, I demand that settler-colonial education systems need a *complete* structural and fundamental deconstruction. Using an intersectional creative methodology allows my artworks to challenge the beliefs of settler-colonial education systems, by welcoming multiple different viewpoints and ways of producing pedagogy (such as BIPOC). Intersectionality helps show the importance of including multiple different viewpoints and acknowledges that valid pedagogy can be produced in many different ways. Therefore, intersectionality allows my research to be more inclusive and intersectional and shows how settler-colonial education systems fail to do so.

Feminist Postmodernism

Feminist postmodernism is another branch of theory used for my research. Postmodernism is not a monolithic theory as there are many different variants depending on the field of study. For my research, I specifically use a feminist postmodernism approach because of how it defines the construction of truth, knowledge, and language. Feminist postmodernism

[7] Eurocentrism is the positioning of European epistemologies "and it's social standards as the basis for evaluative judgments concerning the practices of others – with the implication that one views one's [Eurocentric] standards as superior" (Joseph, Reddy, & Searle-Chatterjee, 1990, p.1).

critically thinks about (and often rejects) what has been defined as truth, knowledge, and language (Flax, 1978, p.624). Feminist postmodernism denounces the idea of one standardized truth and instead sees 'reality' and 'truth' as subjective experiences created through the construction of "society, culture, and the spoken and written word" as well as "power interests" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.43). As a philosopher and theorist, Michel Foucault explored a variety of postmodernist thoughts around 'truth', knowledge, reality, and power. Foucault explains that "truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it" (Foucault, 1984, p.74). Therefore, through feminist postmodernism, my research is able to challenge what has been seen as 'truth', be critical of the ways that truth self-perpetuates, and to show why it is important to question how 'truths' are constructed.

Feminist postmodernism also allows my research and artworks to criticize sexist and binary ways of viewing gender. Feminist postmodernism and I examine how there is power within language and how the patriarchy uses this to its advantage. For example, as explored by Mary Hawksworth, androcentric[8] language "continuously self-perpetuates itself" by providing "misinformation about women that are handed down as sacred truths" (Hawkesworth, 1989, p.538). For example, women are often criticised, dismissed, or undermined in the academic world because of the sexist belief that they are controlled by 'irrational' emotions (Jaggar, 1989, p.151). Therefore, as further stated by Hawksworth, even if "women attempt to challenge the adequacy of such misogynistic[9] accounts, they are frequently informed that their innate inabilities preclude their comprehension of these classic insights" (Hawkesoworth, 1989, p.538).

[8] Androcentric: the domination or centralization of men and their viewpoints; also known as "male-centered…in the sense of being biased in favor of men's interests" (England, 1996, p.154).
[9] Misogynistic or misogyny refers to the "hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against women" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

These sexist beliefs are brought forth from a 'confirmation biased[10] truth', one that simply perpetuates its own beliefs as true. However, feminist postmodernism rejects "essentialism[11] that describes 'woman' [or 'man'] as an identity category that is fixed and unchanging" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.6). Rather, as explored by Hesse-Biber, feminist postmodernism "invites the exploration of diversity in womanhood and seeks out the multiple truths, viewpoints, and voices that describe the range of women's experiences" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.45). In this respect, feminist postmodernism combats sexist and essentialist beliefs allowing my research and artworks to be considered academic. Feminist postmodernism also allows both my research and artworks to challenge sexist beliefs without being undermined simply because I am a woman. Additionally, feminist postmodernism validates that there are a range of gendered experiences (not binary), resulting in multiple viewpoints. Overall, feminist postmodernism allows my research to view multiple viewpoints, challenge the perpetuation of essentialism, and validate my research as a woman.

I also use feminist postmodernism to critically think about deconstructing the power of language while writing my paper. To understand the power of language within research I draw on bell hooks[12] who has produced a variety of findings on research, race, and class. In her research, she expresses the limitations that feminist research can have within settler-colonial education systems. For example, hooks states that by trying to be a part of and stay within

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[10] Confirmation bias means "that information is searched for, interpreted, and remembered in such a way that it systemically impedes the possibility that the hypothesis could be rejected – that is, it fosters the immunity of the hypothesis" (Oswald, 2004, p.79).

[11] Essentialism reduces the entirety of a person to stereotypes and misconceptions (Cvetkovich, 2012, p.8)

[12] bell hooks does not capitalize her name in order to challenge settler-colonial "standard orthography (writing systems)" (Jeppesen, 2012, p.3). By doing so, she aims to challenge "western traditions of philosophy, theory, literary studies and other logocentric disciplines", "the privileging of the written word over oral traditions", to tribute her mother and great-grandmother, to put the focus on her work rather than herself (power dynamics), and is "therefore a radical, feminist, queer and anarchist strategy that disrupts the way texts are produced [and] valued" (Jeppesen, 2012, p.3).

academia, “many amazing feminist ideas never reach an audience outside the academic world because the work is simply not accessible” (hooks, 2013, p.xii). Settler-colonial education systems create a façade that members always need to be superior which often fosters imposter syndrome[13]. hooks explains that many feminists and academics feel forced to use “inaccessible language and/or academic jargon” because of imposter syndrome and sexist beliefs held against them (hooks, 2013, p. xii). Many women, BIPOC, and feminist academics have had no choice but to write language that comes off as ‘elitist’, or ‘academic jargon’ because their intelligence and abilities were being criticized. As men were looked at as being superior, many women and BIPOC did not have the privilege to fight for their right to conduct research, have their research included *and* to challenge the writing style. Therefore, through my own privilege and opportunity to write this research, I want to be critical about my language to make my work as accessible as possible. For example, within my research, I purposely include a multitude of footnotes that seek to deconstruct any ‘elitist’ or academic jargon which would make my paper inaccessible. I use these footnotes to define a variety of terms, provide additional information, and explain topics further. By including footnotes, my goal is for my research and all the context/information within it to be attainable and accessible across communities, inside and outside of academia, and regardless of the reader’s background/social divisions. I also attempt to avoid any language or words that are very academic-based and may not be taught outside of academic systems. Settler-colonial education systems can make individuals feel that the use of large complex language reflects their high intelligence. I argue that a person is only as intelligent as their ability to know their audience and properly educate their readers – not to make their

[13] Imposter syndrome is “a psychological condition that is characterized by persistent doubt concerning one’s abilities or accomplishments accompanied by the fear of being exposed as a fraud despite evidence of one’s ongoing success” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

readers feel inferior or unintelligent. While writing my paper, I also asked a variety of people outside of academia to read my paper. My goal was to ask them if they clearly understood the concepts I was talking about, if they could explain the concepts back to me, and if there were any additional words I should add footnotes to. My hope is that these steps will make my paper more accessible and inclusive as I want everyone to feel welcome to this research. By being more accessible and inclusive, it also increases the audience that my research can impact. Additionally, I am critical about the language I use by expressing myself using a creative methodology. Through the use of a creative methodology, feminist postmodernism and feminist art allow my research to break away from discourses that come along with language and shifts to more open interpretations of art and images. Consequently, my research and artworks allow for multiple viewpoints regardless of my audience's background (race, class, gender, etc). Overall, through feminist postmodernism, I critically think about the power of language and how I can dismantle these power imbalances while writing my paper.

There has been an interesting and conflicting history between postmodernism, feminism, and feminist art that is also important to discuss. As mentioned by Craig Owens, there has been a "treacherous course between postmodernism and feminism" as postmodernism did not always accept feminist and identity-based approaches (Owens, 1988, p.68). Postmodernism held patriarchal views, and therefore, rejected feminism, women, BIPOC and their analyses of topics such as gender, class, race, sexuality, etc. (Owens, 1988, p.71). Postmodernism regarded feminism as a monolithic movement – that feminism was simply a group trying to benefit women. Therefore, postmodernism did not value feminism as it did not benefit men or patriarchal agendas. As a result, postmodernism often rejected feminist thoughts on gender, class, race, sexuality, and other identity lenses as they thought these were only 'women and

BIPOC issues' (Owen, 1988, p.71). Unlike feminist postmodernism, postmodernism does not go as far to include identity lenses, such as critiques of gender (Owens, 1988). I see the exclusion of identity lenses as extremely problematic and choose to use feminist postmodernism over postmodernism. It is important to include and critique the representation of gender, class, sexuality, race, etc. in order to not fall prey to things such as sexism, racism, ableism, and more. Including critiques of gender, class, sexuality, race, etc. is also important as it allows research to remain intersectional. Overall, my research uses feminist postmodernism specifically as it allows for important critiques of representing gender, class, sexuality, and other identity lenses.

Consequently, postmodernism's rejection of feminism also denied feminist art and its contributions. While postmodernism was presenting critiques of representation, truth, and categorization, feminist art was equally questioning these things through feminist critiques of patriarchy, essentialism, and sexism (Owens, 1988, p.68). An example that feminist artists did contribute to postmodernist ideologies can be seen by exploring Barbara Kruger's *Untitled (Your gaze hits the side of my face) 1981*[14] (Owens, 1988, p.87). Kruger's artwork critiques western representations of women while showing how feminist artists were equally at the frontline of postmodernist thought. Her artwork includes a photograph of the side profile of a female bust giving resemblance to an old classic sculpture. Words are horizontally placed over top of the female bust saying, 'Your gaze hits the side of my face'. This artwork is an example of western representation of women as it highlights how the look and the power of looking are gendered. Through her artwork, she addresses the male gaze[15] and how power is given to the eyes of

[14] To see the image I am referring to, please see page 87 of Craig Owens' *The Anti-Aesthetic.*

[15] The male gaze is the "visual display of [female] physical appearance, of her body as material object, to be observed, judged, valued, appreciated, rejected, modified and essentially commodified, for socially-constructed purposes…to be essentially male pleasure, concomitant social benchmarking and commercial profit" (Ponterotte, 2016, p.134).

patriarchal fantasies who are viewing females as passive objects. Through the female bust, Kruger shows how women have been historically portrayed and artistically conceived through the male gaze. Female busts have a long history of being created by 'old masters' (white men) to show the rendered versions of female beauty through the eyes of the male. In the artwork, the female bust is turned to the side, meaning she poses a passive gaze that does not meet the viewer. Through her feminist art, Kruger shows the patriarchal act and the power of being looked at. She also shows that even though women are being included in art/media, the issue is *how* they are being included. Women are excessively included in art but only as objects that are to be looked at (ex. nude models). Women were not allowed or respected as artists, intellectuals, or talented individuals that should be included within art/media. Overall, Kruger shows that women were only included if it was from the male viewpoint, not women's viewpoints of themselves and the world. Kruger is a great example that feminist artists have made major theoretical contributions to postmodernist ideologies by challenging representations of gender, class, ability, race, sexuality, etc. When my research discusses feminist postmodernism and feminist art, it is important to recognize the history of feminist art and how it worked as an avant-garde[16] and in parallel to postmodernism. Feminist art is not an example of postmodernism but is within itself original and led the way within postmodernist developments through art praxis[17]. Hence my research uses feminist postmodernism and feminist art specifically as it allows for important critiques of representing gender, class, sexuality, and other identity lenses.

Feminist postmodernism helps my research to create inclusivity and challenge the way settler-colonial education systems produce knowledge and truth. Within settler-colonial systems,

[16] Typically within the context of art, Avant-garde refers to something that is "ahead of its time and is shocking, disturbing and therefore viewed as socially and aesthetically objectionable. The specific aim of the avant-garde is to undermine the existing order and to replace it by another" (Dudek, 2011, p.53).
[17] Praxis is an accepted practice or discipline (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

so-called 'academic research' and knowledge are only seen if the research remains objective and does not include any subjectivity (Jaggar, 1989, p.162). Consequently, as art is often a subjective methodology, it has "been met with skepticism about its scholarly value" (Cvetkovich, 2012, p.16), as settler-colonial systems commonly "position qualitative and arts-based research as less empirical[18] by comparison" (Leavy, 2015, p.8). However, feminist postmodernism works with creative methodologies to highlight the reality that there are multiple subjective truths based on individual experiences and social constructions. As we are social humans that live intrinsically within social structures, feminist postmodernism challenges the idea that objectivity can be achieved (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.18). Feminist postmodernism states that this Eurocentric held assumption only validates settler-colonial ways of knowing and undermines all other ways, such as pedagogy produced from subjective experiences and BIPOC (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.18). Thus, feminist postmodernism aims to validate the use of subjectivity by "pointing out the shortcomings, incompleteness, and exclusiveness" of objectivity (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.18). Feminist postmodernism, therefore, combats the way that settler-colonial education systems only allow their own truth and knowledge productions as a way to continue their domination, silencing, and assimilation. Instead, feminist postmodernism allows my research to show how there are multiple truths and ways to construct knowledge, but the 'other ways of constructing truth and knowledge' (such as BIPOC's) have been excluded. Perceptively, drawing on feminist postmodernism allows my research and artworks to be more accessible, inclusive, anti-elitist, and intersectional.

[18] Empiricism is "the doctrine that all knowledge derives from sensory experience, exists relatively uniformly outside of social contexts, and is validated as true by its replicability through 'objective' measurements" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.15).

Affect Theory

My research also uses affect theory. The affective turn and affect theory are known for their reinvention of 'affect'[19] and emotion in research during the early to mid-1990s (Clough & Halley, 2010, p.206). Theorists and researchers felt that 'poststructuralism' and 'deconstruction' were limited as they did not see emotions or other non-tangible data as valuable (Clough & Halley, 2010, p.206). As explored by Alison Jaggar's research, affect theory was created and research shifted to seeing non-tangible data and emotions as a "valuable contribution to knowledge" (Jaggar, 1989, p.162). Teresa Brennan's research echoes these thoughts stating that affect theory challenges the opinion that emotions are "not viewed as intelligent, academic or data capable of being researched" (Brennan, 2004, p.3). Affect theory also shows that reason and emotion are intertwined (Hardt, 2007, p.ix). Humans are social beings and live within socially constructed systems, therefore, as stated by Jaggar, "observation is not simply a passive process of absorbing impressions or recordings stimuli; instead, it is an activity of selection and interpretation" (Jaggar, 1989, p.160). Affect theory allows researchers to explore how individuals are affected by their 'atmosphere' and 'environment' in rather non-tangible ways (Brennan, 2004, p.1). A simple explanation to understanding the complexities of affect theory is that a) affect is about the associations people attach to the things and people around them, and b) consequently, affect is how people are affected by the things and people around them. It is important to also explain that affect is transferable and fluid. What I mean by this is that associations that are created are different depending on the person, time, location, culture, age, race, sexuality, etc. Affect is forever changing depending on a variety of factors and can be

[19] 'Affect' is a multifaceted and complex topic, however, an oversimplified definition of 'affect' is, "the physiological shift accompanying a judgment" (Brennan, 2004, p.5). See Teresa Brennan's *The Transmission of Affect* to understand further.

different for everyone. Furthermore, affect is transferable as the emotions of one person can affect and transfer to another person. A great example of affect theory is when Teresa Brennan talks about "walking into a room and *feeling* the *atmosphere*" (Brennan, 2004, p.1). Brennan explains that "if I feel anxiety when I enter the room, then that will influence what I perceive or receive by way of an *impression*" (Brennan, 2004, p.6) as well as how the anxiety and emotion imprints on those who are already in the room. Brennan shows that affect theory allows researchers to see and record important non-tangible data that was previously not included or valued. Affect theory shows how emotions affect people, how the emotions of one individual affects others, and how people interpret things and the world around them. Affect theory expands my ability to record crucial data, allows me to further explore how creative methodology uses emotions, and validates that emotions can be used as effective pedagogy.

Affect theory also allows my research to challenge the problematic racist ideologies held towards race and emotions. Affect theory challenges the binary belief that emotion is associated with BIPOC, the irrational, the weak, non-white, and female - while the rational is associated with Eurocentrism, the intelligent, the strong, and white men (Jaggar, 1989, p.151). Affect theory points out how this binary way of viewing emotion causes women and BIPOC groups to be seen and taught that they over-react, are un-rational, and over-emotional (Minarshich, 2014, p.167). As a result, women and BIPOC groups are often "discredited" and their "epistemic[20] authority" is undermined (Jaggar, 1989, p.151). At the same time, affect theory states that this problematic way of viewing emotions and BIPOC is only a result of colonization and not about reality. As Andrea Smith's research explores, affect theory demands a "fundamental epistemological shift

[20] Epistemic or epistemological relates to "knowledge or knowing: Cognitive" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

that questions the very logic systems of Western thought itself" (Smith, 2013, p.274). Audre Lord places a call to action, stating that:

> as we come more in touch with our own ancient, non-European consciousness of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and, therefore, lasting action comes. (Lorde, 2007, p.45).

Affect theory allows my research to see the ways that settler-colonial systems have affected the racist ways emotions and BIPOC have been viewed and constructed. Therefore, affect theory helps my research to highlight and deconstruct the settler-colonial, racist, and Eurocentric ways that emotion has been constructed.

For my research, I use a creative methodology with the addition of affect theory as they enrich the understanding of each other. Creative methodologies are a standalone entity and do not rely on theories in order to come to fruition. However, theories, such as affect theory, can be applied to creative methodologies as a lens to further conceptualize artwork and art practice. So, when talking about affect theory and creative methodologies in my research, I am not using art as a tool for theory or theory as an example of art; instead, I am examining how they both can be used to inform each other. As explored by Patricia Leavy, affect theory and the arts are both "known for being emotionally and politically evocative, captivating, aesthetically powerful, and moving" (Leavy, 2015, p.23). Both affect theory and creative methodology allow individuals to express important topics and emotions that are difficult to conceptualize through words or through more 'traditional' methods (Vaart et al., 2018, p.3-4). By using affect theory and creative methodologies, it permits my research to have a more rounded understanding of emotion and non-tangible data. Through affect theory and creative methodologies, my research explores more possibilities of why emotion is important within knowledge/research and why settler-colonial education systems should include them.

Affect theory also validates my research on emotions as a woman and feminist. Affect theory addresses the reality that since I am a woman who is researching topics that include emotion and creativity, I could be wrongly discredited based on my gender. Settler-colonial systems associate women with emotions and emotions with the irrational; therefore, they are often both criticized as being "subversive of knowledge" (Jaggar, 1989, p.151). However, affect theory demands that emotions are intrinsically woven into human experiences making them impossible to separate from our interpretations, research, and knowledge regardless of gender (Jaggar, 1989, p.153). Affect theory helps combat sexist overarching Eurocentric beliefs that boys are "guided by the rational/mind and girls directed by the emotion/heart" (Minarshich, 2014, p.167). Therefore, affect theory validates that women, such as myself, can use emotion and creativity in research and still be considered academic. Some debates argue that women using emotional work is not feminist. Individuals who argue this believe that women should reject emotional work in order to fight against ideas of biological determinism[21]. They believe that to fight against the sexist belief that women are irrational/ruled by emotions, the solution is to completely avoid emotions. However, affect theory counters the idea that women are at the mercy of their emotions, that using emotions is subversive to knowledge, and that emotions need to be completely excluded from research (Jaggar, 1989, p.151). Thus, affect theory validates the use of emotion and directly challenges the traditional Eurocentric view of knowledge production which often denies emotions being seen as intelligent and academic (Brennan, 2004, p.3). Overall, affect theory and creative methodologies validate my research as a woman and as a feminist by showing that emotions are important and intrinsically woven within knowledge.

[21] Biological determinism is "the social, cultural, and cognitive processes that produce, reinforce, and reward the tendency to view" and boil down all human social phenomena as biologically predisposition/predetermined. (Ellison and Wet, 2018, p.1).

Methodology

Creative Methodology

For my research, I use a creative methodological framework which consists of accompanying my MRP with three mixed media artworks that I created. It is first important to understand and define what I mean by creative methodologies. Creative methodologies involve the senses, emotions, logic, and intelligence that offer significant contributions to research/knowledge (Noblit, 2020). Patricia Leavy provides a variety of creative methodologies examples, such as music, theatre, dance, architecture, graphic design, visual arts, film, and more (Leavy, 2015, p.4). Furthermore, creative methodologies could include mediums[22] such as:

> short stories, novels, experimental writing forms, graphic novels, comics, poems, parables, collages, paintings, drawings, sculpture, 3-D art, quilts and needlework, performance scripts, theatrical performances, dances, films, and songs and musical scores (Leavy, 2015, p.4)

These are just a few examples of creative methodologies that could be used for research and producing knowledge. As further explored by Leavy, these creative methodologies are used as tools across "disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation" (Leavy, 2015, p.4). Creative methodologies offer a different way of looking at and accessing research that could have been missed by traditional methods (Vaart et al., 2018, p.3). To understand creative methodologies it is also important to understand how they can be implemented within research. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Making creative artworks that accompany critically written research in order to give fuller understandings (Skains, 2018, p.86);
- Using a creative methodology that is answering a specific research question, which might not be able to be explored by more traditional forms (Skains, 2018, p.86);
- Asking participants to create art so that it can be collected for data analysis. The data would be extracted from deeper meanings and symbolism of the drawings. This method

[22] Mediums can be understood as "a mode of artistic expression or communication" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

allows things that might be hidden to be revealed through the use of art. A great example of this is art therapy used by therapists. (Skains, 2018, p.86);

- By analyzing pre-existing art to further understand its historical, political, and social contexts. For example, this is often done by art historians (Skains, 2018, p.87);
- Conducting creative interviews, group discussions, and creative workshops. (Vaart et al., 2018, p.6);
- Within a reflective manner, using creative methods to draw on the participant's memory, which is done after the act rather than during (Skains, 2018, p.87);
- Free-standing visual art, where the artwork is presented independently. Art that is not using the support of any other mediums, such as a research paper. An example of implementing free-standing art as a creative methodology could be murals that are created during protests, as they are used "contextual[ly], in which the practice is an effort to bring about social change" (Skain, 2018, p.86).

These are just a few technical examples of how creative methodologies are implemented within research. Creative methodologies are very malleable and adaptive, hence, they allow for unconventional thinking. This flexibility opens endless possibilities in which creative methodologies could be implemented and used to critically expand research.

Examples of Creative Methodologies: Music, Poetry, Craft, Protest Graffiti, and Painting

Before exploring my mixed media artworks, it's imperative to understand what creative methodologies are. I created mixed media artworks for my research, but, there are many other forms of creative methodologies that can be used as effective pedagogy. For example, in the next several paragraphs, I will explore music, poetry, craft, protest graffiti, and paintings as creative methodologies. Although there are a variety to choose from, I use these five diverse mediums to further show and understand the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies.

Music as a Creative Methodology. Music can be looked at more closely to understand the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies. As defined by Leavy, music can be "defined in many ways, particularly when thinking cross-culturally…Nevertheless, music is generally considered to be the art of arranging sounds into a continuous and unified composition with dimensions that typically include rhythm and melody", in addition to having lyrics, no

lyrics, or only lyrics (Leavy, 2015, p.122). Music has a profound ability to connect people based on emotions, feelings, and sensations in a way that transcends more traditional ways of conducting research (Leavy, 2015, p.123). Furthermore, music is universally and historically woven into human experiences, traditions, cultures, hobbies, rituals, and social events. As explored by Leavy, some of these events include but are not limited to, "religious or spiritual rituals and practices, ceremonies related to weddings or funerals, as well as educational markers such as graduations, popular entertainment, or leisure activities, and a great many other components of culture" (Leavy, 2015, p.123). Taking all of this into consideration, music is rich with data that can be used for producing significant knowledge and research. Accordingly, music's abundant capabilities are a great example of its use as a creative methodology within research.

Music's pedagogical possibilities can also be seen by discussing BIPOC's spearheading[23] of creative methodologies. When speaking about music, it is crucial to discuss BIPOC as they were at the forefront of many creative methodologies. Although there are many different examples of BIPOC being at the forefront of music, I explore a few in the following paragraphs to show how creative methodologies are used and the pedagogical possibilities they have. To begin, I will be drawing on Katherine McKittrick and her research on BIPOC, cultural studies, and anti-colonial works. As McKittrick discusses, many BIPOC productions include "lyrical and sonic critiques of colonialism, racism, structural inequalities, and other forms of violence" (McKittrick, 2021, p.57). BIPOC musical knowledge productions are created even during times of oppression, racism, and racial injustice that actively wish to undermine, eliminate, or assimilate them. Thus, BIPOC musical knowledge productions are used as tools to express the

[23] Spearheaded is "a leading element, force, or influence in an undertaking or development" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

oppressions felt while simultaneously being an act of resistance, rebellion, and changing the status quo[24]. As many BIPOC musical productions were at the forefront of creative methodologies, it is imperative that they be discussed as they can further our understanding of creative methodologies and their pedagogical possibilities.

Understanding creative methodologies and their pedagogical possibilities can also be done by exploring how music has been used within social justice movements such as the Black Lives Matter Movement. It is important to note that I am *not* claiming that the Black Lives Matter Movement was created by feminism, as Black Lives Matter is entirely its own entity. However, feminism and Black Lives Matter do have some overlapping ideologies and goals, providing that feminism remains intersectional and void of whitened renditions. Taking this into consideration, I find that the Black Lives Matter Movement is a great way to understand creative methodologies further and their pedagogical possibilities. To speak more about the Black Lives Matter Movement, I will draw on Abimbola Adelakun and her work on politics and identity. As stated by Adelakun:

> The Black Lives Matter Movement began in the United States as a drive against anti-black violence, another wave of pushback that was energized in the wake of the Trayvon Martin murder…BLM functions as a dense political statement that encodes the urgency of acknowledging Black humanity, the decades of history of advocating for it, and the yet-to-be-resolved issues that continue to give the declaration of Black humanity currency (Adelakun, 2019, p.1).

Music is used as a tool to further the initiatives of the Black Lives Matter movement resulting in a very powerful method for fighting against topics such as slavery, racism, racial violence, police brutality, and more (Adelakun, 2019, p.1). For example, Childish Gambino's song titled, *This Is America*[25] released in 2018 comments on the violent racial oppressions occurring within the

[24] Status Quo is "the existing state of affairs" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
[25] *This Is America,* is also (simultaneously) an example of dance/movement and film/acting as a creative methodology because of its use of a music video.

United States (Simmons, 2018, p.112). Through his music video, Gambino also showcases Black knowledge productions by using cultural dances and traditions fused with modern hip-hop culture and internet trends (Adelakun, 2019, p.5). Through the use of music, Childish Gambino is able to criticize, educate, and demand justice for topics such as racism, racist judicial systems, white supremacy, police brutality, gun violence, and more. Furthermore, as pointed out by Kimberly Simmons, Gambino uses music to comment and highlight:

> some of the most horrific and heartbreaking events that have taken place in recent years. From school shootings (represented by the dancers wearing school uniforms) to the Charleston massacre (represented by the church choir and shooting scene), to the police presence, gun violence, racial violence and black oppression (Simmons, 2018, p.114).

For example, I will take an excerpt of Gambino's lyrics in order to analyze the pedagogical possibilities further. Within Gambino's lyrics, he states:

> You just a Black man in this world
> You just a barcode, ayy
> You just a Black man in this world
> (Glover, 2018)

Through lyrics such as these, Gambino musically and metaphorically comments on the realities of living as a Black person. His lyrics, 'you just a black man in this world' are deeply layered commenting on the act of only being seen for the colour of his skin, racial profiling, racial injustice, and more. The lyrics 'you just a barcode' comments on the horrific reality/fear of racial police violence, racial injustices, and the murdering of Black individuals. Songs like *This Is America* were created during times of racism and anti-black beliefs, making them active expressions of defiance, rebellion, and the need for racial equality. Gambino furthers Black Lives Matter initiatives by using music, and its success is easy to see as it had been heard by 13 million people globally even just within 24 hours of being released (Adelakun, 2019, p.5). Thus, through the use of songs like Gambino's, it is clear to see that music has the ability to present strong critiques of racism, racial inequalities, violence, and other social justice initiatives. Therefore,

through the Black Lives Matter Movement, music such as Gambino helps show the pedagogical possibilities that creative methodologies have.

Poems as a Creative Methodology. Poems can also be used as an example to understand the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies. As defined by Leavy, poems are "sensory scenes created with skillfully placed words and purposeful pauses, poems push feelings to the forefront, capturing heightened moments of social reality as if under a magnifying glass" (Leavy, 2015, p.77). Poems focus heavily on creative grammar, syntax, spelling, representation, and interpretations. Through the use of creative language, researchers are able to interpret, analyze, and unearth symbolic data that might have been unachievable through other methods. Furthermore, as explored by Leavy, researchers would first look for:

> themes and recurring language, then extract words and phrases out of the data. The selected words and phrases become the basis of the poem. In addition to using [the] participant's language, this approach also preserves [the] narrator's speech patterns. This technique ultimately relies on extensive thematic coding, constituting a process of reduction where single words may come to represent segments of an interview transcript (Leavy, 2018, p.83).

Poems allow data and research to emerge through the writer's voice, storytelling, and their personal choice of language (Leavy, 2018, p.80). An example to understand the use of poems further can be seen by looking at "Dangerous Coats" by Sharon Owens (as cited in McKeever, 2021). "Dangerous Coats" is a poem that went viral on Twitter and acted as inspiration for many viewers (McKeever, 2021, p.2). In her poem "Dangerous Coats", Owens writes:

> Someone clever once said
> Women were not allowed pockets
> In case they carried leaflets
> To spread sedition
> Which means unrest
> To you & me
> A grandiose word
> For common-sense
> Fairness
> Kindness

Equality
So ladies, start sewing
Dangerous coats
Made of pockets and sedition
(as cited in McKeever, 2021.)

"Dangerous Coats" is a great example of how poems are rich with the possibility for creative activism, symbolism, interpretations, and a variety of other data. As "Dangerous Coats" shows, poems can be analyzed by looking at the specific words that are picked, the connotation that they have, the emotions that they evoke, the length of the phrase, the order of the words, and so much more (Leavy, 2021, p.83). To analyze "Dangerous Coats", I will break up the poem into a few sections to show the pedagogical possibilities of poems. For example, the words 'Women were not allowed pockets' shows a variety of historical context of sexism that even continues today. This phrase draws on the long history of women's clothing that has been regulated through a variety of ways (such as corsets, dresses, bras, and other garments). Even in modern times, women are often not given pockets, while men's clothing has not faced this same limitation. The next couple of phrases 'in case they carried leaflets, to spread sedition, which means unrest to you & me' comment on the ideas of rebellion, activism, and challenging the status quo. This poem reclaims pockets by saying that women are not given them because it would make them too powerful. The poem also constructs the idea that if women were given pockets, they would use their intelligence and abilities to overturn authority and the patriarchy. Continuing, the phrases, 'a grandiose word, for common-sense, fairness, kindness, and equality' comment on the goals of feminism and activism. Common-sense, fairness, kindness, and equality are the words this poem uses to describe what feminism asks for and what women deserve. The words chosen show the well-intended, powerful, and equality-seeking goals that the 'leaflets' would contain. This effectively helps the readers to understand concisely what the goals are. Lastly, the phrases

‘so ladies, start sewing, dangerous coats, made of pockets and sedition’ create a call to action for empowerment, autonomy, rebellion, and deconstructing the patriarchy. By encouraging and calling for women to start sewing pockets on coats, it tells the reader that there is strength in numbers, that women deserve equality, and that change can come from even the smallest of actions. “Dangerous Coats” is a great example of how poems use purposeful language, words, feelings, sounds, and connotations to further social justice issues and research/knowledge. Thus, poems are not just a use of language, words, syntax, and connotations, they are also, within themselves, mediums for deconstruction, rebellion, and social justice.

Craft as a Creative Methodology. Craft is another great example to look at to understand creative methodologies and their pedagogical possibilities. As defined by L. J. Roberts, ‘craft’ is rooted “in everyday utilitarian things – ceramic teapots and rag rugs and caned chairs- items that are needed in order to drink tea, keep your feet warm, and sit down, items that have purpose and a function” (Roberts, 2014. p.59). Craft is often distinguished from the category of ‘art’, at least in settler-colonial systems, as it is seen as being more about everyday objects or hobbies. For the purpose of my paper, when I refer to craft, I am specifically referring to craftivism which is the combination of craft and activism. By equipping craft with activism, it allows individuals to protest against settler-colonial structures, the status quo, and the many inequalities that occur in the world. The meticulous, precise, and detailed processes that often come with the territory of crafting drives individuals to be overly thoughtful and mindful of their activism and the injustices of the world. Although craft is long-standing within history, it was not necessarily always regarded as an official practice. Instead, crafts were everyday creations/tasks, such as women and BIPOC sewing household fabrics (McGovern, 2019, p.13). Even if not consciously done, these acts by women and BIPOC lead the way to expanding craft’s use today.

Through craft's rich history, methodical processes, and content, there is an abundance of pedagogical possibilities as a creative methodology.

To understand craftivism and its pedagogical possibilities as a creative methodology, I will be drawing on Marianne Jørgensen's artwork titled, *Pink M.24 Chaffee Tank*. Jørgensen is a Danish artist who used yarn bombing[26] (a form of craft) to protest against the US, British, and Danish involvement in the Iraqi war (Goggin, 2014, p.100). For her piece, Jørgensen crocheted and knitted over top of a military tank that was on public display in Copenhagen (Goggin, 2014, p.100). There are multiple crucial elements that can be analyzed within this piece. First of all, Jørgensen purposely decides to use a tank as this symbolizes feelings of violence, aggression, anger, war, and injustice. By sewing over the tank, she is reclaiming it by 'softening' it with textiles, fabric, and the colour (pink). Jørgensen uses yarn which has connotations of being soft, welcoming, safe, and warm while the colour pink has connotations of femininity, kindness, and love. Altering the tank's appearance and connotations change the entire environment around it, and all those who view it change too. The meticulous and time-consuming nature of covering an entire tank is also very apparent when viewing this work. As stated by Goggin:

> There are more than 4,000 15 x 15 pink crocheted and knitted squares donated by more than one thousand contributors from the United States and European countries, then assembled together by a group of volunteers and fit over the borrowed WWII combat tank (Goggin, 2014, p.100).

Viewers not only see the sheer time and dedication that this installation consumed, but also the number of people that came together to create it. The collection of people coming together also acts as a visual 'petition', as a way to show their (soft) protest against the involvement in the Iraqi war. Thus, Jørgensen is a great example of craftivism's ability to critique politics,

[26] Yarn bombing involves tactile practices, such as sewing, knitting, crocheted, which are then placed on objects in public places as a form of art or protest (Goggin, 2014).

regulations, war, and many other social inequalities. Craft, therefore, is another great example of creative methodologies and their pedagogical possibilities.

Craft is also a great example of the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies as it fights against misogynistic beliefs. To expand on this further, I draw on the research of Adrian Piper, a notable figure within art, art history, and philosophy. Piper shows that settler-colonial systems view themselves as superior with an inherent right to define what is and isn't art (Piper, 1985, p.31). Settler-colonial's misogynistic viewpoints associate 'craft' with connotations they (wrongly) deem negative, such as poor, un-intelligent, un-talented, feminine, queer, and BIPOC (Roberts, 2014. p.126). Due to these misogynistic connotations, 'craft' is wrongly perpetuated by settler-colonial systems as either being 'less' than art (McGovern, 2019, p.34) or not being art at all (Piper, 1985, p.31). This way of viewing craft is extremely problematic as it is elitist, sexist, racist, and classist. Furthermore, many of the mediums that fall under the category of craft were created by or largely used by women and/or BIPOC (McGovern, 2019); this being the major reason why settler-colonial systems regard craft as less than art. Art was regarded as prestigious and created by the white male 'masters', while craft was seen as frivolous tasks done by women and BIPOC (Roberts, 2014. p.126). For example, sewing/knitting is a medium of craft which women and BIPOC have been at the forefront of (McGovern, 2019). Many women and BIPOC use sewing/knitting for essential activism, cultural practices, and historical purposes (McGovern, 2019). Many women, BIPOC, and non-Eurocentric cultures do not have the privilege of regarding sewing/knitting as just being a 'craft' in the same -degrading- way that settler-colonial systems view it. For many women, BIPOC, and non-European cultures, sewing/knitting and craft are viewed as a basic need for survival and a highly respectable form of knowledge and intelligence. Thus, using craft as a medium, is within itself, an act of fighting back against

patriarchal, misogynistic, classicist, racist, sexist, thoughts. As a medium, craft is, therefore, a great example of what creative methodologies are and their pedagogical possibilities.

Protest Graffiti as a Creative Methodology. Protest graffiti can also be used as an example to better understand the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies. As defined by Holly Ryan, graffiti can be understood as "street art, muralism, paste-ups, tags and stencils…words or images that have been etched, scrawled, painted or pasted onto walls, pavements or other surfaces, usually outdoors and/or within public view" (Ryan, 2021, p.133). Furthermore, graffiti can include markings, messages, drawings, images, text, and engravings on public surfaces such as walls, buildings, trains, fences, etc (Cappelli, 2020, p.325). For this example, I am specifically focusing on protest graffiti. Protest graffiti is graffiti that is created as a visual form of resistance usually during times of oppression, injustice, or inequality (Cappelli, 2020, p.325). As stated by Mary Cappelli:

> Protest graffiti is a fertile ground of visual activism for the collective fight against injustice. Graffiti has the visual power to challenge and advocate for the restricting of political systems. As a site of witnessing discourse, graffiti can generate affective solidarity where emotions of anger and rage can bring about social justice. Graffiti is a cultural/historical discourse that informs its audience on how the world is viewed by marginalized peoples during specific periods of time and place. Graffiti testifies to the socio-cultural, political, racial, and economic conditions of our time. (Cappelli, 2020, p.324).

As Ryan and Cappelli explain, protest graffiti is used as a tool to effectively express political and social opinions, cause change, offer support, refuse to be silenced, act as resistance, and a call for solidarity.

Protest graffiti is an effective methodology as it continuously proves to assist in protests, social injustice, inequality, and racism. For many women and BIPOC, protest graffiti is an essential medium/platform used by artists, activists, academics, and intellectuals. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement used protest graffiti as a methodology after the murder of

George Floyd. George Floyd was murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin in an act of police brutality/violence, racial profiling[27], white supremacy, and racial injustice (Cappelli, 2020, p.325). As stated by Mary Cappelli, "police officer Derek Chauvin held his knee on Floyd's neck for eight minutes and 15 seconds despite Floyd's repeated requests that "*please, I can't breathe*" (Cappelli, 2020, p.323). After Floyd's murder, several protest graffiti artworks were created depicting images of fear, pain, anger, resistance, and activism. As explored by Cappelli, this was not the first time protest graffiti had been used; the images that arose from Floyd's murder were "fueled by a historical trajectory of uneven police brutality towards black and culture of impunity" (Cappelli, 2020, p.324). Although many different images were created after George Floyd's murder, I draw specifically on a few examples of protest graffiti to show their capabilities and to better understand creative methodologies.

One protest graffiti image used was the clenched fist (Figure 1) which is used as a visual icon/symbol for Black power, resistance, unitedness, and defiance (Cappelli, 2020, p.334).

Figure 1. Cappelli, L. Mary (2020). *Fist on Boarded up wall in Santa Monica*. [Photograph]. https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=102809

As Cappelli states, "this iconic image of resistance has a compelling history dating back to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s when Stokely Carmichael adopted the slogan at the Poor

[27] Racial Profiling can be understood as "any police-initiated action that relies on the race, ethnicity, or national origin and not merely on the behaviours of an individual" (Risse & Zeckhauser, 2004, p.136).

People's Campaign in Washington D.C. to bring attention to the systematic oppression of Black [people]". (Cappelli, 2020, p.334). This fist is identifiable and well known by many people as the symbol of the Black Lives Matter movement. This image is not just an image of a fist, it is an image that has gathered large connotations and historical meaning behind it. It is used to remind and symbolize Black people's resistance, the fight for liberation, solidarity, and so much more. Simply by viewing this image people can take away a variety of meanings. Black Lives Matter is a complex and multi-layered movement, so, the open-endedness that this image allows aids the movement and its many initiatives. This image may mean a variety of different things depending on the viewer, the creator, or the time in which it is made allowing it to remain intersectional within the movement. Through its rich contextual and visual content, the graffiti fist greatly assists in protests, social injustice, inequality, and racism.

Another image that arose from George Floyd's murder, was protest graffiti that displayed both George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Cappelli, L. Mary (2020). *Floyd and Breonna Taylor on Wall in Santa Monica.* [Photograph]. https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=102809

Breonna Taylor is another Black person who was murdered by police. Breonna was asleep inside her own home when police broke in and shot and killed her (Cappelli, 2020, p. 338). Placing George Floyd and Breonna Taylor together hits the public with undeniable truths and unspoken

connections. As both were murdered by police, placing these two together shows the continuation of police brutality, the murdering of Black people, and racial injustices. As stated by Cappelli, it "evoke[s] the memory of other Black men and women who died at the hands of police – Eric Garner, Trayvon Mertin, Philando Castile, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown – to name a few" (Cappelli, 2020, p.323). By creating this graffiti image, it also works as a way to keep the public and media accountable. Too often the media either ignores BIPOC injustices or highlights them in a way that criminalizes/blames BIPOC (ex. wrongly showcasing the police as doing their job and Black individuals provoking them as if to justify the murder). The images of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor aim to express injustices, challenge the media narratives, keep the public accountable, show the continuation of police brutality/violence, and express resistance and solidarity. Thus, using images of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor together is a great example of how provoking and impactful protest graffiti can be.

Lastly, one of the most prominent images used in protest graffiti after George Floyd's murder is of George Floyd himself (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Cappelli, L. Mary (2020*). Los Angeles Street Corner.* [Photograph]. https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=102809

Using George Floyd's image acts as a memorial to honour and demand justice for the continuation of police violence and the murdering of Black people. The image of George Floyd acts as a visual form of grieving, sadness, loss, fear, and anger. Solely displaying George Floyd's

face also humanizes his murder forcing the public to acknowledge that this is a real person who was killed. By creating these memorials on a mass scale, it shouts out to the public that his murder cannot and will not be forgotten. It refuses to let Floyd become just a number in the statistics of racial violence. By continuously creating protest graffiti of Floyd, it forces the public to know that his murder is seen, felt, and has angered many people globally. Protest graffiti as a methodology continues to prove its validity by voicing BIPOC voices, challenging racial injustice, demanding political action, and effecting real change within laws, policies, and social dynamics. Thus, the images of George Floyd as protest graffiti are another great example of the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies.

Painting as a Creative Methodology. Another example of the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies is by looking at paintings. As defined by Graeme Sullivan, paintings can be understood as the "creation [of] images on surfaces" as well as building off of the "rich conceptual traditions associated with image-making whose purpose is to open up dialogue between the artist and viewer" (Sullivan, 2008, p.240 & 245). Paintings can combine the use of aesthetics, imagination, and education to further understand posed inquires (Sullivan, 2008, p.245). As a creative methodology, paintings act as tools for research between the researcher and subject, and the painter and painted (Sullivan, 2008, p.242). Moreover, painting can be used as a tool to explore problems and questions through the use of feelings, expression, and painting techniques (Sullivan, 2008, p.245). Historically, paintings have also been a rich source for capturing moments in time, different social beliefs, and social events. As stated by Leavy, paintings are "important in our history and the ongoing trajectory of social progress, [which becomes] evident when we examine how images have been used to serve dominant ideologies or commercial interests as well as counterculture or otherwise resistive efforts" (Leavy, 2015,

p.225). Paintings heavily rely on image-based expression enabling research to be accessible, diverse, and inclusive inside and outside of education systems. Thus, paintings offer a multitude of data collection opportunities and are a great example of the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies.

To further explore paintings' pedagogical possibilities as a creative methodology, I will examine Christi Belcourt's artworks. Christi Belcourt is a Métis artist and author who describes her artistic focus and passions as, "environmentalist and advocate[ing] for the lands, waters and Indigenous Peoples" (Belcourt, 2021). Belcourt further describes herself as having a deep connection and passion for "Mother Earth, the traditions and the knowledge of her people" (Belcourt, 2021). Although Belcourt has made many amazing artworks, I focus specifically on her series, *Beadwork Style*[28]*,* to understand how paintings can be used as creative methodologies. Within her series, *Beadwork Style,* are paintings such as *Wampum, Growing, Happiness, Medicine to Help Us,* and *My Heart,* just to name a few (Belcourt, 2021). Starting in 1993, Belcourt began to experiment with "painting flowers inspired by the traditional beadwork patterns of Métis and First Nations women" (Belcourt, 2002, p.7). For her technique, Belcourt purposely rejects the colonial ideologies and techniques of pointillism[29], instead, she roots her techniques in the tradition of Métis and First Nation beadwork (Belcourt, 2002, p.7). Thus, when looking at paintings such as Belcourt's, the technique can be equally as important to analyze as its aesthetics. Belcourt's content not only furthers the efforts of anti-colonialism, environmentalism, land rights, Mother Earth, and Indigenous solidarity, but the technique she uses also does this. For the *Beadwork Style* series, Belcourt writes:

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[28] The rights to these paintings could not be obtained in order to include photos within my MRP. To see these paintings, please visit http://christibelcourt.com/bio/

[29] Pointillism is "the theory or practice in art of applying small strokes or dots of colour to a surface" (Merriam-Webster, n.d).

> I use plants in my paintings as metaphors for our own lives. The shapes created by the strong black stems curve to create human male and female forms. The roots show that all life needs nurturing from Mother Earth and that there is more to life than what is seen on the surface. The lines surrounding the plants indicate a spiritual world that is ever present but not visible. The lines connecting the plants symbolize our interconnectedness with all living things, and the outstretched flowers and leaves represent our quests for individual spirituality as we gaze upon an uncertain future (Belcourt, 2002, p.7)

Belcourt's work creates awareness surrounding colonialism, environmentalism, land rights, Indigenous solidarity, Métis heritage, and a plea to respect Mother Earth (Belcourt, 2002, p.7). Belcourt's artworks show how paintings are crucial tools for understanding the social and the political while adding value to understanding events that happen around us. Belcourt has displayed her artworks in a variety of locations reaching a variety of audiences. Through her artworks, individuals (regardless of their class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc) have access to her pieces and their content. This means that through the medium of painting, she offers accessible education on a variety of crucial topics. Overall, paintings, such as Belcourt's can be used as a great way to understand how creative methodologies can be used and exemplify their pedagogical possibilities.

Feminist Art

Now that I have provided a variety of examples of what creative methodologies are and how they are used, I will move on to talk more directly about my own creative methodology. To begin, it is important to highlight that my creative methodology is specifically using feminist art in accompaniment to my research paper. There is a lot involved when art is equipped with feminism as it is no longer just about aesthetics but also a political and activist platform (Mullin, 2020, p.202). There is no one way to create feminist art as it is about making a political stance rather than a defined style. Feminist art is about its content such as social justice activism and changing the status quo. As explored by Heather Davis, feminism and feminist art are both "a

form of resistance" and have "always been both critical – providing insightful analysis and critiques of patriarchy and other systems of oppression – and also creative" (Davis, 2017, p.4). Feminism and feminist art are diverse and multi-layered, causing a need to remain reflexive to accommodate the varying questions, concerns, and social issues that arise. The 'subjectivity' of art as a medium, therefore, allows feminist art to create conversation, welcome multiple viewpoints/backgrounds, and encourage change and critical discussions (Mullin, 2020, p.201). As researched by Amy Mullin, feminist art demands its viewers to experience "receptivity, to asking oneself questions, and entertaining different potential answers to those questions" (Mullin, 2020, p.203). Feminist art, the Arts, and artists, in general, are often called to perform self-reflection in order to understand their perpetuation of privileges, power, patriarchy, colonialism, and more (Davis, 2017, p.7). However, even with all of these monumental and historic contributions, as pointed out by Cornelia Butler, "the impact of feminist art has yet to be fully theorized and accepted by academic and museum institutions" (Cornelia, 2007, p.15). The lack of understanding towards it and the impact of feminist art makes it imperative to continue to research and showcase the many pedagogical abilities that feminist art has.

Feminist art allows my research to challenge the status quo especially surrounding the ideologies of art's history. Feminism and Feminist art value the interlocking dynamics of power relations, class, gender, race, sexuality, and more. Feminism and feminist art have the ability to highlight the racism, oppression, and colonialism within art history and history itself (Nochlin, 1971, p.1). To address the failures of art history, I will be drawing on the research of Linda Nochlin and her research on art, art history, and the failure of representation. As stated by Nochlin, feminist art reminds us that individuals problematically "tend to accept whatever is, as natural" (Nochlin, 1971, p.1). As Nochlin further discusses, "the white Western male viewpoint,

[has] unconsciously [been] accepted as the viewpoint of the art historian" (Nochlin, 1971, p.1). This constructed view of art history, and history in general, perpetuates a problematic idea that, historically, there are no talented, impactful, or worthy artists other than white men (Nochlin, 1971, p.2). Even in more contemporary times, there remains a glass ceiling[30] for female and BIPOC artists (Bocart, Gertsberg, & Pownall, 2017, p. 2.). Even the mere anticipation of the glass ceiling's existence can discourage women and BIPOC from following artistic careers and passions (Bocart et al., 2017, p. 27). Thus, especially through a critical race lens, it can be easily seen that the Arts and its history are segregating, oppressive, discriminatory, and assimilating.

Feminist art challenges Eurocentric systems' extremely problematic art history canon. The art history canon is created to record and highlight those who are considered 'Old Masters' and 'Great Artists' (Nochlin, 1971, p.7). Through the Art history canon, the 'Old Masters' and 'Great Artists' are presented as godlike, geniuses, and ultimately superior (Nochlin, 1971, p.7). For example, when the topic of art arises, who hasn't heard the names of artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, or Jackson Pollock? (Nochlin, 1971, p.7). Sharing the commonality of being white men, these are just a few names of the artists that are considered 'Old Masters' within the art history canon. This gendered segregation is so intrinsically woven into history that white male artists are how 'art' is defined inside and outside of academia (Nochlin, 1971, p.7). As stated by Anna Brzyski, feminist art highlights how the art history canon "function[s] as a mechanism of oppression, a guardian of privilege, a vehicle of exclusion, and a structure for class, gender, and racial interests" (Brzyski, 2007, p.1). Brzyski also states that feminist art:

> explore[s] the canon's relationship to capitalism as an economic, social, and cultural system, and in particular to the function of art markets, by aligning the canon's function and logic

[30] The glass ceiling describes an "intangible barrier [which] prevents female [and BIPOC] professionals from achieving upper-level positions" (Bocart et al., 2017, p. 2).

> with the concept of commodity fetishism and the mechanisms of cultural hegemony[31] (Brzyski, 2007, p.1).

Feminist art shows how the art history canon perpetuates and validates white masculinity being the defining feature of creativity and knowledge (Pollock, 1999, p.9). However, feminist art acknowledges that there are numerous women and BIPOC artists throughout history. As Nochlin states, some of these women and BIPOC include, but are not limited to:

> Artemisia Gentileschi, Mme. Vigee-Lebrun, Angelica Kauffmann, Rosa Bonheur, Berthe Morlsot, Suzanne Valadon, Kathe Kollwitz, Barbara Hepworth, Georgia O'Keeffe, Sophle Taeuber-Arp, Helen Frankenthaler, Bridget Riley, Lee Bontecou, or Loulse Nevelson… Sappho, Marle de France, Jane Austen, Emily Bronte, George Sand, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Anais Nin, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, and Susan Sontag (Nochlin, 1971, p.4).

The list of women artists from history goes on, as shown by Broude and Garrard who mention "Paula Modersohn-Becker, Frida Kahlo, Alice Neel, Louise Bourgeois, and many others" (Broude & Garrard, 1994, p.10). Often through problematic biological deterministic beliefs, art history has long deemed women and BIPOC as not capable of being within the canon (Pollock, 1999, p.9). Historically, and even continuing into contemporary times, many women and BIPOC use masculine or gender-neutral names in order to have their work considered valid and included within society. Examples of individuals who have used alias names include George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), J.K. Rowling[32] (Joanne Kathleen Rowling), Currer Ellis (Emily Charlotte), or Acton Bell (Anne Brontë) (Miller, 2016, p.124). These aliases make it even harder to track/record all the women and BIPOC artists that there are/have been as they were forced to hide and adapt to these sexist restrictions to be able to participate. However, as stated by Nochlin, feminism and feminist art show that "the fault lies not in our stars, our hormones, our

[31] Hegemony is "influence or authority over others" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
[32] Although J.K. Rowling is a great example of women using alias/gender-neutral names, she is criticized for transphobic/homophobic comments and should be thought about critically in other contexts outside of the use of her name (Gulley, 2022).

menstrual cycles, or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions and our education (Nochlin, 1971, p.5). Considering these statements, feminist art critically states that the art history canon needs to be either destroyed, altered, or completely replaced (Pollock, 1999, p.i). Feminist art calls out the western art canon for being colonial, racist, classist, and sexist, as settler-colonials were the ones who defined who got to be included within it. Settler-colonialism deemed that it alone has the right to decide that settler-colonial artists, scholars, beliefs, and techniques are the only ones to be highlighted/recorded. Feminist art shows this flawed system and demands that the art canon is arbitrary and self-perpetuating colonialist domination. By dismantling the art canon, it no longer has authority over defining art and challenges the sexist beliefs that are used to restrict women (such as myself) and BIPOC artists. Therefore, I use and create feminist art as the shift and displacement it brings to the current status quo and art canon are crucial.

My Artworks

In accompaniment to my MRP, I created three mixed media artworks, titled *What Were They Wearing?, Table Talk,* and *More Than Numbers*. To understand the importance of creative methodologies, I describe each artwork below and their pedagogical possibilities. Within the description of each artwork, I address five major questions: (1) Overview: a summary of what the artwork is; (2) Visual Analysis: as the artist, I provide an introspective visual description of the piece to further the content available to the viewer; (3) History/context: any historical background or information that is needed to better understand the artwork; (4) Purpose: the process, the content, and the reason why I made this piece; and (5) Outcome/reactions: a description of the reactions, conversations, and effects that my artworks had. By accompanying my research with artworks, I give a firsthand example of how creative methodologies are

implemented within research and their pedagogical possibilities. I am also able to give viewers a fuller understanding of my research and the context of my artworks. As stated by Shaun McNiff, the partnership of research and art "enhance[es] understanding of the human condition through alternative (compared to conventional) processes and representational form of inquiry, and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible" (McNiff, 2008, p.59). Writing an MRP is very informative and insightful as it engages the reader through structure, statistics, research, and academics. However, the accompaniment of artworks gives my work the power to engage with the reader through a variety of additional senses such as visually, emotionally, and sensually. Artworks also inclusively welcome different kinds of learners as people can learn in a variety of ways, such as visual, auditory, or hands-on. Therefore, my research can be absorbed in a more holistic and rounded way. Thus, by accompanying my MRP with artworks, it enhances the overall ability of viewers to understand my work, why creative methodologies are important, and creative methodologies' abundant pedagogical possibilities.

As an artist I am only able to create art from my viewpoint and experiences, thus, I am not able to speak on behalf of others or all experiences. However, creative methodologies have strong reflexivity (McNiff, 2008, p.61) allowing people to relate to my work through their own experiences and interpretations of my work. As discussed by Leavy, through creative methodologies' inherent ability to "open up multiple-meanings", the content of my work is "determined not only by the artist [me] but also the viewer and the context of viewing" (Leavy, 2015, p.224). Although my art expresses my viewpoint (as a cis-gender, middle class, able-bodied, white woman), these topics, in general, can be relatable to a variety of people around the world in their own way. Thus, through my art, I am able to express how I am feeling on a personal scale; yet, the message is relatable on a global scale. To understand creative

methodologies further, I described the meanings and content behind my pieces. However, as the viewer, there may be many different ways that these pieces can be interpreted – based on race, class, ability, gender, sexuality, etc. Although this is an important disclaimer to address, creative methodologies have innate abilities which enable reflexivity, and therefore, allow artworks, like mine, to be more inclusive, diverse, and intersectional.

What Were They Wearing?

Ervin, Vanessa. (2018-2019). *What Were They Wearing?* [Mixed media]. All rights reserved and copyrighted.

Ervin, Vanessa. (2018-2019). Detail photos of: *What Were They Wearing?* [Mixed media]. All rights reserved and copyrighted.

One of the artworks that I am using to compliment my MRP is titled, *What Were They Wearing?* This piece highlights the importance of consent and dispels sexual assault myths. Too

often, the clothing that a victim is wearing is wrongly blamed for causing/inviting the assault – for example, people asking 'what were they wearing?' in response to sexual assault. With an overwhelming amount of victim-blaming, slut shaming, scapegoating, gaslighting, and more occurring around sexual assault, I felt an undeniable call to make a 'consent clothing line/brand'. This clothing line shows the reality of what society has come to – the need for clothing that clearly states 'I do not consent' in order for individuals to feel safe, not be blamed, and take back their autonomy. My clothing is meant to aggressively and defiantly take away the myths society uses to excuse sexual assault to force society to face reality – just how problematic all sexual assault myths are, and that it is not the clothes or the survivors' fault.

A visual analysis of *What Were They Wearing?* is also important to include to understand my artwork and provide further possible analyses. *What Were They Wearing?* consists of two clothing lines, one above the other. Each clothing line has an assortment of clothing that are equally spaced. Each piece of clothing is carefully hung with old fashion clothesline clips that allow the viewer to perfectly see the face of the clothing. This way of hanging the clothing gives an essence of respect, dignity, and that the clothing is cared for. Furthermore, the composition of the piece is balanced as the large/small and colourful/dull clothing are purposely inter-mixed. As a result, the viewer's eye is drawn to each article of clothing, making each equally important to observe. There is also juxtaposition[33] between the connotation of the text and the thread used to write the text. The connotations of the word 'No' are assertive and demanding which is contrasted by the soft, intricate, and delicate fabric of the thread. This piece commands both of these essences - assertiveness, strength, and demands in addition to the soft personal, delicateness, and vulnerable.

[33] Juxtaposition is the act of "placing two or more things side by side often to compare or contrast" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

It is important to understand the concept of sexual assault myths and how they are harmful. As defined by Martha Burt, sexual assault myths "are prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, or rapists" (Burt, 1998, p.129). Sexual assault myths are perpetuated as they remain a huge "part of the general culture. People learn them in the same way they acquire other attitudes and beliefs – from their families, their friends, newspapers, movies, books, dirty jokes" and more (Burt, 1998, p.129). Although there are many different sexual assault myths, I attempt to debunk them all by focusing specifically on the myth that blames the victim's clothing for causing/inviting the assault. This sexual assault myth wrongly perpetuates the idea that the victim's "clothing may be viewed as [the] provocation for rape, such as wearing short shorts, miniskirts, high heels, or not wearing a bra" (Brinson, 1992, p.362). A few other examples of sexual assault myths are that victims were 'asking for it', that their behaviour was 'wrong', that it's their fault for being at the location they were at (bar, walking home late, etc), or that people lie about its occurrence (Brinson, 1992, p.362). As Susan Brinson shows, when it comes to sexual assault myths, the victim "often becomes the target of blame" (Brinson, 1992, p.359). Although these rationales are groundless, these myths are so ingrained into society and normalized in everyday life that they are often accepted as the truth (Brinson, 1992, p.360). Brinson states that sexual assault myths occur because they help "a culture resolve internal conflicts that otherwise are unresolvable. Rape myths allow our culture to rationalize the prevalence of rape by offering explanations for its occurrence" (Brinson, 1992, p.360). However, I challenge Brinson's reasoning for sexual assault myths. I argue that sexual assault myths are used as a tactic, even if subconsciously, to excuse individuals from putting in the effort to bring change, especially if it does not affect them directly. I also argue that sexual assault myths are problematically used to give individuals a false sense of security and reassurance - that the

individual (wrongly) thinks that they 'cannot experience sexual assault because they wouldn't do what the victim did' to 'invite' it. In reality, sexual assault could happen to anyone regardless of 'precautions' or 'morals', no matter how far someone differentiates themselves or their morals from the victim (Burt, 1998, p.130). Many sexual assault myths perpetuate the idea that sexual assaults only happen by strangers, at night, outside (ie. in alleyways), include weapons, and leave clear signs of struggle on the victim's body (Burt, 1998, p.130). As shown in Burt's research on sexual assault myths, the reality is that "most do not involve a weapon, or injury beyond minor bruises or scratches; most occur indoors in either the victim's or the assailant's home" and is often done by someone they trust and/or love (Burt, 1998, p.130). These results easily and quickly debunk the ideas that the sexual assault myths perpetuate. Nevertheless, unfounded sexual assault myths continue to thrive and continue to cause many harmful implications. Although the magnitude of damage the sexual assault myths cause is deep and boundless, some examples of harm they cause are: (a) that these problematic thoughts become so ingrained within individuals that they manifests themselves within institutional laws, regulations, constitutions, rights, and values (Brinson, 1992, p.359); (b) myths cause lasting physical, mental, and psychological effects on victims discouraging them to report the sexual assault for a variety of reasons (fear, judgement, shame, etc) (Brinson, 1992, p.361); (c) myths further problematic stereotypes and gender roles derivative of essentialism and patriarchal agendas[34]; (d) myths perpetuate a perception of rape as normal, desired, or acceptable (Brinson, 1992, p.373); (e) myths hide the truth of sexual assaults with misinformation; (f) myths scapegoat the blame, creating a false sense of security for individuals leaving them to incorrectly feel safe in an

[34] For example, as patriarchal agendas view gender as binary, it positions that "women personify nature", over-emotional, and weakness - all things that should and can be 'controlled'; while placing men as representing strong, intelligence, "culture and civilization" – all things that are superior and, thus, what should control women (Brinson, 1992, p.361).

actually unsafe world; and (g) by not addressing the realities of sexual assault it means that progress towards ending sexual assault cannot be achieved. These are just a few examples of how harmful sexual assault myths are, and why I feel that artworks, such as *What Were They Wearing?* need to be created - to educate people, start discussions, and help end sexual assault myths.

For *What Were They Wearing?*, I announced a 'call for donations' asking the community for articles of clothing that they wanted to contribute to this art initiative. Once I received all the donations, I selected a variety of clothing that ranged in size, colour, styles, fabrics, and came from a variety of backgrounds. The clothing I picked also ranged in articles including: pants, underwear, shirts, long sleeve, dress shirts, bras, dresses, pants, and tank tops. Additionally, all of the clothing I selected varied from 'provocative' to 'conservative'. I purposely selected a diverse range of clothing to show that consent is always mandatory, regardless of the kind of clothing being worn. Once I had my selection of clothing, I embroidered and designed a variety of ways of saying "No" onto the clothing, such as "I do not consent", "Still No", "No means No", or "Non-Consenting". Once I finished embroidering the clothing, I created two old-fashioned clothing lines to hang my pieces on. I used clothing lines to display my artwork as they reference the act of 'putting your dirty laundry out to dry'. I also used clothing lines to display my pieces because clothing lines were banned in many communities as they were deemed to 'decrease the aesthetic' of the neighbourhood (Priesnitz, 2007, p.10). Clothing lines have a lot of negative connotations and social contexts/meanings and highlight problematic views on class, space, and neighbourhood policing. For example, banning clothing lines perpetuates classism as it forces individuals to keep their clothes inside either through the use of expensive washing machines/dryers or demanding additional labour and time to hand-wash them. It also forces

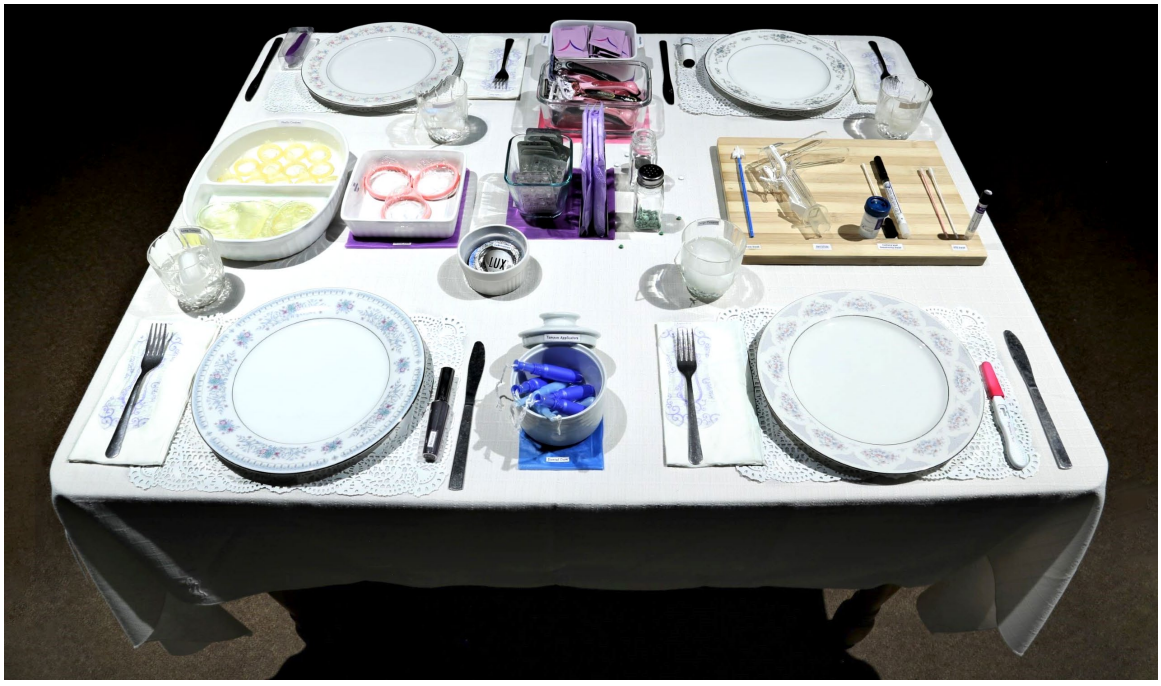
neighbourhood policing and elitism by forcing neighbours to monitor each other, distrust each other, and feel pressure to follow social etiquette (even if they can't afford to do so). Similar to clothing lines and dirty laundry, sexual assault is also often a topic that is – wrongly – hidden away, considered socially taboo by society, and experiences gatekeeping (ex. using sexual assault myths to 'reject' claims of sexual assault). However, I wanted to actively defy these notions by putting the topic of sexual assault out in the open for all to see, talk about, ask questions, and get educated on.

This piece has been on display at a variety of art galleries and caused a variety of discussions in person and online. For example, *What Were They Wearing?* has been (a) exhibited at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery during the *LU Major Studio Artist Exhibition* (2019) (b) exhibited at the Definitely Superior Art Gallery during *RetroGrad X2* (2021-2022); (c) published in Queen's University's first edition of "*Perspectives on Gender, Equity, and Politics"* (2022); (e) presented during Thunder Bay Art Gallery's *LU Major Studio Artist Talk* (2019); (d) presented at *Feminisms At Lakehead: Indigenous Feminisms* by the Women's Studies Department and Gender Equity Centre (2019); and (f) presented at *Feminist Conference* held by the Women's Studies Department and Gender Equity Centre at Lakehead University (2018). *What Were They Wearing?*'s large amount of exposure stirred up a variety of conversations and thoughts. Some of the more tangible and easily recorded reactions were those found online which showed a variety of reactions. Many people commented on and 'shared' this piece and even the Thunder Bay Art Gallery noted that it was one of the most engaged posts they had online up to that point[35]. From the large interaction online, this artwork was deeply community-based, stirred up dialogue, and heard multiple voices. The majority of people shared that they

[35] The online comments and 'shares' I am referring to can be seen by following this link: https://www.facebook.com/129041813492/photos/a.395619658492/10157059298448493/?type=3&theater

could relate to the piece or were showing their support. Out of the bulk of interactions online, there were only one or two comments which were reaffirming sexual assault myths. Regardless of the opinions expressed, I welcome all conversation surrounding *What Were They Wearing?* as it allows people to become more educated on a topic that is often silenced and censored. By educating the way someone thinks it can change the way they act. By changing the way they act, it can affect the way that people around them act and think also. As a result, it causes a ripple effect that has the potential to change policies and laws, resulting in a better world. The purpose of *What Were They Wearing?* is to bring up questions, conversations, educate, and act as a symbol of solidarity in the fight against sexual assault myths. Its goal is to allow survivors of sexual assault to feel a sense of community and resistance, feel that they are not alone, and know that it is not their fault. Therefore, *What Were They Wearing,* can be used to understand the use of creative methodologies and their pedagogical possibilities.

Table Talk.



Ervin, Vanessa. (2018-2019). *Table Talk.* [Mixed media]. All rights reserved and copyrighted.

Ervin, Vanessa. (2018-2019). Detail photos of: *Table Talk.*[Mixed media]. All rights reserved and copyrighted.

Another artwork I am using to complement my research is titled *Table Talk. Table Talk* addresses the importance of sexual health education and highlights how its absence is destructive. This piece was created in 2018-2019 in response to the revision and regression of the sexual education curriculum[36] during that time. In 2018-2019, many vital topics such as consent, contraception, sexual orientation, and gender expression were either removed or censored in students' sex education (Saarreharju, Uusiautii, & Määttä, 2020, p.609). As a result of these regressions in 2018-2019, I created *Table Talk* to address the importance of comprehensive sex education, protest and plead against the revision of the sex education curriculum, and offer education during a time when it wasn't allowed to be taught anywhere else.

Table Talk has a variety of important contexts to be offered within a visual analysis. To begin, it is important to know all of the objects that are within the table. The objects on my table

[36] There are two types of sex education programs. 1) Abstinence-only sex education programs. This program is defined as "those that encourage only abstinence and not condom or other contraceptive use" (Kirby, 2007, p.151); and 2) Comprehensive sex education programs. This program is defined as "those that emphasize abstinence as the safest behaviour, but also promote condom or other forms of contraception for those who do have sex" (Kirby, 2007, p.151).

include:

- Birth control (placebo pills) as salt shakers
- Dental dams as placemats
- Vaginal wipes served inside a small dish
- Tampons as tea bags
- Tampon applicators inside small service dish
- Soft menstrual cups on a platter
- Condoms and vaginal condoms on a divided serving dish
- Menstrual cups inside a small serving dish
- Lubrications inside a small bowl
- Nighttime pads as napkins within a napkin holder
- Light 'panty liner' pads as decorative napkins beside the plates
- Birth control containers (empty) inside a serving bowl
- Pap equipment, cervix swab, speculum, culture and sensitivity swab, sexually transmitted infection (S.T.I) swabs, and container as a charcuterie board and more
- Makeup (such as mascara, lipstick) placed as utensils
- Shaving razors (pink ones and black ones) inside a Tupperware dish
- A small vibrator placed as a utensil
- White embroidered images of penises, vulvas, and breasts discreetly placed as embellishments on the table cloth.

These objects have been selected as they either relate to the information that was taken out of the sex education curriculum or information that is included but is still considered social taboo/censored. These objects can evoke a variety of associations which give deeper analyses of my artwork. For example, the pregnancy test evokes topics such as planned parenting, pro-choice/pro-life, women's rights, LGBTQ2S+ rights, and autonomy. The mascara and lipstick give connotations of topics such as beauty standards, social media, drag, and identity. The condoms relate to topics such as sex, historical and cultural beliefs, AIDS, and consent. Visually the table is balanced with an assortment of colours, shapes, sizes, and textures. This variety forces the viewer to slowly absorb each visual item and connotations on the table at a time.

To understand *Table Talk* holistically, a timeline of the sex education mandates and policies is beneficial to comprehend. In 1998, curriculums enforced a 'sex-abstinence' education which included restrictive ideologies such as taking out the names of many body and private parts as it was seen as too compromising for kids (Saarreharju, Uusiautii, & Määttä, 2020, p.210). In 2014-2015, the government attempted to update the sex education curriculum as it was

deemed out of date and non-reflective of new developments that had occurred (such as technology/internet) (Saarreharju et al., 2020, p.210). In 2015, the Ontario Liberal Party created and implemented a sex education curriculum that took a step toward being more progressive (Saarreharju et al., 2020, p.210). As stated by Saarreharju, Uusiautii, and Määttä, the 2015 sex education curriculum, was for "the first time acknowledg[ing] the technological developments and its influence on sex education, teaching of safety skills, new family structures (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parenting), and puberty occurring earlier and earlier – all of which increased the need for sex education at an earlier age" (Saarreharju et al., 2020, p 210). Although the 2015 curriculum was not perfect, it was much more progressive than the previous 1998 curriculum. This progressive shift in the sex education curriculum became an immensely sensitive "topic in the 2018 general election in Ontario, which ultimately resulted in the loss for the Ontario Liberal Party" (Saarreharju et al., 2020, p.610). Ultimately, the debate on sexual health education became a topic to be leveraged between the parties running. Therefore, the social taboo of sexual health education was so strong that it likely helped/impacted the Conservative Party of Ontario's leader, Doug Ford, to be elected in 2018-2019. Once Doug Ford was elected, the conservative party revoked the 2015 sex education curriculum and re-issued the one from 1998 once again (Bialystok, Wright, Berzins, Guy, & Osborne, 2020, p.333). Through this repeal, many vital topics were omitted but not without an abundance of objections. As stated by Bialystok, Wright, Berzins, Guy, and Osborne, the information provided within the 2015 comprehensive sex education was "recommended by health professionals, psychologists, educators, and other public servants with no partisan agenda. Thousands of physicians, nurses and social workers also publically denounced the repeal" (Bialystok et al., 2020, p.339) and many others deemed that the sex-abstinence curriculum violates "a child's right to information"

(Saarreharju et al., 2020, p.612). Furthermore, within this reform, Ford implemented a website for parents and the public to report teachers who taught information that was deemed too progressive. The government positioned teachers as individuals who needed to be monitored by the public via 'snitching' (Bialystok et al., 2020, p.340). This dictatorship struck fear into the community and, especially, within teachers who could lose their jobs/income to survive (Bialystok et al., 2020, p.340). The silver lining for me during this time was that I was not a teacher who had to follow these rules and fear for my career. I was a visual arts student who wanted to express my opinions and activism with the privilege and public opportunities to do so. It was during this time (2018-2019) that I created *Table Talk* as a protest against the problematic revision of comprehensive sex education that I was passionately wanting to bring to light.

For *Table Talk,* I decided to express my content through the form of a dining table/table setting because of the common social etiquettes, structured hierarchy, and associations held towards them. Although the ideas surrounding dining tables vary between individuals and cultures, the dining table archetype usually involves social/family etiquettes, rules, and behaviours (Flammang, 2016, p.96). For example, topics such as sex education and politics are not to be talked about as they could lead to impolite behaviours or go against social etiquette (Flammang, 2016, p.96). Instead, 'table talk' refers to the socially acceptable 'light' topics that refrain from any conversations that could be considered 'controversial' or 'provoking'. For example, 'table talk' can include topics such as the weather or how your day went. The structure of 'table talk' is very similar to the way sex education is treated; both are treated as surface-level conversations that should neglect/hide the realities and truths of the world. However, I want to dismantle the way 'table talk' and sex education are conducted, because avoiding or extracting these important conversations causes damaging and life-altering effects (Saarreharju et al., 2020,

p.610). Therefore, I labelled and placed a variety of sexual health objects back on the table to see, learn, and ask questions about (please refer to the list of objects included above). By using and labelling these every day 'behind the scenes' objects, my goal is for my artwork to act as medical diagrams/informational display cases. This way my artwork is simultaneously informational and educational to the viewers. I purposely put nothing on the plates because nothing has been served yet. Metaphorically, I am addressing the fact that the knowledge of sex education is not being given but that it does exist, as we can see within the dishes[37]. My artwork also brings awareness to the research that has proven that "educat[ion] on topics such as contraception, abstinence, and STI prevention d[oes] not increase sexual activity in youth but, instead, leads to postponed and less frequent sexual activity when compared to youth who did not receive equally comprehensive education" (Saarreharju et al., 2020, p.616). My table setting is unconventional and the uncomfortableness that people may feel when viewing it just helps to further my message. It's time to bring sex education back to the table!

Table Talk has had a variety of reactions while being on display in-person as well as on a variety of online platforms. For example, *Table Talk* has been: (a) on display at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery during the *LU Major Studio Exhibition* (2019); (b) published online and printed by

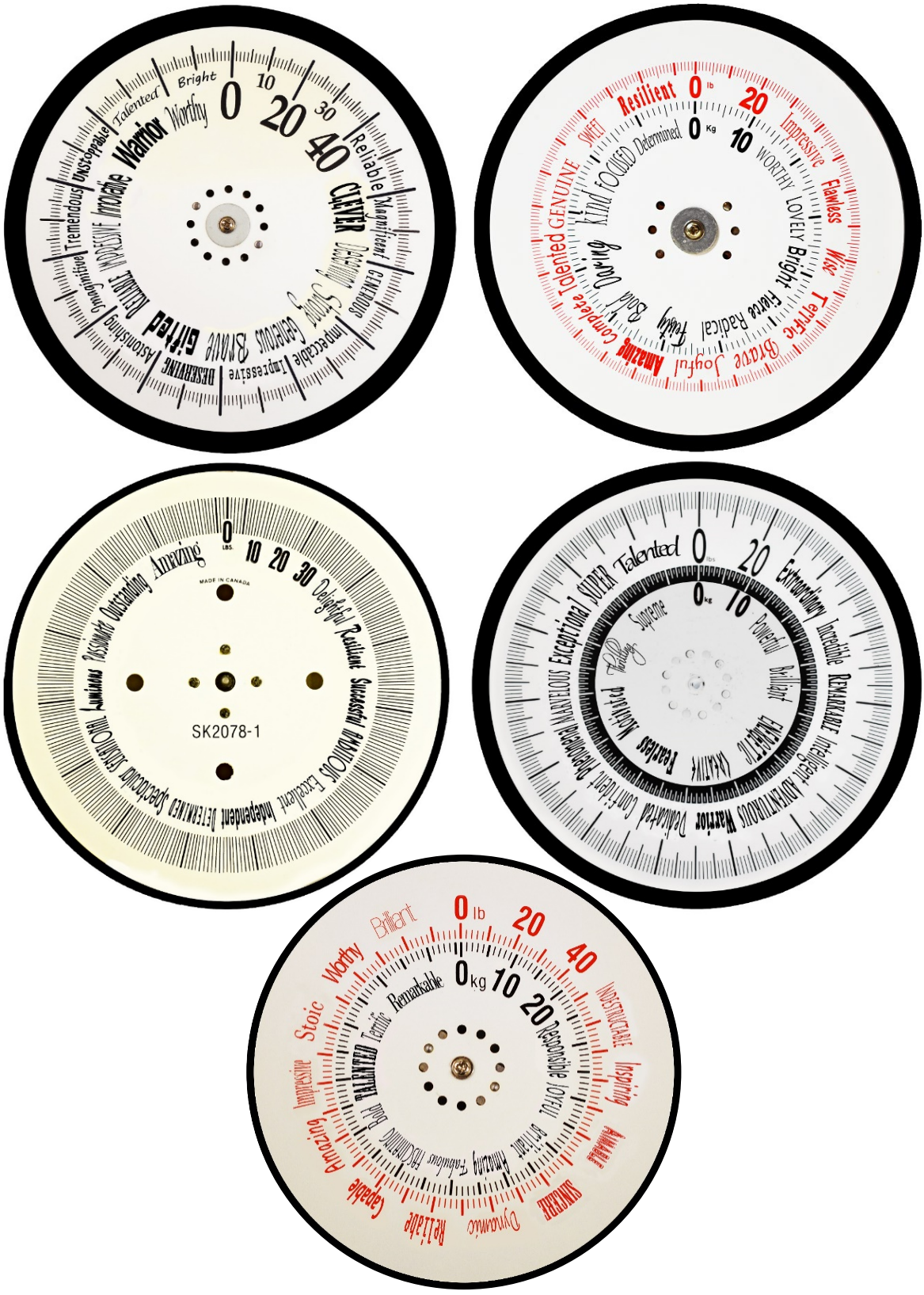
[37] There are some very interesting connections to be made between Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* and my work, *Table Talk*. Created by Chicago, *The Dinner Party* is a "triangular table with thirty-nine place setters, situated on a floor inscribed with the names of 999 additional women. The components of this ceremonial meal include embroidered runners, sculptured and painted [vaginal] plates, flatware and chalices, napkins and cloths" (Broude & Garrard, 1994, p.228). Chicago's purpose for this table was to create the female version of 'the last supper', and therefore, all "the women who were, in Chicago's view, 'swallowed up by history', were now presented as substantial nourishment for an audience hungry to learn about the past" (Broude & Garrard, 1994, p.228). With a similar essence, *Table Talk* looks at the sexual health education that I feel has been left out of history/education (such as showing empty plates), but the reality is that there is lots to teach (as shown by the full serving plates) and that similarly, the knowledge/education of sexual health should be presented to people 'as it is substantial nourishment for an audience hungry to learn about it'.

the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF) in their 9th edition of *The Feminist Word* (2022); (c) posted online and on their website by Lakehead University's Women's and Gender Studies Student's Association (2021); (d) posted online and sent out on their subscription email by the University of Ottawa Graduate Student Association during their 'Art + Empowerment Initiative' (2021); (e) presented at *Feminism's At Lakehead: Indigenous Feminisms* by the Women's Studies Department and Gender Equity Centre (2019); (f) presented during Thunder Bay Art Gallery's *LU Major Studio Artist Talk* (2019); and (g) presented at *Feminist Conference* held by the Women's Studies Department and Gender Equity Centre at Lakehead University (2018). *Table Talk* has had a variety of exposure which has led to a variety of conversations and reactions. Online, *Table Talk* received a variety of positive feedback and many comments about how the viewers agreed that this education was necessary. However, an interesting interaction occurred when this piece was on display at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. For its display, the gallery and professors placed *Table Talk* in the 'nook' of the gallery. I later learnt that this happened because it needed to be hidden from the public schools and high schools that would often tour the gallery. Therefore, they placed my art in the 'nook' as it was easier for the teachers and teaching staff to avoid and hide from the students. I created this piece in the heat of the revision of sex education and thought that since schools were not allowed to teach it, my art could be a loophole for still getting the information out. However, it was interesting to witness firsthand just how controlled the information and education of sex education was to students. Even though the sexual health information wasn't within a textbook or classroom, the teachers still had to hide this information from the students in public domains. This interaction simply furthered the content of my work as it showed firsthand just how fragile, controlled, and forbidden information about sex education is. Although the Ontario sex education

has now been updated back to the 2015 sex education system by Doug Ford (Saarreharju et al, 2020, p.210), my artwork is still extremely relevant today and in the future. My artwork shows that throughout history, the education that is provided on sex education is easily malleable and fickle. This means, that although there is currently a more 'sex-comprehensive' education in place, its accessibility is fragile and can easily be revised or regressed, as history has proven. Furthermore, sex education in this province is also still a social taboo and a censored topic today. Therefore, talking about the importance and the right to sex education is something that needs to be consistently fought for, making my artwork relevant and important today and in the future

More Than Numbers.

Ervin, Vanessa. (2018-2019). *More Than Numbers.* [Interactive Mixed Media]. All rights reserved and copyrighted.



Ervin, Vanessa. (2018-2019). Detail photos of: *More Than Numbers* [Interactive mixed media]. All rights reserved and copyrighted.

More Than Numbers is an interactive artwork commenting on the problematic fixation on weight, appearance, and image in our society. Especially during a pandemic and quarantine, people are left isolated with their thoughts. The capitalist demands of society force us to value productivity over mental health, happiness, and simply trying to get through a global pandemic (Queen and Harding, 2020, p.873). For many people, social media is the only outlet they have to stay connected with others. In turn, there is a new hyper fixation on productivity, image, and weight. Our bodies and weight are going to change in a variety of ways, especially during the extreme times we are currently facing. As a collective, there is an increase in depression, burnout, mental illness, and sometimes isolation that can make getting out of bed an achievement to celebrate (Vindegaard and Benros, 2020, p.873). The hardships of the pandemic, lockdown, and burnout are ones that many people understand and universally feel. By stepping on my scales, I hope to remind people that they are so much more than a number. Through my artwork, *More Than Numbers,* I want to reclaim the way people define their worth, others' worth, and the way we think and talk about weight.

A visual analysis of *More Than Numbers* provides viewers with further possible context and understandings of my artworks. *More Than Numbers* includes five white scales that are distanced equally a part on the floor. Under each scale is a neutral brown mat, intended to further welcome the viewers to 'wipe their shoes' and step onto the scales. Three scales are facing one way, and two facing the opposite way. This space is crucial not only for visual balance but for the welcoming atmosphere I wanted it to create. The space I use is crucial as it offers some comfort (but not complete comfort) to the individual that they can stand on the scale without their number being seen easily. Furthermore, each scale is unique in shape and design yet there is unity in their colour and function. This shows individuals that each scale has its own unique

result, and entices them to step on all five scales. Furthermore, each scale is pre-loved and has a variety of scuffs, marks, and lines. I purchased these scales from a thrift store meaning that each of these scales has its own background story. Maybe one was used by an individual who was on a diet while another scale was used by someone attempting to gain weight. Maybe one was donated because someone wanted a newer modern digital version while another scale was no longer wanted as the individual did not care to know their weight. From their pre-loved appearances, it visually tells a story that they were used for a variety of reasons, that they were donated for a variety of reasons, and now they have been reclaimed in a positive way.

More Than Numbers consists of five interactive scales that are distanced a part on the floor. The scales show the first few numbers within the glass window, therefore, they appear to just be normal scales; however, they are anything but. As soon as someone steps on the scale, the viewers see that the scales I made have words on them instead of numbers. The words I chose are descriptive and revolve around people's accomplishments and abilities rather than their appearance. Too often, we value our worth based on being considered beautiful, pretty, gorgeous, etc. Furthermore, who is considered 'beautiful' is deeply rooted in problematic colonial views such as how much a person weighs. I want to show people that beauty isn't defined by weight, that weight doesn't define a person, and problematize just how much value we put on the scale's numbers. For this reason, on my scales, I instead used words such as courageous, strong, and brave to remind people of who they are and what they are capable of.

Placing a scale in a room can make people uncomfortable because society has placed so much importance on how much a person weighs. Especially during Covid-19 and quarantine, people's weight and image seem to be under a microscope. When people see my artwork, some may not want to stand on the scales (at first) as they assume the scales will reveal their weight to

all around them. This is exactly what I want to address and change: that we place so much importance on weight that we are causing people to miss the artwork (metaphorically and literally). To see the artwork, a person has to interact with the scale, and in turn, they see that they are so much more than a number. I am resiliently reclaiming the scale to show people that they are so much more than numbers.

This piece is intersectional as the problematic ideas of image and weight have effects on us all. Although views on weight are diverse across race, ability, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and other social divisions, I believe that everyone is able to relate to this piece in their own way. The colonial, Eurocentric, and westernized view of beauty has whitewashed many ideas of what you should look like. With my scales, I address a westernized beauty standard that is problematic and needs to end. With my scales, I dream of a world where we teach the importance of mental health and that everybody is important. We all experienced a global pandemic where our body image and confidence were attacked. Through my artwork, *More Than Numbers,* I want to act as a leader in creating collective healing and change for everyone.

More Than Numbers has been on display at a multitude of venues and platforms and therefore, has caused a variety of discussions. *More Than Numbers* has been on display at (a) The Thunder Bay Art Gallery during the *LU Major Studio Exhibition* (2019); (b) published online and printed by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF) in their 8th edition of *The Feminist Word* (2021); (c) presented during Thunder Bay Art Gallery's *LU Major Studio Artist Talk* (2019); (d) presented at *Feminism's At Lakehead: Indigenous Feminisms* by the Women's Studies Department and Gender Equity Centre (2019); and (e) presented at *Feminist Conference* held by the Women's Studies Department and Gender Equity Centre at Lakehead University (2018). *More Than Numbers'* big reveal was at the

Thunder Bay Art Gallery and is the noteworthy interaction I draw on as an example of the discussions it caused. At the gallery, I placed a sign that said ‘interactive piece, please feel free to step on me’. My artwork was a social experiment to see how people acted around the scales. I was able to watch people interact with my artworks from a distance and held anonymity by fading into the large crowd around me. I wanted to see if people would stand on them, as a collective not want to stand on them, or if something completely unexpected would happen. I found it fascinating to watch everything unfold. Initially, some avoided this artwork. Then one by one, people began to slowly step onto the scales. They would soon have a huge grin on their faces, as much to their surprise, they noticed positive and affirmational words revealed to them instead of numbers. Others were not able to see why the people on the scales were smiling, but they were able to see the positive reactions to standing on the scales. Therefore, more and more people began to stand on the scales to see what was causing delight. Soon the scales were a busy and in demand interaction and people did not hesitate to stand on them. Some people wanted to step on all five of the scales as they further discovered that each scale had different affirmational words within them. Some people would also return to try the same scales repeatedly or they would run to their friends and/or family to bring them to the scales to try. Other people would want to show others what words they were given while standing on the scale, and many people bent down to take photos of the word they had been assigned. I was amazed to see the stark contrast between how people interacted with and were affected by my scales compared to how people interact and are affected by regular scales. It was also amazing to see the ripple effect of how people interacted with my scales from the start of the night to the end. It started with just a few people and some hesitation, and ended with many people interacting and hardly any hesitation. With my scales, I picture a world where numbers, scales, or weight are not the cause

of panic, shame, fear, etc. Instead, it would be amazing if regular scales cause reactions like my scales because of a reconstructed view on weight - where people feel uplifted, confident, and affirmed instead. Through *More Than Numbers,* I want to reconstruct how people define their worth and identity by their weight and image.

Main Objectives

Healing: Inclusive and Accessible, Racial Inequality, Trauma, and Mental Health

One main objective of my research is to explore the pedagogical possibilities that creative methodologies have to be used as tools for healing. Although there are a variety of ways that creative methodologies can be implemented as tools for healing, I explore specifically how they have been healing tools for inclusivity and accessibility, racial inequalities, trauma, and mental health issues. I will explore the healing properties of creative methodologies by drawing on researchers that specialize in fields of social work, art therapists, and therapists, as well as Black, Indigenous, and POC researchers that focus on decolonizing healing and criticizing white immunity. I will also use firsthand examples of creative methodologies being used as tools for healing, such as Jane Doe's *The Story of Jane Doe,* Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer: A Memoir,* and Anne Cvetkovich's *Depression: A Public Feeling.* By exploring these specific ways of healing, I aim to show the many pedagogical possibilities that creative methodologies have.

Before exploring the healing abilities that creative methodologies have, it is first important to discuss that I am putting forth my ideal, utopian, and futuristic dream about including healing in the classroom. There are many limitations and pitfalls that can occur when stating that healing should be used within classrooms. To discuss this further, I will draw on the work of Koller, Osterlind, Paris, and Weston, who explore the topics of mental health, education, students, and training. As their research shows, "teachers are routinely sent into public schools with increasing students mental health problems, completely untrained" (Koller, Osterlind, Paris, & Weston,

2004, p.41). These instances occur not because of the teachers, but because of the institutions themselves who do not provide or create effective training or programs (Koller, et al., 2004, p.41). Teachers are left to provide content that could be extremely triggering or traumatizing to the students within the classroom. Teachers are not trained therapists or social workers, nor are they often taught to prioritize dealing with their own mental health issues. Furthermore, because of the whitewashed, white supremacist, colonial ideologies held within settler-colonial education systems, teachers can be unaware of the many complex traumas or mental health issues that women and BIPOC students in their class have. As a result, without any guidance or training, teachers can problematically further the trauma or mental health issues by (inaccurately) trying to provide healing.

Another important caveat to address is that some topics should not be used for healing or safety. Settler-colonial education systems often whitewash education and wrongly offer white individuals immunity from guilt. There are many topics that white individuals should feel uneasy, troubled, and shocked about. For example, topics within history class, such as residential schools, slavery, sixties scoop, and many other topics should not remain safe, 'easy', or provide healing for white individuals. The unsafe and violent realities of these events need to be addressed. It is a privilege in the first place to learn about these topics in a third-party environment, rather than living them every day as many BIPOC do. Topics such as these are just a few examples of why some topics should not be used for healing or safety, as they need to address and be disruptive to white privilege.

It is essential to also prioritize the realities of unsafe learning/classrooms that Katherine McKittrick and Peter Hudson bring forth. McKittrick and Hudson highlight how the classroom is not a safe space as every aspect of history, knowledge, education, and teaching has been touched

by the effects of settler-colonialism (Hudson and McKittrick, 2013, p.237). Furthermore, McKittrick's and Hudson's research outlines how trigger warnings give the idea that in their natural state classrooms are safe places for all students; problematically implying that it is not until topics such as racism, colonization, and/or oppression come up that trigger warnings are needed (Hudson and McKittrick, 2013, p.238). Echoing these thoughts, Lauren Howards' revolutionary research explores the topics of pain, healing, feminist theory, and contemporary art. As stated by Howards, "it is widely understood that the human experience of suffering must be handled with care – a reality that is often compromised when it comes to racial or class privilege and in the face of unequal distribution of power" (Howard, 2020, p. 30). As Howard shows, the concept of healing and safety are often limited to whiteness and white individuals. How is it possible then to provide trigger warnings, healing, and safety within classrooms, when classrooms are all innate with colonialism, xenophobia, racism, and sexism? How can we decide which topics need warnings, and who gets to decide this? For example, how often are trigger warnings given before history classes or before singing *Oh'Canada* every morning before school? In reality, there is profound damage that can come from the white-washed history and daily reminder of forced colonization in *Oh'Canada*. Thus, the idea of classrooms as safe-spaces can, in reality, harmfully perpetuate settler-colonial immunity while silencing women and BIPOC. McKittrick states that "the only people harmed in this process [of trying to make safe spaces] are students of colour, faculty of colour, and those who are victims of potential yet unspoken intolerance" (Hudson and McKittrick, 2013, p.238). Furthermore, McKittrick shows how the idea of healing and a 'safe space classroom' in academia is:

> a fantasy that replicates, rather than undoes, systems of injustice because it assumes, first, that teaching about anti-colonialism or sexism or homophobia can be safe (which is an injustice to those who have lived and live injustice), second, that learning about anti-

> colonialism or sexism or homophobia is safe, easy, comfortable, and third, that silencing and/or removing 'bad' or 'intolerant' students dismantles systems of injustice (Hudson and McKittrick, 2013, p.237).

McKittrick shows that classrooms are, within themselves, "already, sites of pain", so, to think of the classroom as a 'safe space' is a "white fantasy because…only someone with racial privilege would assume that the classroom could be a site of safety!" (Hudson and McKittrick, 2013, p.237). As these points show, it is important to understand the dynamics of safety within classrooms and that it is privileged to assume that classrooms are safe spaces.

There are some theorists such as bell hooks, who discuss the dialects of the classroom and the potential for healing within them. bell hooks calls for the academic classroom to not be seen as separate from the real world (hooks, 2013, p.41). hooks states that classrooms should be regarded as places that can create change equally as much as the outside world (hooks, 2013, p.xv). Furthermore, she sees academia as one of "the most radical space of possibility", and thus, has endless potential to create change (hooks, 1994, p.14). hooks highlights how the conventional colonial "classrooms, remain a place where students [are] simply given material to learn by rote[38] and regurgitate" (hooks, 2013, p.8). Through 'regurgitating learning' in academia, there is problematically a widespread reproduction of colonialism, white supremacy, misogyny, racism, sexism, xenophobia[39], and more (hooks, 2013, p.xiii). hooks proposes that through healing, academics are able to expand their critical thinking and be able to identify more clearly when settler-colonialist ideologies try to perpetuate their domination (hooks, 2013, p.8). As stated by bell hooks, healing within academia:

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[38] Rote can be understood as the use of memory/memorization when absorbing new concepts, however, it lacks a true or genuine understanding. Thus, the concept is simply reproduced, but not understood or fully grasped (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

[39] Xenophobia is the "fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

> urg[es] all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, [she] celebrate[s] teaching that enables transgressions- a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994, p.14).

hooks demands that academia not reproduce and regurgitate learning but instead be an environment that creates change and healing. Supporting hooks, Antero Gracia and Dutro Elizabeth state that healing allows for an intersectional "exploration of the intersections between shared, collective traumas and more intimate, personal traumas; witnessing of and testimony to life stories as pedagogy; and classrooms as sites of vulnerability and embod[ied] experiences" (Gracia and Dutro, 2018, p.378). Furthermore, Gracia and Dutro state that:

> healing is not a singular journey of moving from hurt to being fully healed, but an ongoing path in which attention to healing and critical youth development have to be made part and parcel of teaching and learning in the classrooms (Gracia and Dutro, 2018, p.378).

These theorists and arguments hold the opinion that healing should be included within academia as it helps dismantle settler-colonialism within education systems.

Going forward, my research aims to keep in mind hooks' and McKittrick's important viewpoints as well as all the caveats previously mentioned. Although my MRP explores the importance and pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies, my work also acknowledges the essential reality that this inclusion still does not make classrooms a safe space. When I state that one of my objectives is to create healing, I mean it in the sense that creative methodologies have innate abilities to cause healing as a practice, even if subconsciously or unintentionally. For my research, I draw on the innate abilities of creative methodologies to explore the mind, emotions, feelings, and senses. Creative methodologies are implemented by researchers, theorists, therapists, social workers, and many other disciplines as effective ways to heal, research, and collect data (Malchiodi, 2003, p.xii). Creative methodologies are insightful ways of

communication, allowing people to visually and emotionally express their thoughts which may have been too difficult or painful through more traditional forms (Malchiodi, 2003, p.ix). Additionally, creative methodologies "encourage personal growth, increase self-understanding, and assist in emotional reparation, and ha[ve] been employed in a wide variety of settings with children, adults, families, and groups" (Malchiodi, 2003, p.1). For my research, I explore creative methodologies' innate abilities to be therapeutic, allow pain to be accessed and recorded within research, while also addressing that its inclusion does not mean classrooms are safe spaces.

Healing Through Inclusivity and Accessibility. To explore the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies, I explore how they help heal through inclusivity and accessibility. As stated by Cathy Malchiodi, when used as a tool for healing, creative methodologies often do not focus on the 'production quality', but rather on the "therapeutic process involved" (Malchiodi, 2003, p.1). When art is used specifically for the use of healing, it is often not about the *look* of the piece, but rather what the creation process *does* or how it *helps* the individual making it. As healing is often about the process and not the quality of the piece, it actively goes against capitalist agendas by being focused on inclusivity and accessibility. When it comes to art, capitalism focuses solely on the 'production quality' and 'market value' of the piece – which is essential to be aware of and criticize[40]. Capitalism's only goal is profit, hence, art is seen only as a product with an elitist market value (Child, 2019, p.1). Therefore, a dichotomous idea that there is 'good' art and 'bad' art is created; 'good' art being 'masterpieces' created by 'master artists' that profit capitalist, colonialist, and hegemonic agendas (Noujeim, 2021, p.2). This harmful

[40] I am not saying that artistic productions can *only* be created for the purpose of healing, or that creating art for the purpose of being sold is bad – instead my essay argues against the capitalist thought that art's *sole value* is if it is 'the most profitable'.

environment often cultivates exploitative and elitist ideologies; conditioning people to think that they must be professionals and that healing through art is frivolous as it isn't profitable to capitalism (Piper, 1985, p.38). Thus, when individuals want to make art, they are often faced with the internal social conditioning that art has to be 'good', and if they can't make good art that they should not try to make art at all (Piper, 1985, p.31). Capitalism's way of regarding art (that art's *sole value* is if it is the most profitable, made only by professionals, and is the best/perfect) is subversive to healing as it is elitist, classist, inaccessible, and exclusionary.

Art has the ability to be inclusive and accessible which actively deconstructs these capitalist agendas. Some of the ways that art offers healing by being accessible and inclusive includes: (a) Making art just for the sake of making art is an active way to reject capitalism, elitism, and classism as it acts as an antagonist to capitalism's belief that everything has to be done for the *sole* purpose of profit; (b) As shown by art theorist and academic, Gaia Noujeim, individuals can use art to "show disapproval of the system within the system" (Noujeim, 2021, p.2). Artists can critique the system they are in by using their freedom of expression to make art that criticizes capitalist and elitist agendas; (c) Artists can also fight back by creating a supportive and friendly creative community that aims to welcome people of all talents and backgrounds – such as non-profit Artist-run centres. To be successful in a capitalist world means that you rise to the top by pushing others down which results in problematic elitism, nepotism, exploitation, self-harm, and more. Capitalism actively wants artists to work against each other and enforce elitist agendas on the art practice. Instead, art can aim to promote a supportive creative community that hopes to welcome people of various talents, abilities, and backgrounds. As these examples show, creative methodologies have the potential to help heal individuals from elitist ideologies capitalism enforces and by feeling included within a welcoming community.

This is not to say that creative methodologies or creative communities will be perfectly inclusive. For example, non-profit Artist-run centres and creative methodologies can still fall prey to sexist, racist, able-ist, colonialist, and capitalist agendas. I will draw on the work of Anne Bertrand, who explores the many pros and cons of Non-profit Artist-run centres. As defined by Bertrand, Artist-run centres can be understood as "form[ing] a network and non-profit art galleries that showcase a diversity of forward-looking art practices" (Bertrand, 2006, p.136). As shown by Bertrand, they can perpetuate "problems of labour and power differentials that arise systemically" (Bertrand, 2006, 136). However, their 'well-intentioned' goal is to dismantle capitalism, which could offer something to work with and improve on. Non-profit Artist-run centres have not yet found a perfect structure or formula, however, it is possible that through critical processes (questioning their hierarchies, their impact, their structure, who is involved, and much more) they could be reinvigorated and become better tools to help dismantle capitalism. For example, Bertrand suggests that to improve Non-profit Art run centers we need to look:

> for ways to foster active participation and engagement (without depleting energy) in an artist-run culture as dedicated as ever to raising the visibility of artists and supporting diverse, innovative art practice and critical inquiry…and create egalitarian work practices across the board" (Bertrand, 2006, 138).

By providing this caveat, I hope to state the reality that creative methodologies and creative communities are not perfect solutions and can still perpetuate sexist, racist, able-ist, colonialist, and capitalist agendas. I argue, however, that although these are not perfect solutions, through critical processes they still have the potential to better help dismantle capitalist goals.

Healing Racial Inequalities. To understand their pedagogical possibilities, I also explore how creative methodologies can be used as a tool to help heal racial inequalities. Creative methodologies can be used as tools of resistance and reclamation to help against white

supremacist, colonial, capitalist, and racist agendas within settler-colonial education systems. A dichotomous view has been socially constructed when examining what is considered 'academic'. While Eurocentric knowledges are seen as superior and 'academic', Non-Eurocentric ways of knowing are often problematically disregarded, undermined, or not allowed within academia (Battiste, 2013, p.14). However, non-Eurocentric ways of knowing have long produced and been a part of creative methodologies - making the use of creative methodologies important to be included within settler-colonial education systems. Therefore, if creative methodologies were included within settler-colonial education systems, it would help combat racist and white supremacist agendas

To understand how creative methodologies can be used to help heal racial inequalities, I will draw on Audre Lorde and her research on racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism. Lorde provides a variety of critical insights, however, I will specifically be drawing on her exploration of poems and how they work towards healing racial inequalities. For instance, Lorde shows that "poetry has been the major voice of poor, working-class, and coloured women", therefore, it is used as a vital way to both "reclaim our literature" and cultural knowledge productions (Lorde, 2013, p.124). She continues by stating that:

> Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then in to more tangible action" (Lorde, 2007, p.45).

As a creative methodology, Lorde shows that poetry enables change and action for racial agendas. Creative methodologies, such as poems, are vital parts of resilience, anti-racism, and survival for many Non-European cultures. Hence, using creative methodologies, such as poetry, is within itself, an act of resistance to colonialist and Eurocentric systems that took away and diminished these cultural knowledge productions.

To understand how creative methodologies help heal racial inequalities, I also explore Black creative knowledge productions. A few examples of Black creative knowledge productions and how they help heal racial inequalities include “films that take up departures or violence, novels that remember slavery, poetry that explores forced human migrations,... music of Bob Marley”, and many other cinematic productions (McKittrick, 2021, p176). More examples of Black cultural knowledge productions that help heal racial inequities include reggae, the blues, and jazz. As cited by McKittrick, reggae, the blues, and jazz (all examples of music) equips Black creative knowledge productions the ability to express metaphoric, symbolic, lyrical expressions of history, racism, rebellion, oppression, pain, fear, and so much more (McKittrick, 2021, p.161). McKittrick shows that Black creative knowledge productions are “narratively oppositional” as they, within themselves, provide “critiques of colonialism, racism, structural inequalities, and other forms of violence” (McKittrick, 2021, p.57). Furthermore, McKittrick, states that Black creative knowledge productions:

> Illuminate narratives of black life and humanity and, at the same time, create conditions through which relationality, rebellion, conversation, interdisciplinary, and disobedience are fostered. Thus, the [creative] text is not simply a representation; the text is bound up in acts of psychic and physiological rebellion and disobedience (McKittrick, 2021, p58).

Black creative knowledge productions are woven into the very history, culture, and survival of BIPOC. Even while settler-colonial systems disregard, undermine, and try to assimilate Black knowledge productions, Black individuals defiantly continue to create. As a result, through creative methodologies, Black individuals actively challenge racism and racial inequalities. As these examples show, the inclusion of creative methodologies is necessary as their inclusion works toward dismantling racial inequalities within the current settler-colonial education systems.

Healing for Trauma. Creative methodologies also have the pedagogical possibilities to serve as a healing tool for trauma. Creative methodologies are successfully used as tools for restorative, therapeutic, and healing agendas. To explore the many ways that creative methodologies can be used as healing tools for trauma, I will draw on the research of Cathy Malchiodi. As explored by Malchiodi, creative methodologies allow researchers, academics, and participants to access data/memories for research that could be locked away by trauma. Humans are social and emotional creatures and our minds can be difficult places to decipher without the correct tools. Experiences that individuals find traumatic can be suppressed, forgotten, or be too difficult to speak about. These experiences can be crucial to include within research, making it vital to have the ability to access them. Creative methodologies are one of the ways that these suppressed, forgotten, or painful memories can be accessed which is crucial for research. Creative methodologies also allow participants and research to be conducted in a safe and healthy way. As pointed out by Malchiodi, creative methodologies help cause "relief from overwhelming emotions or trauma, resolve conflicts and problems, enrich daily life, and achieve an increase in well-being" (Malchiodi, 2003, p.1). Malchiodi also states that creative methodologies allow individuals to unearth "abusive experience", "forgotten trauma", "hidden secrets or significant incidents", and reduce long-term "posttraumatic stress" (Malchiodi, 2003, p.21). Through creative methodologies, individuals have the possibility to heal from trauma and researchers have the possibility to safely access this trauma as data for research.

To understand the healing possibilities of creative methodologies further, I will analyze Jane Doe's visual novel/scrapbook titled *The Story of Jane Doe.* Doe uses an anonymous name in order to tell her story, but what we do know is that she is a teacher, lecturer and an arts culture worker (Doe, 2004 p.364). Doe worked side by side with Shary Boyle in order to make the

visually impactful illustrations. Her book re-tells her firsthand experience of rape, victim-blaming, and problems within the justice system. The scrapbook is used as a creative methodology to fully express the trauma that she experienced, to give viewers a fuller understanding of her story, and to provide readers with a more comprehensive understanding of the research presented on the justice system. For example, with the addition of an illustration[41], Doe expresses that they experienced:

> Self-protection: I was freaked out-you can imagine. They call it shock. A particular kind of shock where I got real quiet. No tears, no apparent fears, just controlled alertness. When the police got to my apartment, I answered their questions calmly, with little emotion and steely gaze (Doe, 2004, p.10).

This illustration is a black and white drawing of Jane Doe in her bedroom watching herself being taken to the hospital after she was raped (Doe, 2004, p.10). Doe is depicted looking outside her bedroom window while in a robe and wearing black heeled boots. The scene outside of Doe's window is of herself being carried into an ambulance by police and paramedics. It is a very busy scene; policemen are depicted asking people to back away as several neighbours are crowding around to see what is happening. The drawing gives the impression that she is just one of the neighbours (third-party) peering out to see what is going on, and not the one that was just raped. This illustration relays more than words are able to as there is a sense of disassociation, survival instincts, fear, shock, and trauma that viewers are able to read deeper into. Furthermore, the viewer is unable to see Doe's face in either scene. Even without being able to see her face, the reader makes a visual connection by the drawing of her boots. Doe is illustrated wearing a specific pair of uniquely drawn black boots which identify her. As a result, the reader can identify that Doe is the one being taken out to the ambulance, while also being the one standing

[41] The rights to this illustration could not be obtained in order to include the photo within my MRP. To see the illustration, please find it on page 10 within Jane Doe's *The Story of Jane Doe.*

in the door frame. Conscious decisions are put into place when making illustrations such as this one, as preventing the viewer to see Doe's face takes away her identity, the power to identify who she is, and disassociates her from her own body. This is very reflective of the rape she just experienced as it also leaves Doe feeling powerless, disassociated, and without an identity. Through the use of illustrations, Doe is able to express her story through images and creative layouts which helps encapsulate an experience that is too difficult to fully express through words. The use of illustrations as a creative methodology, allows an individual, such as Jane Doe, to express and unlock painful experiences, convey data effectively to the reader, and express more data that traditional forms may not be able to.

Another example of creative methodologies being used to help heal from trauma is within Maia Kobabe's comic/visual memoir[42] titled, *Gender Queer: A Memoir*. This book tells the story of Kobabe's journey of identity, sexuality, and using the pronouns e/em/eir[43] (Spivak). As a comic artist, Kobabe uses comics as a creative methodology to illustrate and articulate many of the non-verbal embodied experiences that ey feels along eirs journey (Kobabe, 2019). For example, I draw on three specific comic drawings[44] Kobabe uses when explaining how ey felt when being wrongly gendered. The first drawing is of a red sneaker that has exaggerated action lines coming from the toe of the shoe. The text accompanying this drawing says "Getting called *she* feels like discovering a rock stuck in my shoe" (Kobabe, 2019, p.208). The second drawing is of an unworn blue t-shirt that has a tag sticking out with the same exaggerated action lines directed to the tag. The text aligned with this drawing says "Or getting scratched by the tag at the

[42] A memoir is "a narrative composed from personal experience" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
[43] To learn more about neopronouns visit: https://intercultural.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/Neopronouns-Explained-UNCG-Intercultural-Engagement.pdf
To learn more about why pronouns matter visit: https://intercultural.uncg.edu/why-pronouns-matter
[44] The rights to these comic images could not be obtained in order to include the photos within my MRP. To see the comics, please find them on page 206 within Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer: A Memoir.*

back of my shirt" (Kobabe, 2019, p.206). In the third drawing, Kobabe is wearing the previously mentioned blue shirt and it is very apparent through the drawing and facial expression, that ey is upset, uncomfortable, and bothered by the scratchy tag. The text with this drawing reads, "A small spike of solvable discomfort" (Kobabe, 2019, p.206). Kobabe explains that ey used these creative methodologies of comics and "metaphors of mild physical pain" in order to "articulate why I wanted new pronouns" (Kobabe, 2019, p.206). Even if the viewer hasn't experienced what Kobabe has, creative methodologies allow viewers to better understand how ey felt. Through the illustrations and creative descriptions, viewers can better relate, experience, and embody the imaginary sensations. More specifically, even just by looking at these three comics, the viewers can feel the mutually understood sensation and discomfort of stepping on a rock or the itchiness of a shift tag. For myself, my neck cringes and my feet scrunch up just thinking about the times a tag has annoyingly scratched me or a rock has caused me pain by being in my shoe. I am cis-gendered and go by she/her pronouns, so I do not have the same experiences surrounding pronouns that Kobabe does. However, I *do* have similar experiences and understand the pain of itchy tags and rocks in shoes. Therefore, through my experiences and the use of illustrations as a creative methodology, I can indirectly relate to and better understand what Kobabe expresses about eirs experience with pronouns. By using a creative methodology, Kobabe is able to articulate to the viewers what ey is feeling, while also expressing a traumatic series of events ey went through. As the illustrations of Kobabe show, creative methodologies can be used in a variety of pedagogical ways to heal from trauma.

Healing for Mental Health Issues. Creative methodologies also have the pedagogical possibility to be used as tools for healing mental health issues. Creative methodologies allow researchers and participants to include mental health issues within research in more tangible

ways. Similar to trauma, mental health issues can also make experiences and memories suppressed, forgotten, or too difficult to speak about inside and outside of research. However, creative methodologies have innate abilities and directly engage with the senses which helps researchers and participants to heal and use mental health issues within research. As stated by Malchiodi, creative methodologies can "explore emotions and beliefs, reduce stress, resolve problems and conflicts, and enhance [people's] sense of well-being" (Malchiodi, 2003, p.ix). Creative methodologies allow researchers and participants to look at feelings, emotions, and mental health issues from a fresh perspective when answering research questions (Malchiodi, 2003, p.xii). Creative methodologies also directly engage with the senses, making them great ways to metaphorically, symbolically, and visually see into the artist's mind and mental state (Malchiodi, 2003, p.28). This allows researchers and participants to harness data from mental health issues in safe, healthy, innovative, and effective ways. Furthermore, emotions and feelings are often discouraged and shamed within settler-colonial education systems; however, creative methodologies validate the importance of emotions and mental health by including bodily experiences, emotions, and not just what can be seen (Cvetkovich, 2012). Thus, through their innate abilities, creative methodologies have the pedagogical possibility to allow mental health issues within research.

Creative methodologies also have the pedagogical possibility to include mental health issues within research while also actively healing. As explored by Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski, creative methodologies encourage people to engage in "critical expression", which combats mental health issues and "leads to more energy, excitement, and enthusiasm" (Nagoski and Nagoski, 2019, p.30). Creative methodologies offer healthy and safe processes to move through mental health issues by not only welcoming emotions but actively encouraging people to

deeply feel/express them (Nagoski and Nagoski, 2019, p.30). Creative methodologies acknowledge that healing is a process of emotions and that the way to work through them is by addressing and feeling them, not ignoring them. This means creative methodologies can be used as tools to allow for a psychological shift and emotional cycles to occur (Nagoski and Nagoski, 2019, p.32). Nagoski and Nagoski continue by stating that using creative methodologies as a way to heal mental health issues "increases creativity and learning, strengthen[ing] your capacity to cope with greater difficulties in the future and empower you to continue working toward goals that matter to you" (Nagoski and Nagoski, 2019, p.47). Therefore, as these examples show, creative methodologies can be used as pedagogical tools to heal from mental health issues.

To understand the healing possibilities of creative methodologies further, I will analyze Anne Cvetkovich's critical memoir titled, *Depression: A Public Feeling.* Cvetkovich uses a critical memoir as a creative methodology to heal, research, and successfully articulate her stories about depression. She states that creative methodologies, such as critical memoirs, are often "met with skepticism about [their] scholarly value" (Cvetkovich, 2012, p.16). However, she fights for their validation by stating that, "if I wrote about depression in the third person without saying anything about my personal experience of it, it [feels] like a key source of my thinking [is] missing" (Cvetkovich, 2012, p.17). In her critical memoir, Cvetkovich specifically focuses on depression and her journey with it. She describes that depression takes on the form of being stuck, at a dead end, and facing a blockage (Cvetkovich, 2012, p.20). She also talks about how, "depression lurks in a lot of different places", and it "can be hard to pin down as an identifiable phenomenon" (Cvetkovich, 2012, p.158). By embracing a critical memoir, Cvetkovich found that creativity allowed an elevated, critical, and self-reflective way to move around/through these difficult topics (Cvetkovich, 2012, p.22). Traditional formal 'academic'

essays often discourage personal opinions, first-person commentary, and self-reflection. 'Academic' research is seen as remaining absent of emotions or personal stories (Jaggar, 1989, p.151). This *so-called* 'academic' way of conducting research negates and ignores the *very* personal realities of depression (and other mental health issues) and the disabling powers it can hold over individuals, researchers, and participants. Cvetkovich acknowledges the reality that her work will be discredited by many for using a memoir/creative methodology, yet, she actively fights against these held opinions by using it anyways. As a result of using a creative methodology to work through her depression, she provides a clear example of how memoirs/creative methodologies can be used for effective research. By utilizing creative methodologies, such as Cvetkovich and her critical memoir, researchers and participants have the ability to heal from mental health issues, collect data on mental health issues, and access data on mental health issues that traditional forms may not be able to fully access.

Decolonizing: Pedagogy, the Definition of 'Academic', and Residential School Ideologies

Decolonizing Pedagogy. Another main objective of my research is to explore the pedagogical abilities creative methodologies have to help decolonize pedagogy. For my research, I am specifically focusing on settler-colonial education systems which is important to distinguish. As previously addressed, the reason why I focus on settler-colonial education systems is because of their continuation of cultural violence, oppression, assimilation, and active denial of needing to decolonize. As stated by Marie Battiste, settler-colonial education systems were "created to maintain the identity, language, and culture of a colonial society" (Battiste, 2013, p.30). Settler-colonial systems perpetuate a false sense of domination by self-confirming their superiority and forcing violent assimilation on all non-European cultures and knowledge productions (Battiste, 2013, p.32). Moreover, as stated by Battiste, settler-colonial education

systems' "cognitive imperialism is about white-washing the mind as a result of forced assimilation, English education, Eurocentric humanities and sciences, and living in a Eurocentric context complete with media, books, laws, and values" (Battiste, 2013, p.26). As addressed further by Battiste, the settler-colonial education system are sites that were created to "sustain colonization in neo-colonial ways" in order to "domesticate and maintain domination" (Battiste, 2013, p.175). Therefore, as settler-colonial education systems are major sites of colonization, it is imperative to decolonize them through efforts such as creative methodologies.

Decolonizing the Definition of 'Academic'. To understand creative methodologies' pedagogical abilities to help decolonize, I explore how they dismantle settler-colonialism and its dichotomous definitions of 'academic'. When viewing what is considered 'academic', a dichotomy has been socially created by settler-colonial systems surrounding Eurocentric versus non-Eurocentric ways of knowing and learning. Eurocentric knowledge is seen as the logical, objective, universal, and white while non-Eurocentric knowledges are seen as irrational, creative, subjective, and non-white (Jaggar, 1989, p.151). This settler-colonial dichotomy perpetuates an idea that BIPOC knowledge productions need to be ignored, rejected, and assimilated (Battiste, 2013, p.32). As a result, settler-colonial education systems often do not accept creative methodologies, such as storytelling, traditional dances, woodcarvings, and beadwork which are inherently a part of BIPOC culture (Battiste, 2013, p.14). Contradictory to the Eurocentric systems, Non-Eurocentric cultures are at the forefront of many creative methodologies and have a long-standing relationship accepting them as valid (Green, 2017, p.13). For example, as expressed by Battiste, many Indigenous knowledge productions are learned through respected elders, observations, storytelling, throat singing, dreams, visions, intuitions, spirituality, listening to the earth, emotions, and feelings just to name a few (Battiste, 2013, p.75). Battiste further

states that “Indigenous epistemology is holistic, acknowledging the interconnectedness of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of individuals with all living things and with the earth, the star world, and the universe” (Battiste, 2013, p.75). These cultural ways of knowing are not accepted by settler-colonial education systems, but, creative methodologies continue to fight for their validity. Creative methodologies and non-Eurocentric cultures have a long standing history together (many BIPOC were the ones who created them) and demand that settler-colonial systems accept multiple ways of producing knowledge (Vaart, et al., p. 25). Creative methodologies have innate abilities to bridge learning and knowledge across cultures accepting that each one is valid (Vaart et al., 2018, p.4). Creative methodologies challenge the traditional methods and ideologies that are held by settler-colonial systems with hopes of dismantling the constructed idea of what constitutes ‘academic’. Creative methodologies dismantle settler-colonial ways of viewing ‘academic’ by demanding that all cultural knowledge productions are valid and welcomed within academia.

Decolonizing Residential School Ideologies. When talking about education systems, it is imperative to address residential schools and Indigenous Peoples’ resilience through creative knowledge productions. In this section I attempt to give context on residential schools, however, there are no words that can do justice to explain the horrific, violent, and abusive acts that residential schools forced upon Indigenous Peoples. Residential schools deeply affected Indigenous Peoples in catastrophic amounts of ways. For the scope of my paper, however, I will *specifically* be focusing on the ways that residential schools affected Indigenous Peoples’ creative knowledge productions and particularly why creative methodologies need to be included within settler-colonial education systems.

I will first explore some ways that residential schools attempted to eradicate Indigenous Peoples' creative knowledge productions. Residential schools were created by the Canadian Government and the church to eradicate Indigenous Peoples, their culture, and their language by forced assimilation and genocide (Neeganagwedgin, 2021, p.19). Indigenous Peoples experienced horrifying amounts of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse within residential schools (Wilk, et al., 2017, p.2). Residential schools enforced ideologies that Indigenous Peoples' way of living were 'primitive' and inferior to European standards/society (Neeganagwedgin, 2021, p.19). Therefore, Indigenous creative knowledge productions, such as beadwork, traditional dance, woodcarving, throat singing, spirituality, cultural clothing, and all other cultural traditions were completely banished, shamed, and violently ripped away from Indigenous Peoples (Wilk, Maltby, & Cooke, 2017, p.2). The eradication of Indigenous Peoples' identity and creative knowledge productions was implemented on a massive scale. As stated by Wilk, Maltby, and Cooke "more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children [were forced to attend] the church-run schools between their establishment in the 1870s and the closure of the last school in the mid-1990s" (Wilk, Maltby, & Cooke, 2017, p.2). Indigenous Peoples were brutally taken away from their families, friends, community, and traditions to have European culture violently forced upon them (Wilk, et al., 2017, p.2). Many of the atrocities of residential school are still being discovered today, such as the unmarked graves of Indigenous Peoples that continue to be found. The horrific events of residential schools can be explored much deeper; however, these are just a few examples of how residential schools *specifically* attempted to eradicate Indigenous creative knowledge productions. By focusing on the attempted eradication of Indigenous Peoples' creative knowledge productions, I hope to show why creative methodologies are crucial to include within academia.

Although residential schools are now closed, many of the residential school ideologies are continued and maintained within settler-colonial education systems. As stated by Simpson:

> We (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) live with the ongoing trauma of the Indian Act, residential schools, day schools, sanatoriums, child welfare, and now an education system that refuses to acknowledge our culture, our knowledge, our histories, and experience (Simpson, 2017, p.5).

Even in contemporary times, settler-colonial education systems are still disregarding, undermining, and/or do not allow Indigenous knowledge within academia (Battiste, 2013, p.14). As stated by Tuck and Yang, Eurocentric academic systems are a constant reminder that colonial "violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler, but is reasserted each day of occupation" (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p.5). Although there are abundant examples, some of the ways that residential school ideologies are reproduced and maintained within contemporary settler-colonial education systems include: (a) A lack of Indigenous content, professors, and courses/mandatory courses offered (Neeganagwedgin, 2021, p.27); (b) settler-colonialism continuing to perpetuate itself as superior through racist, sexist, and white supremacist agendas (Neeganagwedgin, 2021, p.16); (c) educational professors and staff regarding BIPOC students as inferior which perpetuates white supremacist and hegemonic stereotypes (Neeganagwedgin, 2021, p.16); and (d) educational sources that lack Indigenous authors, viewpoints, languages, and/or are outdated (Neeganagwedgin, 2021, p.16). These few examples show that there are still many ways that residential schools' ideologies of imperialism, white supremacy, colonialism, and racism still continue within contemporary settler-colonial education systems.

To help dismantle residential schools' ideologies, it is imperative to acknowledge Indigenous Peoples' resilience and include their creative knowledge productions. Despite residential schools' violent and abusive attempts to eradicate Indigenous Peoples and their creative knowledge productions, Indigenous Peoples continue to resiliently produce and survive.

It is imperative to challenge the ways that settler-colonial education systems continue to disregard, undermine, and/or not allow Indigenous knowledge within academia (Battiste, 2013, p.14). By including creative methodologies, I also mean the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' creative knowledge productions – their knowledge, cultures, art, traditions, teachings, and practices. By including creative methodologies, it contradicts and dismantles residential schools' efforts, by welcoming, honouring, and validating the use of Indigenous creative methodologies. Thus, Indigenous Peoples' creative knowledge productions such as beadwork, traditional dance, woodcarving, throat singing, spirituality, cultural clothing, and all other cultural traditions would be seen and included as valid knowledge production.

With the inclusion of creative methodologies, it is also crucial to consider whose creative methodologies are being included. It is not enough to gain the inclusion of creative methodologies in settler-colonial education systems; there also needs to be critical discussions that Indigenous Peoples' and BIPOC's creative knowledge productions are at the forefront of this inclusion. Indigenous Peoples and BIPOC are at the forefront of many creative methodologies, yet are often disregarded and left out of pedagogy. A prime example of this is by looking at the art history canon. As discussed earlier, the art history canon consist of white men and excludes many, if not all, BIPOC and women (Nochlin, 1971, p.2). As a result, it is shown that colonial creative agendas are often problematically put at the forefront. Although I fight for creative methodologies to be included, it is crucial that the creative traditions, practices, artists, and techniques that are included are not just ones that originate or benefit whiteness or white individuals. If this occurred, it would simply perpetuate the harmful imperialist, white supremacist, and hegemonic agendas of settler-colonialism. Therefore, it is imperative and

critical that BIPOC creative traditions, practices, artists, and techniques be at the forefront of creative methodologies' inclusion.

Validity of Creative Methodologies

My research's objective is to also prove the validity of creative methodologies through their many pedagogical possibilities. Creative methodologies have offered significant contributions, yet, settler-colonial education systems still criticize their legitimacy and pedagogical importance. As previously mentioned in my research, Eurocentric knowledge is seen as the scientific, logical, objective, universal, and male, whereas subjects such as creative methodologies are seen as irrational, creative, subjective, and non-white (Jaggar, 1989, p.151). Creative methodologies are often valued as 'less than' the 'objective' and scientific methodologies within settler-colonial education systems (Leavy, 2015, p.7). Settler-colonial education systems have created this problematic dichotomy when regarding creative methodologies versus scientific methodologies. However, as stated by Leavy, both the arts and sciences "bear intrinsic similarities in their attempts to illuminate aspects of the human condition. Grounded in exploration, revelation, and representation, art and science work toward advancing human understanding" (Leavy, 2015, p.3). Nevertheless, theorists, researchers, and students can be discouraged and/or denied creative methodologies because of the deeply rooted beliefs perpetuated by settler-colonial education systems.

Research on creative methodologies is important as it shows the many pedagogical possibilities they have, solidifying their validity. Throughout my paper, I provide a variety of examples of creative methodologies and their pedagogical abilities. This research is essential as I aim to cause real change in how creative methodologies are regarded, reinforcing the importance to include them within education systems. Creative methodologies continue to prove their

validity in and out of education systems. As explored throughout this paper, creative methodologies are used to collect data, see data that was not included before, add fresh perspectives, allow multiple viewpoints, allow new ways to ask research questions, promote inclusivity, challenge oppressive and racist academic beliefs, and so much more. Creative methodologies also allow for alternate forms of communication, providing for a more rounded and holistic approach to presenting research (Malchiodi, 2003, p.ix). Creative methodologies also work against power relations giving the power to the researcher, artist, and viewer (Leavy, 2015, p.24). Creative methodologies also allow the research to be accessible to non-academic audiences. The provision of accessibility widens the audience range, creates a larger impact, and increases the likelihood of change happening. Creative methodologies also challenge the capitalist, colonialist, white supremacist, and hegemonic agendas that settler-colonial education systems hold. Taking into account the many creative methodologies that were spearheaded by BIPOC, creative methodologies also fight for the decolonization of education, knowledge, and pedagogy (Vaart et al., 2018, p.4). These are just a few examples of the pedagogical possibilities that creative methodologies have. However, creative methodologies continuously prove their validity in a multitude of ways, therefore, it is hard to encapsulate all of the endless pedagogical possibilities that creative methodologies offer. Nevertheless, my research explores a variety of examples to understand the endless pedagogical possibilities that creative methodologies have.

Conclusion

As explored extensively within my paper, creative methodologies are continuously proving their pedagogical possibilities. Creative methodologies are used to collect data, see data that was not included before, add fresh perspectives, allow multiple viewpoints, allow new ways to ask research questions, promote inclusivity, challenge oppressive and racist academic beliefs,

and so much more. Creative methodologies come in a variety of mediums (such as music, poems, craft, protest graffiti, and painting) which all have their own historical, political, and personal contexts to be harnessed. Furthermore, although they have many pedagogical possibilities, my paper explores some of the healing and decolonizing properties that creative methodologies offer. Through these properties, my research shows the pedagogical possibilities that creative methodologies have in regards to inclusivity, accessibility, racial inequalities, trauma, mental health issues, decolonizing pedagogy, decolonizing the definition of 'academic', and decolonizing residential school ideologies. My research fights for the inclusions of creative methodologies and shows that Indigenous, BIPOC, and other non-Eurocentric creative knowledge productions need to be at the forefront of this inclusion. To further show the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies I also include my own mixed media artworks: *What Were They Wearing?, Table Talk,* and *More Than Numbers.* By including these artworks, my goal is to provide a firsthand exploration of creative methodologies, how they can be used, and how they can be effective pedagogy.

As an activist, artist, musician, academic, researcher, and feminist, I am very passionate about exploring the pedagogical possibilities of creative methodologies to show their proven validity. By conducting research such as this MRP, my dream is that creativity, creative pathways, and creative methodologies be accepted and considered important within settler-colonial education systems. By providing an abundance of research, examples, and explanations I challenge the negative thoughts, beliefs, actions, and policies that settler-colonial education systems hold towards creative methodologies. Through my MRP, my goal is to create a world where creative methodologies – including Indigenous and other Non-Eurocentric knowledge productions – are welcome, honoured, and encouraged inside and outside of academia.

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