

(Un)Compromising/In Tension: Critical Pedagogy and the Academy

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Abstract

In asking about the experiences of professors embodying and enacting tools of critical pedagogy, this thesis seeks to explore strategies of resistance to the hegemony of neoliberalism in the Academy. This research focuses on the Canadian university as characterized by neoliberal logic and the hierarchical practices of capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism. By exploring the themes of neoliberalism, violence, tension, critical pedagogy, and anti-oppression, that are in turn rooted in personal testimony and lived experience of educators, this study seeks to challenge normative systems of knowledge production to expand and explore subjugated knowledges. What is at stake is developing strategies that may be cultivated and documented as critical pedagogical tools that work toward collective imaginings of resistance.

Acknowledgements

True to character I am writing my acknowledgments at the final hour. To the tune of R&B slow jams, exhaustion creeping through my sore fingers and back, I sip tea and beer and remember everything it took to get to this point. Ultimately, taking on graduate studies in Education and Women's Studies and writing a Master's thesis has been more about the process than the product.

As a student who often worked full-time throughout my full-time studies I am unable to detach my educational experiences in the Academy from (un)learning, growth, and challenges in my personal life. Every piece of learning took me on tangents that had to be controlled in this thesis: 'tape your research questions to every work space and remember to always return to them', I was reminded again and again. However, questioning inevitably uncovers further questions. One of the most important pieces of advice I received from a brilliant academic and friend, Alexis Shotwell, was to know that my thesis is not an extension of myself, but a small piece of interest and thus could never encompass the dynamism that I seek to embody.

This accomplishment has been strongly supported with the patience and care of my thesis supervisor, Lorna McLean, who has spent countless hours editing and reviewing draft after draft. To my committee members, Professors Nicholas Ng-A-Fook and Katherine Trevenen, who have supported this 'provocative' project from its inception. A special thank-you to KT who has – on more than one occasion – listened to me rant through tears of frustration and failure. The smallest words of praise, encouragement and gestures of support carry profound meaning for students struggling to make space for themselves in the Academy.

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As I continue on to another phase in my life I will carry with me the lessons, support, and love.

INTRODUCTION

Youths are passed through schools that don't teach, then forced to search for jobs that don't exist and finally left stranded in the street to stare at the glamorous lives advertised around them.

— Huey P. Newton

My first interactions with critical pedagogy came to me like ripples on an otherwise placid surface, as small interruptions in the monotony of formal schooling. These fleeting experiences contextualized and contained in caring conversations, a messy and beautiful art project, the intentional breaking down of hierarchy, the blunt challenge of homophobia in the high-school classroom. These moments sparked in me feelings of what I have come to relate to as teaching resistance, as reorganizing normative spaces, and opening up windows of imagination that lead to new ways of being. Argentinian feminist, and critical theorist Adriana Hernandez speaks of education as being at the heart of distributive and appropriative practices, while it is also at the heart of transformative struggle. My argument has expanded to assert that the only way to break free from the monotony of hegemonic reproductions is to start taking risks. This project has come to be about risks. Risks in (re)producing the harm of epistemic violence permeating the academy; risks of taking up the personal and political task of centering anti-oppression at the heart of one's work; risks to the self, to happiness, and well-being; risk to fail, and to what consequences? Inevitably I questioned myself ...why? Why take up tools of critical pedagogy within the academy?

In 2007, I was bored with, and angry at post-secondary education. I found learning happening in more organic and vibrant spaces – the community. It was a time of angst, of disregard for my academic trajectory – of the scripted happiness promised alongside a

neoliberal ideal – and the cultivation of (un)learning as a form of change. In the midst of this, I attended a lecture by prison abolitionist, former black panther, academic, activist, and revolutionary: Angela Davis. During question period she responded to a common query about activists working within the institution: ‘how do you negotiate upholding the institutions you are working to dismantle?’ I carry her response with me as a curt reminder to existing in tension with the status quo. She spoke about how we – as activists, revolutionaries, critical thinkers, and survivors – interact with the institutions we wish to dismantle in complex ways, and our work also functions to generate resistance. We can simultaneously wish to abolish the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) while providing services to prisoners through state sanctioned channels, just as we can work as activist-academics/critical educators wanting to dismantle the Academic Industrial Complex (AIC). Within the academy I have found that teaching, learning, dialogue, and experiential narratives generated to be disruptive of the status quo become a point of departure for creating alternative spaces, and alternative ways of being. Further pursuing this project has led to important challenges that stem from negotiating the never singular locations of identity; identities that exist in tension with structures they are simultaneously dismantling and upholding. Critical pedagogical practice and the actions of those that practice them (students and educators) generate insight into centering anti-oppression, anti-violence, and solidarity.

Research Questions

Conversations about the academy began for me while being located there, but steadily moved beyond those walls and connected with something much broader – matrices of oppression and power that structure our existences, and are purported through education. The construction of the academy as being a complex site of struggle, oppression and power,

and force of knowledge transmission lead to ongoing frustrations and questions. What training is taking place, and who challenges this knowledge acquisition that leads to further inequities, exploitation, and violence demanded by a neoliberal, settler-colonial, and ultimately white hetero-patriarchal capitalist society? The violence that exists obscurely through the academy has become the leviathan to this project, and the catalyst to resistance narratives. I locate these narratives in the active and creative existence of critical pedagogies, and those that wield these strategies. I am asking:

- What are the experiences of critical pedagogues enacting tools of activism, and resistance strategies in the academy?
- What strategies can be cultivated and documented as critical pedagogical tools that work toward our imaginings of resistance?

Indeed, what is at stake here is developing an understanding, and a set of pedagogical tools that fuse the relationship between theory and practice with a liberatory intent. As Henry Giroux (1992) asserts, pedagogy is capable of contesting dominant forms of knowledge production, and it ‘both contests and refigures the construction, presentation, and engagement of various forms of images, text, talk, and action [...] this results in the production of meaning, which informs cultural workers, teachers, and students’ (3). This thesis therefore inquires into the acts of contestation to better understand the processes and experiences in pedagogical acts of resistance.

Data Collection

For this thesis, I conducted three one-hour interviews with diverse professors at Universities in Canada, as well as relied on secondary sources. The professors’ identities are important to the discussion, and therefore I sought participants who fulfilled specific criteria, which

includes, but is not limited to: experience participating in organizing, community building and/or activism, identifying with some form of marginalization/exploitation (such as queer, racialized, indigenous, having a disability etc.). The professors interviewed are Anna, Adrian, and Njeri, who will be introduced in detail later on in this thesis. I further explore data collection, identity and how identities inform pedagogy in the methodology section and analysis, with emphasis on participants' self-identifying aspects of their own lived realities and pedagogical practices.

Violence in the Academy

Striking at the root of violence, I turn to feminist, anti-violence activist, and co-founder of INCITE! Women of Colour Against Violence, Andrea Smith (2011), in order to explore the narrative of white settler colonialism as an epistemological container that sets limits on our imaginations, infects the work that we do, and clouds our critical visions. In the context of the Academic Industrial Complex we may well ask if all education is violent? I take up this question in relation to the material and intellectual spaces existing within the academy, critical pedagogy, and in the subject of the critical pedagogue. I explore this narrative by highlighting broader contestations playing out within this project that turns to questions of tension and resistance within institutions we seek to abolish. There remains the skepticism in reclaiming the academy in pieces, as a whole, or at all. How might we make it a space for desire, liberation, transgression and self-actualization? And what role –what limits – do critical pedagogues play in such institutional, political and/or epistemological transformations? What does change mean in the mind/body of spatial dissidents that move over and between community and the academy? Do critical pedagogues seek legitimacy, and if so, is it counter to liberation when we have seen programs spun from social justice

movements become complacent or even active participants in the hegemonic oppressions of the academy?

Speaking about the Academic Industrial Complex, Andrea Smith (2011) addresses the question of violence and tensions:

We whine and complain about how racist [the academy] is. As if the only problem is a few racist administrators who need to be fired. And if we just convince them how great Ethnic Studies is, they'd just give us more money. But if we were actually to imagine a liberatory educational system would this be it? Professors, do we say, "Tenure was the most fun thing I've ever done, I wish I could do it again?" Do students say, "You know, I love it when I work really hard for my finals and then get a bad grade anyway, how empowering was that?" We don't even try to imagine building an alternative to the Academic Industrial Complex. We act as if the problem is that there is racism in the academy, not that the academy is structured by racism. And here's where we can learn from the Prison Industrial Complex. Is not that the organizing against the Prison Industrial Complex puts forth a model of abolition that doesn't just say that it's about tearing down prison walls now but it's about building alternatives that squeeze out the current system. Similarly, while we might have day jobs in the academic system, why can't we start building alternatives to this system, build the educational system that we would actually like to see that could then squeeze out the current system as it develops. So, for instance, when Arizona says something like they're going to ban Ethnic Studies, we think, "Oh no, there's not going to be Ethnic Studies because the State says so!" We presume the state owns Ethnic Studies and it actually can ban it. We don't say, "Uh, whatever, Arizona! Ethnic Studies is not a gift from the Academic Industrial Complex or from the state. It's a product of social movements for social justice, and as long as they exist there will be Ethnic Studies wherever and whenever we go." And did we ever really think Ethnic Studies was going to be legitimate in a white supremacist and settler colonialist academy? And if it ever did become legitimate, we would know we had failed in our task.

I have come to use her depiction of the Academic Industrial Complex as a sounding board for thinking about violence, legitimacy, complacency, resistance, and building alternatives.

Unfixing Knowledges and Clarifying Terms

I could not go forward without problematizing concepts and terms which are both personal, political, and read through my identities as well as the subjects informing this project.

Queering this project has become a task of unraveling the fabric underlying feminist theory,

and disrupting the ongoing reproduction of normativity in a process Christopher Walsh (1993) terms ‘unfixing knowledges’ (1). James Koschoreck et al (2010) describe how queer scholarship acknowledges perspectives on queerness as resistance and construction of a new way of life, ‘even as it seeks to gather the evidence that the heteronormative world order does violence to all persons living within it’ (10). This disruption stems as much from my personal connection, the troublemaker (Ahmed, 2010) as to the embodiment of a queer anti-authoritarian striving to be ‘unfuckwithable’ in the ongoing processes of (un)learning. Extending this narrative, queering is about speaking back to the regulatory structures that say we need binary systems to make sense of our selves: hetero-homo, male-female, teacher-student, us-them, and so on. In one sense, a queer pedagogy would imply not only an analysis of (sexual) difference(s), but of interrelated, broad-based pedagogical commitments to critical thinking, inquiry and expression, social equity, the development of more democratic institutional and pedagogical practices; the broadening of dialogical spheres of public exchange within and beyond the classroom as sites for engaged solidarities, and collective struggles (Spurlin, 2002: 10).

Drawing on William F. Pinar (1998) writing on identity politics, I bring in the complex and limited notions of identity. Pinar (1998) writes that ‘queer is not only queer; it is not identical within itself [...] There are, then, at least two forms of group identity. The first is affiliative, characterized by strategies of identification; the second is exclusionary, typified by strategies of disidentification’ (7). He continues to explain how ‘these two movements of identity formation seem to characterize the movements of that political and pedagogical subject formation called queer in North America at this time’ (7). The subversive acts of troubling normativity is developed reflexively, and interlaced throughout the project in the interest of making sense of identities, as well as the praxis driven task of

documenting pedagogical strategies. Queering this project also opens the door to putting in crisis what we know, and what is central, and flipping concepts upside down to better understand the complexities involved in our relation to, and interaction with multiple and conflicting sites of struggle within the academy, and ourselves.

Further to turning concepts upside down and questioning normativity, blogger, Spektra¹, wrote the online article “Straight Allies, White-Anti-racists, Male Feminists (and Other Labels that Mean Nothing to Me)”, which is a succinct piece on the use of labels and identities under the banner of activism/allyship. She explains, ‘I rarely introduce myself using labels; I tell stories, instead’ as a point of departure to problematize the use of labels as identity: white-antiracist, straight-ally, feminist men etc. She argues that as a society, we have become so ‘narrowly focused on the theoretical “*what*” at the expense of the practical “*how*” of creating change, we’ve forgotten that change happens primarily through our personal relationships, not just passionate rhetoric’. Thus, I construct the use of identity labels as inherently problematic in the pursuit of goals of unity, seeking to be solidaristic and sharing understandings. Spektra further describes her own route to coming to this understanding of labels:

So, despite starting off as an activist who was really excited about the concept of “allies”, as I’ve gotten older, I’ve found less use for words and definitions in social justice; labels like feminists, anti-sexists, radicals, allies etc. simply don’t mean much to me anymore. Though I certainly see these ideas/concepts as a way of connecting with others initially, ultimately, relationships that last aren’t sustained by *what* you are to each other, but *how* you treat each other.

Activism has a troubled history, and presence. Through dominant narratives, it can resemble an identity to be critiqued in the same breath as the word ‘ally’; as something that is

¹ Queer Nigerian Afrofeminist Writer and Media Activist. Social Entrepreneur Nurturing Principled Diaspora and Women's Philanthropy in Media and Tech. Self-Care and Self-Love Evangelist. Idealist Warrior Woman. Big Dreamer. Big Thinker. Big Doer,too. (<http://www.spectraspeaks.com>)

often taken up without negotiation or consent with a disenfranchised and exploited group.

Spectra explains further:

When someone fights for me, I want them to do so because they care about me as an individual – or as someone who reminds them of someone else that they care about – not just as some abstract theoretical concept. I’d rather that the “white allies”, the “straight allies”, the “male feminists” of the world do the work to build authentic relationships based on *real* love and respect, not just politically correct lexicon and rhetoric.

Thus, when engaging with anti-oppressive pedagogy that often interacts with activism and solidarity work I keep these challenges at the forefront of this work in order to mitigate the knee-jerk activist/academic tendency to rely on labels to explain a process.

On the subject of feminism, Jessica Yee (2011) illustrates her critique in stating that we are not equal when in the name of ‘feminism’, so-called ‘women’s only’ spaces are created and we get to police and regulate who qualifies as a ‘woman’ based on *their* interpretation (12). She further explains a point that resonates with me in trying to air out my laundry list of identities, or hearing others negotiate theirs:

I’m at a point in my activism where in many spaces I no longer feel comfortable saying I’m a feminist, full-stop, without adding a few words before or after, I say I’m a multi-racial indigenous two-spirit feminist. I say I’m a hip-hop feminist, a reproductive justice feminist. Like many people, I feel I’ve been burned out by the mainstream usage and representation of feminism and I’m not making any apologies for what I call myself, because I’m speaking the English language of the colonizer, and if it takes people a few extra words to give me my right to self-determination of what I want to be called in English, so be it. Being uncomfortable with this truth about feminism helps keep my fire alive to change it, and also helps me to not forget where we’ve really come from and where we’re really going. (13)

Some, like Andrea Carmen², may never identify as a feminist but instead assert not a rejection of feminism, but a redefinition that includes indigenous people and people of colour,

² Andrea Carmen is from the Yaqui nation, Executive Director of the International Indian Treaty Council and the first woman to ever be in this position. (<http://www.ushrnetwork.org/about-us/who-we-are/board/andrea-carmen>)

and a strong respect for the different ways we exist in the created world: ‘As long as there is mutual respect and all of our cultural and historic realities are brought into the mix, we can create cross-cultural human movements’ (18). In the section that follows, I present an overview of chapters. Throughout each chapter I keep in mind the work of deconstructing and questioning identities and labels.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter one is theoretical framework integrated in a literature review. This chapter presents an overview of the academy in terms of neoliberalism, the concept of subjectivity in relation to critical pedagogues, imagining resistance through critical pedagogy, and community struggle as the multiple locations informing my thesis. Chapter one acts as a sounding board for the entire project, and is reflected in the final chapter by using the same four locations as a point of departure for my analysis.

Chapter two structures this project by rooting the framework in feminist epistemology that relies on intersectional dialogue to illustrate how knowledge is constructed as valuable and legitimate – looking to problematize concepts of positivism, androcentrism and objectivity. This chapter centers the work of Leslie Brown and Susan Strega on anti-oppressive epistemology and subjugated knowledges as a centerpiece for this thesis, and lays the groundwork for my personal standpoint and reflexive process that are integrated throughout this thesis. Chapter two also includes a methodological framework paired with research methods outlining data production³, and the interview process, which draws on

³ I further explore the difference between ‘data production’ and ‘data collection’ drawing on the work of Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002).

feminist, and queer approaches to data production and critical discourse analysis. I also briefly discuss gaps in the literature, as well as the ethical framework of my thesis.

The central piece of this thesis will be presented in chapter three where I draw on three in depth interviews with critical pedagogues in conjunction with their course syllabi. This chapter mirrors chapter one in presentation, using locations of the academy, the critical pedagogue, and imagining resistance as narratives of analysis. This research concludes with a discussion on community struggle and pedagogy, and goes further to address the ongoing theme of (institutional) violence within the academy. This project is by no means all encompassing of the diverse experiences of critical pedagogy and community struggle, thus, I use the conclusion to address gaps in this research, and humbly hope that other folks take up research centering the work, experiences, and lessons of critical pedagogues.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Some of the most basic advice from my mentor regarding surviving and thriving in the academy was know the campus, know who's who, understand the governance, know how the system works, find your allies (sometimes in seemingly unlikely places—be open to seeing). Know your rights. Choose your battles, and only go to battle when you know you are going to win. (In other words, think it out. Prepare. Line everything up. Think ahead. Make the system work for you.)

- Inés Hernandez-Avila

Introduction

The following section will outline the theoretical framework for my thesis by presenting the academic disciplines and academic and community theorists that helped to ground my research in the relevant literature. As advocated for by Audre Lorde (1983), I use theory in a way that draws from and centres lived experiences, and considers these lived experiences as valid sources of knowledge. Similarly, I draw on Lorde's (1983) argument for the necessity

of discussing difference as a central part of feminist theory. Additionally, I take to heart what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) has pointed out elsewhere; that, despite the ways in which Western culture likes to imagine its own history, language, and theory as neutral and value-free, these practices carry (neo)colonialist assumptions that construct both Western subjects and its 'Others', and have and continue to be used in the service of imperialism (61). I therefore work to center voices that have been traditionally exploited by the academy, and further center community theorists that write from a standpoint of personal experience.

I will first summarize the literature which illustrates how post-secondary institutions in Canada are defined and shaped by the many manifestations of neoliberalism and are used as a means of disseminating state power. I will then move to literature that demonstrates how the critical pedagogue represents a location of tension, both reproducing and subverting the academy. Finally, I will present theory that imagines a critical pedagogy inherently tied to grassroots community struggle as potential tools of resistance to the harmful affects of neoliberalism, as well as describing strategies of change within the academy.

Intersectionality

Before discussing the role of neoliberalism in the shaping of the academy, however, I will first briefly outline feminist theories of intersectionality to emphasize the connections between my methodological and theoretical approaches, and then ground the approaches in feminist understandings of identity and experience. In the methodology section, I further this discussion by looking at partial knowledges, and here I begin by outlining my use of intersectionality as rooted in feminist and queer theory. Intersectionality strives to engage with the differences and complexities arising out of the converging feminist theories as well as to maintain the political impetus of feminism (Knapp, 2005: 254). In my introduction, I

deconstructed specific key terms used throughout this thesis (feminism and activism), and in the same vein I mobilized an intersectional analysis to further disrupt and queer this project as a means of challenging myself and readers to reflectively engage with experiences that are multifaceted and never singular. An integrated approach seeks to refute the compartmentalization and hierarchization of lived experiences through categories of gender, sex, class, race, status, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation, etc. Intersectional approaches move beyond simple recognition of the multiplicity of the systems of oppression functioning out of these categories, and postulate their interplay in the production and reproduction of social inequity, exploitation, and power (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; Brah and Phoenix, 2004). Disability theorist Robert McRuer reminds us that listing identities as a means of touching on experiences is a failed attempt at intersectionality and acknowledging difference (McRuer, 2006: viii). I appreciate McRuer's argument, and hope that the reader takes into account this challenge when we discuss experiences of critical pedagogues and voices/bodies in the academy. For example, while this thesis draws on some experience, it necessarily leaves out others (intentionally or unintentionally). Michael Berubé articulates the inevitability of incompleteness: 'the lines of inquiry that fail to attend to one thing or another – gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, age, historical context, nation, and ethnicity [...] inevitably *do* wind up producing an incomplete or partly skewed analysis of the world' (quoted in McRuer, 2006: viii). Intersectionality rooted in crip theory (looking at the intersections between able-bodiedness and queer theory) firmly questions how academia and society is organized and considers how and why academia and society are constructed and naturalized. Furthering this narrative, intersectionality deconstructs normativity by questioning how it is 'embedded in complex economic, social, and cultural relations; and how it might be changed' (McRuer, 2006: 2). The way in which McRuer

engages with visibility and invisibility (not as fixed attributes) in relation to changing economic, political, and cultural conditions, and compulsory heterosexuality and able-bodiedness⁴ represents a profound intervention to the discussion on critical pedagogy, and the work of critical pedagogues within the context of violence, and erasure of experience and identity in the academy. From this, we can look at the way in which the academy is structured and pedagogy is used to formulate value, hierarchy, and normativity; and, how critical pedagogy takes up the task of disrupting the academy. Intersectionality is therefore a means of looking at the never- singular- relationship between identities, experiences and the social, economic and political structures that up-hold, restrict, and interact with each other (Bilge, 2010: 58). Further, recognizing intersections within systems of oppression and power broadens the discussion of critical pedagogy within the academy, and provided me with footholds to mitigate the reproduction of oppressions in the analysis. Keeping intersectionality in mind, I move on to illustrate the Canadian academy as a location of intersecting experiences and tension.

A. Location 1: THE ACADEMY

Neoliberalism and Canadian Post-Secondary Education: happiness is social/economic capital

The section that follows looks at neoliberalism as one overarching theme of my thesis. Specifically, I will examine some of the ways in which neoliberalism has become one of the most pervasive and far-reaching ideologies of the twenty-first century: ‘its pervasiveness is evident not only by its unparalleled influence on the global economy but also in its power to

⁴ McRuer (2006) explains that ‘the system of compulsory able-bodiedness, which in a sense produces disability, is thoroughly interwoven with the system of compulsory heterosexuality that produces queerness: that, in fact, compulsory heterosexuality is contingent on compulsory able-bodiedness, and vice versa (2).

redefine the very nature of politics and sociality' (Giroux, 2006: 21). I continue to explore neoliberalism in the context of shaping the academy, and the actors involved in academia – professors, staff, students and community members. Drawing from anti-authoritarian intersectionality theory, I summarize the main tenets of neoliberalism shaping Canadian universities; namely, systems of oppression and exclusion that constitute a large part of the neoliberal logic permeating the academy and the hierarchical practices of capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism (Jeppesen and Nazar, 2012: 87).

Critical pedagogues conceptualize the academy as inherently framed by the hegemony of neoliberalism, which has transformed the landscape of the academy, and in turn places a hierarchy on which bodies/knowledge are most valued, and thus welcomed in to the academy. Giroux's (1992, 1997, 2003, 2006) work is deeply concerned with challenging institutional frameworks and shifting the language, values, and beliefs that get rationalized and achieve legitimacy in the academy. Similarly, hooks (2003) describes how progressive educators can challenge 'the way institutionalized systems of domination (race, sex, nationalist imperialism) have, since the origin of public education, used schooling to reinforce dominator values' (1). For example, as a disenfranchised student, Toronto-based writer, artist, and arts-educator Shaunga Tagore (2011) asks of the academy, 'why did you let me through the doors in the first place/if you were just gonna turn around and force me out?' (37). Her (poetry) slam on feminism in academia amplifies the voices of those who experience this ivory tower⁵ as a mechanism of silencing and de-legitimizing, and as a space that only seeks to push them out. In order to extend this discussion on who is meant to

⁵ Universities have often been conceptualized as meritocratic institutions and have occupied a special place in social imagery as Ivory Towers inhabited by scholars at liberty to pursue knowledge in a rigorous and critical way, enjoying the independence of means and mind (Acker, 1994: 125).

participate in academia, I explore characteristics of neoliberalism which encapsulate privatization within a global convergence of educational policy discourses and practices.

Drawing from Simon Springer (2012), this thesis defines neoliberalism in relation to multiple understandings, namely:

- 1) *Neoliberalism as an ideological hegemonic project:* This understanding maintains that elite actors and dominant groups organized around transnational class-based alliances have the capacity to project and circulate a coherent program of interpretations and images of the world onto others. This is not only subordination to particular coercive impositions, but also involves a degree of willing consent, (Springer, 2012: 137)⁶
- 2) *Neoliberalism as policy and program:* This frame of reference focuses on the transfer of ownership from the state or public holdings to the private sector or corporate interests, which necessarily involves a conceptual reworking of the meaning these categories hold. In the context of my thesis, the transfer takes in to consideration the shift from public to private funding for universities. The usual motifs under which such policy and program are advanced include privatization, deregulation, liberalization, depoliticization, and monetarism (Springer, 2012: 137) (see also Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Klepeis & Vance, 2003; Martinez & Garcia, 2000).
- 3) *Neoliberalism as governmentality:* This understanding denotes power as complex, yet is inherently tied to pedagogy in the academy by centering on knowledge production through the collection of strategies, technologies, rationalities, and techniques concerning the mentality of rule that allow for the de-centering of government (acting obscurely through institutions of knowledge creation) through the active role of auto-regulated or auto-correcting selves who facilitate ‘governance at a distance’ (Foucault, 1991). Consequently, internal dynamics of neoliberalism in this understanding are underpinned by an unquestioned ‘commonsense’ – as in, the institutionalization of normalcy. (Springer, 2012: 137)

Furthering the conversation on multiple understandings of neoliberalism, Smith (1999) describes the ‘neoliberalism-as-colonialism’ discourse, which is useful in engaging with an anti-colonial theoretical foundation. Drawing on anti-colonial narratives provides a global framework for looking at the impact of neoliberalism on community struggles, which in turn

⁶ (see also Cox, 2002; Duménil & Lévy, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Peet, 2002; Plehwe et al., 2006)

impacts knowledge production, as well as the operation of Canadian universities. Therefore, I examined current neoliberal trends within the Canadian academy such as limits to academic freedom and corporatization and privatization of the university, which are embedded in the subjectivity of critical pedagogues and – central to this thesis – create barriers to enacting a critical pedagogy that seeks to be transformative and anti-oppressive. Giroux (2006) warns us of a crisis facing critical pedagogy in this era of pervasive neoliberalism: ‘it is a crisis grounded in the now commonsense belief that education should be divorced from politics and that politics should be removed from the imperatives of democracy’ (22). While Giroux writes predominantly about the American context, he analyzes the wide reaching affects of neoliberalism globally.

Speaking directly to the Canadian context, the impact of neoliberalism on higher education is evident in actions of the state retreating from its historical obligation to provide (some) citizens with educational opportunities (Canadian Federation of Students, 2012). The gaps left by diminishing the public sector, and supplemented by the steady off-loading of the cost of higher education onto students and their families, students are graduating from an undergraduate degree in Canadian universities with the collective federal student debt at over fifteen billion (Canadian Federation of Students, 2012). Extending the conversation on the impact of neoliberalism on the Canadian academy, the President of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, James Turk (2008) describes how the above situation is further exacerbated by the ‘realpolitik of coping with underfunding, a society dominated by a market mentality, an increasingly interventionist state, and aggressive special interests determined to shape what the university is and does’ (13).

One of the ways in which neoliberalism affects critical pedagogy and critical engagement is the way that neoliberalism attacks academic freedom – an important principle

that protects researchers from censorship, termination and other institutional pressures. This trend towards limiting academic freedom can be seen in university financing, such as the April 2010 thirty-five million dollar donation from the Peter and Melanie Munk charitable foundation to fund the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto (Jeppesen and Nazar 2012: 87). In this example, Jeppesen and Nazar point to the source of Munk's capital, which is Barrick Gold, and highlight human rights abuses connected to their mining practices. Shifting from the public good to private/corporate sector, as Giroux asserts, as the only source of comprehensive investment, 'neoliberal ideology produces, legitimates, and exacerbates growing inequalities between the rich and the poor in both the North American context, and globally' (2006: 23). Moreover, I highlight the connection between specific tenets of neoliberalism in the academy such as corporate influence, privately funded education, rising tuition fees, rising class sizes, academic codes of conduct etc. as all acting together to limit critical engagement (Duggan, 2003: 3). Additionally, these many factors do not exist in isolation from one another; as such, neoliberalism shapes the university as a powerful system of knowledge production (Giroux, 2006: 23).

Horn (1999) argues that the role of the academy has shifted – most evident beginning in the 1990s – to serving corporate interests and models and public-private partnerships as government funding models shifted (336). These shifts in government funding are a global phenomena under the directive of international debt-brokering agencies or at the behest of ideological and corporate-linked governments whereby communities continue to deal with increasing trends of marketization and privatization of education (Davidson-Harden and Majhanovich, 2004: 264). Consequently, pursuit of higher education is defined in relation to societal values of success that center a neoliberal ideal of social mobility via educational capital and higher education as a ticket to advancement and self-fulfillment.

Meritocracy

The neoliberal paradigm of success persistently tells students to ‘pull themselves up by their bootstraps’, and cultivates a form of individualized meritocracy that represents real danger to engagement with, and sustainability of, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and anti-oppressive community struggle. Richard Jones and Bernadette Calafell (2012) explain that neoliberalism’s privileging of individualism and personal responsibility also influences notions of culture and identity (965). Within the academy, the neoliberal logic of individualized meritocracy contributes to the increasing diversification of higher education, connecting to deepening levels of institutional stratification, differentiation and selection, which is tied to the discourses of excellence, quality and the drive for institutions to be positioned as ‘world-class’ (Burke, 2013: 107). Consequently, individualism can have an impact on both access to the academy and notions of success in the academy, which are influenced by the fact that ‘when identity is seen as fixed, stable, and emanating from within an individual, it is much easier to blame that person for their problems’ (Jones and Calafell, 2012: 965).

Further building on notions of individualism, I draw on an example examining racism, white supremacy and white privilege as barriers to ‘success’ in the academy. In this example, individualism erases systemic and institutionalized oppressive practices by placing singular blame for issues with access and success. This ‘concealed’ racism can manifest in the classroom through students who deny the existence of racism, citing as proof that the United States has a black president (Jones and Calafell, 2012: 965). Moreover, this disguised racism ignores the complexity of the situation or larger social and cultural contexts, and substantiates a narrative of denying racism, replaced with an optimistic discourse about how

‘things were never really that bad, are not so bad now, and are only getting better’ (Ono, 2010: 227). These toxic meritocratic ideals cultivated by institutions and educators propose the notion that poor/disenfranchised/exploited/marginalized groups can snatch ourselves out of poverty by sheer willpower, and create a happiness script (see Ahmed, 2010) reliant on status, power, and social/economic capital as well as reinforcing the white, hetero-patriarchal standard as the epitome of success (Ahmed, 2010: 226).

Ahmed (2010) describes how the origins of political economy are premised on happiness, in which inequality becomes the measure of advancement and happiness:

In which the very perception of equality and equal opportunity as misery devices or leveling devices: a way of bringing down others (the mediocre and the miserable are conflated), of getting in the way of a happiness that is presumed by right to belong to those above (their happiness is naturalized as merit) [...] Redressing inequality thus already functions as a challenge to happiness and the terms of its appeal. (277)

Promises of happiness used as a tool of neoliberal meritocracy is important to deconstruct in the context of using critical pedagogy as a means of subverting neoliberal discourses (Giroux, 2006: 22). Adding to this conversation, Canadian student, writer and musician Megan Lee (2011) illustrates the complications and tensions taking root in her identities as a poor, multi-racial, queer, woman. She describes how during her university experience she and other students were taught to renounce their sense of identification with the poor, treating poor people as the ‘other’, and ultimately justifying having power over people (90). Lee (2011) describes how she was exposed to many conflicting ideas about university and class mobility, in that it was ‘the subject of envy, resentment and outright hatred. Some of the black kids on [her] block got called “white” for reading books; it made sense, since the educated professionals whose houses were cleaned and whose children were reared by lower-class people were mostly white’ (90). Lee speaks of being forced to choose between the indignity

of remaining poor, and the ethically repellant strategy of privilege-seeking. This ‘conflicted survival’ as she puts it, situates the university as a classist institution in terms of access⁷, and also in the sense that the very culture of the university enacts a homogenous set of classist values, including ‘dangerous delusions of meritocracy’ (91). Individualism cultivated via neoliberalism also positions students as individuals in constant competition with one another, and is a force that works against building communities and collective resistance in and beyond the academy. As the next section will demonstrate, further investigation into Canadian universities elaborates on the institution as characterized by specific tools of neoliberalism, such as privatization and barriers to access while keeping in mind the social and political function of the academy.

A Contemporary Look at Post-Secondary Education in Canada: Privatization, and Accessibility

Having defined and situated neoliberalism in relation to the contemporary academy, I will now further elaborate on this relationship by examining how neoliberalism results in privatization and accessibility within the academy. A clear example of this phenomenon of privatization is the fact that Canada’s post-secondary education system has become notably less public over the past three decades. Beginning in the 1980s, the federal government limited the increase in transfers to the provinces for PSE, effectively decreasing per-student funding (Canadian Federation of Students, 2012: 6). In 1995, the federal government made one of the most significant funding cuts in history by reducing transfers to the provinces for social programs by seven billion dollars. In every province, with the exception of Québec,

⁷ The term “access”, narrowly defined, is used to refer to participation in post-secondary institutions (universities and colleges). Expanding this term, I take in to account factors such as class, race, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and ability for the freedom to obtain and make use of Post-Secondary Education.

this funding cut has been passed on directly to students in the form of massive tuition fee increases (Canadian Federation of Students, 2012: 6). The resulting effect of these cuts pushed provinces to spend less on PSE, and led the way for a detrimental shift towards private funding as the main source of revenue for Canada's universities and colleges. Currently, post-secondary institutions rely largely on private sources of funding – primarily through tuition and ancillary fees – to cover operating costs⁸ (Canadian Federation of Students, 2012: 6). As James Turk (2008) from the Canadian Association of University Teachers notes, North American universities strive to characterize their fundamental purpose as serving the public good by preserving, transmitting, and advancing knowledge, and do so by enforcing institutional autonomy and academic freedom (11). Elaborating on the debate of universities as a means of knowledge production, while reflecting on higher education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Professor Clyde Barrow states that 'the corporate ideal as applied to the university was actually a class-political program designed to conquer ideological power' (quoted in Turk, 2008: 12). As we have seen, privatization of Canadian universities contributes to the neoliberal logic that solidifies barriers to access including class sizes, institutional codes of conduct, curriculum, grant systems, student debt, lack of student services, and systemic and structural oppressions that are fundamentally involved in the complex struggles within the academy.

With the role of the academy as linked to systemic and structural power/oppression in mind, I draw on Michele Foucault's (1971) work on institutional and state power as a

⁸ Nearly half of the operational funding for universities today comes from students themselves, with institutions like the University of Toronto receiving more from students than from the government (Canadian Federation of Students, 2011).

framework to investigate how neoliberalism further shapes the academy as an instrument of state power:

One knows [...] that the university and in a general way, all teaching systems, which appear simply to disseminate knowledge, are made to maintain a certain social class in power; and to exclude the instruments of power of another social class [...] It seems to me that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the workings of institutions, which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize and attack them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them⁹.

In this sense, Foucault presents the academy as being independent from the government (holding central power), but, as he argues, the academy plays a specific role in enacting state power and discipline – more explicitly carried out by institutions such as the police, and the army. The fact that the university maintains the pretense of being ‘neutral’ and ‘independent’ is something that we, as critical scholars, must question in terms of our location in the academy, and deconstruct within our engagement as students, teachers, researchers, and community actors. As I will present in the analysis section of my research, one of the ways in which critical pedagogues enact their pedagogy is to create opportunities for students to critically analyze the institution in an exercise of unmasking political violence.

Substantiating this activity as crucial, Foucault notes the inherent risk in *not* critiquing institutions such as these, and warns that power and violence will reconstitute itself through these seemingly neutral channels¹⁰. In agreement with this premise, Giroux (2006) urges educators to take up critical pedagogy that reflects that a commitment to education as ‘moral and political practice and a recognition that its value should be judged in terms of how it

⁹ Foucault power and institutions of knowledge production in a debate Human Nature and Power with Chomsky, 1971 (http://www.openculture.com/2011/10/chomsky-foucault_debate_1971.html)

¹⁰ Foucault power and institutions of knowledge production in a debate Human Nature and Power with Chomsky, 1971 (http://www.openculture.com/2011/10/chomsky-foucault_debate_1971.html)

prepares students to engage in a common struggle for deepening the possibilities of autonomy, critical thought, and a substantive democracy' (21). I use these constructions of neoliberalism to think about how the academy is situated as an institution of cultural transmission and the role that it plays within narratives of power, privilege, and resistance. I also use neoliberalism paired with articulations of subjectivity as self-hood – how we understand ourselves – and in articulating the tensions that exist in the subjectivities of actors within the academy, and more specifically critical pedagogues. I further explore the role of critical pedagogy as an intervention into neoliberalism by envisioning institutional reform and radical alternatives to the contemporary academy in the next section.

Radical Institutional Reform

As illustrated in the previous section, neoliberal logic shapes the academy, and in turn the encroachment of neoliberalism severely impedes on the development and employment of critical pedagogies. Cornel West (2004) argues that we need to analyze those forces shutting down democracy and at the same time, 'we also need to be very clear about the vision that lures us toward hope and the sources of that vision' (18). In the same tone, Canadian artist and critical educator dian marino (1997) laments that education is domesticating and more about skills acquisition than it is about liberation, tightly held in the restraints of capitalism. Drawing on these critiques, I amplify Lisa Duggan's (2003) compelling argument to the 'progressive-left' that in order to effectively target and dismantle neoliberalism, we must understand and examine its impacts.

Extending Duggan's narrative with an important anti-racist analysis that interrogates whiteness and white-privilege, Chandra Mohanty¹¹ (2003) addresses scholarship that connects pedagogical and curricular questions to those of governance, administration and educational policy. She urges activists, solidarity workers and resistance actors alike to take up community struggles and struggles within the academy with a critique of capitalism if we are to effectively generate profound transformation. Critical pedagogy then becomes a language of critique and of transformation. Challenging the politics of knowledge that 'naturalize global capitalism and business-as-usual in North American higher education' are central to the project of identifying and deconstructing neoliberalism while illustrating visions of change (Mohanty, 2003: 171).

Further reflecting on her experiences of struggle with the academy, Lee (2011) suggests that the fight for access to PSE also has to be 'a panoramic fight against poverty – against dehumanization, ghettos, exploitation, and fear. This fight needs to include anti-racist collectives, and radical immigration reform' (89). This fight also needs to fundamentally change universities from institutions that reinforce oppressive hierarchies to institutions that break down these power dynamics. In order to further this discussion, I frame the academy within a critique of neoliberalism while concurrently emphasizing the role critical pedagogy can play despite – and in spite of – the restrictions enforced by a neoliberal environment.

Normative and Transgressive Bodies/Spaces

¹¹ Chandra Mohanty (2003) highlights the urgency of feminist praxis and deconstructs notions of solidarity: in terms of agency, identity and commonality of struggle. She also asserts that the politics of knowledge (the politics behind a definition of group identity) and questions of voice, agency, and representation are anchored in multiple histories of struggle.

One of the ways in which neoliberalism permeates the academy is through administrative control of the usability of spaces through normative mechanisms which consequently enforces a dichotomy between normative body/spaces and transgressive body/spaces. The normative and transgressive dichotomy means using the status quo to order the academy, and to justify exclusions while restraining, limiting, and suffocating dissidence aimed at a vision of public, free, critical and social justice oriented education (Heald, 1992: 129). Giroux (2006) warns us that ‘while the prevailing discourse of neoliberalism seizes the public imagination, there is no vocabulary for progressive social change, democratically inspired visions, critical notions of social agency, or the kinds of institutions that expand the meaning and purpose of democratic public life’ (25). As Mario de Savo stated during the Berkeley Free Speech Movement (1964-65), ‘the university was the factory, the administrators were the bosses, students were the products and corporations were the buyers’ (Thompson, 1997: 180). The shortcoming with this analogy is that a product does not act, does not express agency or make demands or express opinions. Critical pedagogues can, and do. This critique is not to say that teachers are not products, however in the process of production (teaching and research), critical pedagogues take certain responsibility for their outcome.

With the aim of ‘unmasking’ political violence and suppression, I center Foucault’s (1980) assertion of the importance of drawing on subjugated knowledges, which have been excluded or trivialized within sites of struggle. Ultimately, redefinition means a refusal to reduce concepts of knowledge to that of skills transmission, and instead to expand on their engagement with pedagogy as political and transformative (Giroux, 1992: 2). As the data presented here suggest, struggles exist within and beyond the walls of the academy that develop partnerships of struggle and resistance with communities and transform experiences of actors within the academy. Mobilizing critical pedagogy opens up the possibility of

strengthening sites of alternative knowledge production that strive to deconstruct the hierarchies of patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism and seek out practices of equity, democracy, accountability and anti-oppression.

B. LOCATION 2: THE CRITICAL PEDAGOGUE AND LOCATIONS OF TENSION

We need street fighters but we also need philosophers. We also need poets and artists, mechanics and trumpet players. Whatever you do, do it well and do it with an eye to a better world. Nearly every act can be an emancipatory one—whatever it is that you're doing, it can make a difference to someone and it makes a big difference to those of us who too often feel like we're alone in this fight

- Student, activist, academic

To illustrate how tensions play out in the arena of academia, the following section names the impacts on transgressive bodies/spaces of control mechanisms that support normative body/spaces by political and governing powers; and, looks at how transgressive bodies interact with these spaces as a form of resistance enhanced, and enabled through the resourcefulness of critical pedagogy. This framework offers a counterpoint to the pervasive neoliberal rhetoric offered up by politicians and policy makers, which is embedded in our institutions, and the dominant pedagogical practices of the academy.

Subjectivity of the Critical Pedagogue

The following section explores the tension existing in the subjectivities of the critical pedagogues placing emphasis on thinking of the social in terms of its locations: the demarcations of space and the confinement to, and movement between, such spaces. Fairn Herising (2005) illustrates locations using the term 'thresholds', which are places and locations that provoke questions of where: where an object is located, where a practice is done, and where a person is situated (127). One can also locate passageways between and

through locations. Looking at the pedagogical subject in terms of location, I engage with the multiplicities of where locations can connect and move questions of ‘where’ through interactions of who and why. This discussion of locations occupied by critical pedagogues extends to examine specific relations of influence that intersect with the thresholds of location, and probes how we shape and are shaped by our locations (128). This conceptualization of locations is useful in defining the overarching experience of the critical in tension with both (re)producing and subverting the academy. Extending this narrative Anthony Giddens (1998) argues that:

Structures only exist, in so far as they are invented and reproduced in the everyday practices of social agents who are themselves constituted by structures... Agency, therefore, may initiate change by altering that structure at the same time as it produces it (11).

For example, describing her experiences as an academic, racialized ‘other’, York University professor, critical scholar and activist, Himani Banerji (1991) conceptualizes the multiple, and conflicting sites within the academy by illuminating the university as embodying both a site of struggle and a site for the reproduction of power and privilege.

The framing of the university as existing as multiple locations and in tension is important when identifying how critical pedagogues engage with the academy as both reproducing dominant structures, and struggling to subvert them in their research, pedagogical practices and actions.

Keeping tension in mind, at the outset, I wish to dispel the false dichotomy of the academic/activist. In Chapter Three my research argues that – with few exceptions – almost all radical scholars and critical thinkers have experienced some form or another of intimidation, censorship or at the very least marginalization from their colleagues and governing forces within the academy (not to mention by their students or the broader public

as a whole). As we shall see, there is a monetary, emotional and psychological toll that is exerted upon the academic/activist subject. This tension becomes explicitly more evident in the struggle for transformative change within the academy and through the enactment of critical pedagogies. The academic/activist subject becomes vulnerable to punitive institutional mechanisms, and the violence of oppression where the costs exist at both a personal and professional level.

Extending this narrative, I draw on Judith Butler's (2009) work *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* in which she writes on war and torture in the U.S. wars in Iraq, and the role of the media in positioning lives as grievable or not. Butler (2009) asserts that all life is precarious due to humans social way of living (14). We are thus exposed and dependent on one another: on those we do not know, barely know, or have never met creating conditions in which we are precariously in the hands of one another (Butler, 2009: 3). Butler's exploration of which human life is valuable and grievable extends to consider the lives and experiences of those lives that are not deemed grievable – especially those marked by racism and violence – who often turn to governments and for protection, when it is these very state and national entities that these lives and demographics should be seeking protection from (Butler, 2009: 14). I extend this to look how critical pedagogues may have some shared conditions of precariousness (and exposure to violence) within the academy due to their social, political, and pedagogical dis/positions, as well as different conditions of precariousness due to their identities and lived experiences. For example, centering the narratives of critical pedagogues explores how some lives are deemed 'lose-able' and can be forfeited because of the frames that deem them already lost or forfeited.

To illustrate characteristics of the critical pedagogue I turn to Hernandez (1997), who describes experience as 'never seamless or totalized, but is always open to being re-imagined

within a broad socio-historical, geo-political and cultural framework that underscores the complexity and situatedness of places, relationships, and practices' (xi). The subject exerting a feminist pedagogy of difference (hooks, 2003) is one who validates subjectivity and agency, wherein agency is used in the service of a critique of global hegemony. Crocco et al (1999) speak to subjectivity as a 'fluid, often conflicted, and continually renegotiated sense of personal identity and agency' (2). In these cases, we see subjectivity play out as contested, (re)negotiated and in spaces of tension. Critical pedagogy enters as a dynamic force, as educators take up the task of becoming active subjects in pursuit of systemic and structural change.

Multiple Locations and Spatial Dissidents

To imagine structural change in the context of the academy, I looked to the spaces of the academy that play out in the classroom, the hallway, office spaces, online forums, community locations, as well as within pedagogues themselves. With a gendered lens, Crocco et al (1999) frame women as sites, which suggests that their lives embody cultural negotiations about gendered social arrangements that have deep and systemic ramifications for politics, economics, and all human institutions (7). I further develop this analysis by employing what Eadie (2003) terms *bodyscape*: 'a terrain of competing forces expressed through an arrangement of bodies across a segment of space, overlaid with imaginary mappings of what such a space means, and riven with the movements of bodies both disrupting and supporting such mappings' (75). I use this term to further explore how some spaces are more equipped for certain bodies than others, while deconstructing the normative feminist analysis that relies heavily on gender binaries to illustrate marginalization of women. It is important to further extend this narrative to include experiences of queer bodies, trans*,

gender-nonconforming bodies, (dis)abled bodies, and racialized bodies. For example, within the context of the corporate university and drawing on composition theory (in which composing is defined as the production of order and experienced as the opposite), McRuer (2006) argues for alternative, and multiple corporealities. He contends that re-centering our attention on the composing bodies in our classrooms can work to sustain a process of ‘decomposition’ – that is, a process that provides an ongoing critique of both the corporate models into which we, as students and teachers, are interpolated and the associated disciplinary compulsion to produce a specific, conditioned academic (149). In response to narratives of the conditioned academic, he argues for the ‘desirability of a loss of composure, since it is only in such a state that heteronormativity might be questioned or resisted and that new (queer/disabled) identities and communities might be imagined’ (149). In this vein, this thesis highlights how the intervention of a group with a new perspective on the bodyscape – such as critical pedagogues – may alter the usability of a space (Nast, 1998: 6).

To understand the relationship of normative body/space, as prescribed by the status quo and challenged by transformative transgressive body/spaces, I looked to critical pedagogues who interact with space in ways that resist the goals of the corporate university, and instead rework the use of space for the political purposes of transforming education, using what Freire terms a pedagogy of freedom. A pedagogue of freedom seeks to provide the classroom conditions to generate the knowledge, skills, and culture of questioning necessary for students to engage in critical dialogue with the past, to question authority (whether sacred or secular) and its effects and to engage with struggles of ongoing relations of power (Giroux, 2006: 28). Additionally, this critical pedagogue seeks to engage the classroom space in a way that prepares everyone involved ‘for what it means to be critical,

active citizens in the interrelated local, national, and global public spheres' (Giroux, 2006: 28).

Further to the illustration of the critical pedagogue as existing in tension and intervening in the academy, I employ the term *spatial dissidents*, which critical disability theorists describe as transgressive bodies that reconceptualise the use of space and map out new ways to engage and define spaces (Nast, 1998: 146). I employ this term to identify spaces that are cultivated by transgressive bodies as sites of dialogue and resistance. Onto transgressive bodies are written rejections: constraints, surveillance, and intersections of oppressions (racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, ageism etc.). It is out of these rejections that emerges a dissident engagement – active or otherwise – by existing as a transgressive body in a normative bodyscape. By this I mean that existing as a transgressive body can be a pedagogical experience in itself, and as my research in Chapter three shows, critical pedagogues draw on the self as text in order to highlight critical lessons in socio-political locations about power, privilege, oppression, and community struggle. It is important here to note the problematic nature of essentializing transgressive bodies through their relationship, spatial or otherwise, to certain locations. Yet, I argue that drawing attention to experiences within spaces, and asking not just who people are, but where people are, can be a tool to recognize the multiple and intersecting existences that interact with the academy, and identify points of intervention. For example, in documenting the stories of women activist-educators, Crocco et al (1999) argue:

The degree to which women's identities have served as contested terrain, defined and molded by a patriarchal ideology to sustain the needs of nation-states, economic systems, and male power, suggests the utility of an interpretive framework that highlights the culturally constructed nature of women's lives. (7)

Extending this narrative, I look at the lives of critical pedagogues, and argue that whether they exhibit agency at all depends in large measure on societal conditions as well as personal impetus.

How do we engage with agency and transgressive experiences of resistance? In a global context, Mohanty (2003) contends that it is by paying attention to, and theorizing the experiences of these communities – in particular of women and girls – that we expose capitalism as a system of debilitating sexism and racism and envision anti-capitalist resistance in a transformative way (232). This call to action brings us back to the central discussion of an academy and actors shaped by the neoliberal status quo, and begs the question of resistance, imagined and exercised through critical pedagogies.

Speaking to resistance and social change, Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2011) states that ‘there needs to be struggle in order to lay out a path to co-existence, and that the process of being uncomfortable is essential for non-indigenous peoples to move from being enemy, to adversary, to ally’ (11). This example extends to the uncomfortable¹² work that needs to be done by everyone if we are to change the course of the academy upholding the power structures generated by hundreds of years of colonization, genocide, and exclusion (12). This uncomfortable, yet necessary, work is further explored by looking at the transformative possibilities of critical pedagogy.

C. LOCATION 3: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

The following section explores the many manifestations of critical pedagogy, and how the practice intersects with queer theory and feminist theory with common goals of liberation,

¹² (un)learning, self-reflection, and learning to account for unearned privilege can be an uncomfortable process as it relies on a profound reorganization of power, active accountability, and space.

and transformative social change. This thesis draws on the work of Paolo Freire, bell hooks, and Henry Giroux, in developing a comprehensive understanding of critical pedagogy. I mobilize the term ‘critical pedagogy’ to refer to Marxist-influenced theories of education that seek both to de-legitimize forms of pedagogy that imitate and generate unjust social power relations and delineate forms of pedagogy that imitate and generate anti-oppressive, and equity-seeking social power relations. Critical pedagogy should be taken to refer to a variety of practices and not one orthodox methodology (Bizzell, 1991: 55). Moreover, I further develop my understanding of critical pedagogy by drawing on anti-oppressive theories rooted in the work of community theorists, as well as queer theory and pedagogy, which is an emerging field of scholarship.

bell hooks and Chandra Mohanty articulate transformative strategies and theories in the field of critical feminist pedagogy. hooks (2003) is explicit in her work that is positioned around pedagogies of liberation to confront indoctrination within the academy (1). Centering hooks’ pedagogical practices helps to ground this project in liberatory education stemming from Freirian pedagogy. Confrontation is a central piece to hooks’ practice, and a theme I will explore further in the analysis with a discussion on the concept of ‘usable power’ (Giroux 1988; hooks 1989) and the critical pedagogue. For example, hooks (1989) seeks a form of legitimate power in the classroom:

My classroom style is very confrontational. It is based on the assumption that many students will take courses from me who are afraid to assert themselves as critical thinkers, who are afraid to speak (especially students from oppressed and exploited groups) [...] The revolutionary hope that I bring to the classroom is that it will become a space where they can come to voice. Unlike the stereotypical feminist model that suggests women best come to voice in an atmosphere of safety (one in which we are all going to be kind and nurturing), I encourage students to work at coming to voice in an atmosphere where they may be afraid or see themselves at risk. The goal is to enable all students, not just an assertive few, to feel empowered in a rigorous, critical discussion. Many students find this pedagogy difficult, frightening,

and very demanding. They do not usually come away from my class talking about how much they enjoyed the experience. (53)

In this way a critical feminist pedagogy plays an important role in the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, provides an intervention into the academic world and engages students in processes of critical thinking and (un)learning. This is a pedagogy that brings dissident voices into the conventional disciplines to change the nature of academic discourse (hooks, 2003: 6). Similarly, Giroux (2011) firmly posits that a critical pedagogy, ‘demands a refusal from teachers, students, and parents to divorce education from both politics and social responsibility’ (160). As seen in this analysis, the pedagogical exercise of an uncompromising, unapologetic, intentional refusal provides the groundwork for methods, strategies and practices of feminist critical pedagogy.

Extending the discussion on strategies of critical pedagogy, hooks (1994) affirms a commitment to engaged pedagogy – wherein the approach to learning is through critical thinking that challenges notions of what rigorous academic teaching should be (203). To teach an engaged pedagogy means to provide opportunities for excitement, to move beyond accepted boundaries of what is considered legitimate knowledge by the institution/society, to interrogate biases in the curricula that reinscribe systems of domination (such as racism, sexism, colonialism), and to insist that everyone’s presence (and experience) is acknowledged (hooks, 1994: 203). This insistence is what I will focus on by unpacking engaged pedagogy and the ways in which this practice works to legitimize experiences – while acknowledging the challenges and inherent problems in a claim to incorporate *all* experience(s).

Queer Theory & Critical Pedagogy

Building on the incorporation of diverse experiences and subjugated voices, the following section explores the intersection between queer theory and critical pedagogy – both of which are grounded in critical theory. In doing so, I illustrate and interrogate important themes such as the student/teacher relationship, the role of identities in the classroom, the nature of disciplines and curriculum, and the connection between the classroom and the broader community. What is at stake here is developing a set of theoretical tools for pedagogical critique, and a set of practical tools for those doing pedagogical work. Queering pedagogy is a personal, and political task for me. It means seeking out queer theory and pedagogical practices to further the discussion on critical pedagogy as an intervention in the academy.

Mary Bryson and Suzanne De Castell (1993) define queer pedagogy as ‘a radical form of educative praxis implemented deliberately to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of “normalcy” in schooled subjects’ (285). I mobilize this notion of intervention in the production of normalcy as a tool in identifying neoliberal practices that enforce a normative agenda of meritocracy. The use of queer theory intertwined with critical pedagogy is intended to engage simultaneously with issues of sexuality, identity, difference, agency, voice, and pedagogy. I also consider queer pedagogy a form of praxis that deliberately interferes with the production of normalcy because, as Susanne Luhmann (1998) argues, it encourages us to confront and undermine the very process by which subjects may become normalized and others marginalized (144). Luhmann (1998) also provides a reminder to be self-reflective on the limitations of queer pedagogy, and other subversive practices, and to be wary of how these practices can produce normalization that is the heart of its critique of mainstream education (142). Maintaining self-reflection speaks directly to the theme of tension that underscores both the critical pedagogical subject, and the pedagogical practices with the academy.

Curriculum Studies

Furthering the discussion on critical pedagogy, the following section draws on curriculum studies in a way that takes in to account the politics involved in creation of curriculum at post secondary institutions in Canada. Curriculum here refers to the philosophy, approach, content and assessment implicit, and explicit in teaching and learning. This broad understanding of curriculum includes both formal and informal facets of schooling, including policy, textbooks, teachers' pedagogical choices, classroom activities and evaluations of student learning chosen or mandated by teachers (Pinto, 2012: 261). Additionally, I complicate the creation of curriculum with the personal experiences of critical pedagogues situated within the academy, and explore the tensions arising from adhering to standards and restrictions while enacting a critical pedagogy through the formal channels of the classroom. To inform my analysis of interviewee's syllabi and the interviews, I draw heavily from Michael Apple's work and the way in which he positions educational and curricular restructuring within neo-liberal and neo- conservative policies. I identify challenges and tensions arising from normative institutional structures alongside the personal, community, and political embodiments of critical pedagogy.

The framework in which I am imagining curriculum analysis at post-secondary institutions in Canada is neo-liberal. Within a neoliberal container, we see what Apple describes as 'economic modernizers who want educational policy to be centered around the economy, around performance objectives based on a closer connection between schooling and paid work' (2001: ii). This interpretation means that curriculum is strongly influenced by political objectives of neoliberalism, such as meritocracy and job acquisition.

Illuminating the connection of schooling and work I must stress the implication of ‘paid’ in connection to work, and the neoliberal patriarchal vision of the labour force, which overwhelmingly disregards the unpaid and often voluntary, community based work done in large part by women. So saying, when conceptualizing higher education as a ticket to employment within a neoliberal framework the value of employment depends largely on salary ranking, which is inherently patriarchal and posits a reductionist vision of value and labour (namely characterized by sexist/racist/classist tropes). Politically, the neoliberal/economic modernizers are in leadership, and frame schools and universities as connected to a marketplace, especially the global capitalist market, and the labour needs and processes of such a market (Apple, 2001: ii).

When building curriculum for post-secondary classrooms, Apple (2001) argues against the reductive nature of an economic focus that consequently renders invisible the important work being done involving critical thought, community building, and the development of self as tied to visions of a more just and equitable world. A critical approach must step away from single-issue theory and action. Furthering Lisa Duggan’s argument on the importance of knowing structures and systems that impact the ‘progressive left’ – critical pedagogues such as Apple (2001), advocates for accessibility, and the importance of ‘progressive texts [that do] not require that you read seven other books in order to understand them. Theory is absolutely crucial. But I am worried about over-theorization’ (vi). Critical theory plays a central role in the classroom of the critical pedagogue. Theory informs the pedagogy, the structure and content of the curriculum and the way in which (un)learning occurs.

All interviewees speak directly to their use of critical theory, which can more broadly be named ‘critical educational studies’, as fundamental in the classroom of the critical

pedagogue. Critical theory in this context also relates to Marxist and neo-Marxist pedagogy and includes pedagogy that is related to the Frankfurt school¹³. This thesis advocates for the use of critical theory in consciousness raising (Freire, 1970), deconstructing the systems that impact us (Duggan, 2003), and informing (un)learning processes in the classroom.

Furthering this conversation, Freire (1970) describes the concept of conscientization as simply ‘to make aware’ or ‘awakening of consciousness’ or ‘critical consciousness’ (27).

Freire (1970) further defines consciousness raising as: ‘the process by which men [sic], not as recipients, but as knowing subjects achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives, and of their capacity to transform that reality’ (27). In a way that is similar and different, hooks recalls the role consciousness raising played in the late 1960s and 1970s with feminist women, ‘largely white, [...] were radicalized by feminist consciousness raising’ to challenge patriarchy and ‘really began to demand changes in the curriculum so that it would no longer reflect gender biases’ (3).

The pedagogical tool of consciousness raising supports opportunities for the critical pedagogue to play a pivotal role in creating curricula that uses theory to illuminate systemic and structural dynamics related to power/privilege and exploitation/oppression. In this way, critical theory is mobilized to situate the institution, and the social, economic, and political locations of students and communities that are situated as independent and/or intersecting with the course material. Keeping in mind the argument for accessible theory, this thesis advocates for a pedagogy stemming from the critical pedagogues’ personal experiences and

¹³ The Frankfurt School, also known as the Institute of Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*), is a social and political philosophical movement of thought located in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. It is the original source of what is known as critical theory. The Institute was founded, thanks to a donation by Felix Weil in 1923, with the aim of developing Marxist studies in Germany. The Institute eventually generated a specific school of thought after 1933 when the Nazis forced it to close and move to the United States, where it found hospitality at Columbia University, New York (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/frankfur/>))

engagement with critical thought that seeks to illuminate subjectivities, and social inequities, and deconstructs the systems that impact society.

Hidden Curriculum of the Academy

The following section seeks to illuminate the structures and systems that impact the academy and the subjectivities playing out in the many of the locations there. To do so, it looks at the concept of hidden curriculum within post-secondary institutions in Canada. A hidden curriculum can be described as operating to connect values, dispositions, and social and behavioral expectations that are rewarded and expected to be learned and adopted by students (Jackson 1968). Laura Pinto (2012), in her study of Ontario curriculum, privatization and education policy, states in her analysis that ‘this privatization resulted in elitism, and a politicized and fragmented process that reified a culture of control’ (261). Writing on the hidden curriculum of citizenship education, Jacqueline Kennelly, and Kristina Llewellyn (2011) described the gendered ramifications of the neoliberal ideologies in the ‘common sense’ usage of contemporary rhetoric associated with citizenship. These same authors describe the implications of ‘often-hidden ideological effects, through a gender analysis of the inclusions and exclusions implied by the supposedly neutral language associated with the ‘active citizen’’ (898). Reinforced gendered normativity is just another example of the role hidden curriculum can play in upholding the goals of neoliberalism.

As I have presented in the previous sections, the goals of a hidden curriculum are reinforced through a neoliberal logic shaping the academy. Additional work on the hidden curriculum directly connects academic expectations to ‘maintaining race, class, and gender stratification within society’ (Apple, 1982; Anyon, 1980). Further to this discussion, Michael Apple (2001) offers the following: ‘the hidden curriculum is one way of talking

about the way in which cultural struggles and policies—people’s lives—are conditioned by an institution...’ (25). Apple continues to explain, ‘at universities the hidden curriculum must be brought to an overt level, it must be thought about, it must be talked through.... All of that should be brought to a level where people can participate in it, struggle over it, talk about it...’ (37). By mobilizing a critical pedagogy and invoking community knowledge in the academy I assert that we are able to negotiate/disrupt the hidden as well as the explicit curriculum.

D. LOCATION 4: IMAGINING RESISTANCE

It is going to take all of us to meet the challenges of our time, this collaborative conversation is just one of those seeds – Ai-Jen Poo, Research as Resistance Conference Barnard Institute for Research on Women “Expanding Feminism: Collaborations for Social Justice”, 2011

The following section is about a vision for transformative change both within systems of education and the broader society (as the two are not mutually exclusive). The literature draws on the radical imaginings and visions of critical pedagogues, and personal testimony from community theorists who seek to centre anti-oppressive practices and mobilize education and pedagogy as tools to undermine the devastating effects of neoliberalism. I am not proposing that systemic and structural oppression will no longer exist when education comprehensively mobilizes critical thought and transformative pedagogy. Rather, I am proposing that if enough people are given the tools to support one another and if enough people understand and practice solidarity, we can lessen the pain within our subversive spaces and become transformative. I am proposing education as a framework for change¹⁴.

Writing on the crisis in public education and the transformative role of critical pedagogy, Giroux (2006) explains that pedagogy is inherently political because it is

¹⁴ Rebecca Farr of Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA) in *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities* proposes that we organize to create such a world.

intertwined with power, ideologies, and agency; yet, as he states, this does not make pedagogy ‘by default propagandistic, closed, dogmatic, or uncritical of its own authority’ (28). With a belief in public education as a crucial arena to educate people on anti-oppression, freedom, social change, and to equip people with the tools to question authority and the insidiousness of ‘commonsense’ neoliberal rhetoric as the premise, then the task at hand for critical educators is enormous (Giroux, 2006: 29). Teachers must take on the responsibility of taking critical positions, connect their research and pedagogy to larger social issues, engage students in demanding social problems, and ultimately take up the challenge of generating new discourses and pedagogies for the purpose of subverting neoliberalism and cultivating resistance (Giroux, 2006: 29). In order to ‘recognize the complex, ambiguous and contradictory character of particular movements and struggles’ critical educators are urged to participate in community struggles by whatever means they can (Foley, 1999: 143). Similarly, Dardar and Mirón (2006) write about a call to action and look for critical pedagogy to provide direction and inspiration to struggle against the growing inequalities and difficulties that are facing society. They look to education as playing a key role in social change (7). Collective imagining of resistance stemming from critical education and cultivating a vision for social and political change must centre the most marginalized/exploited at the forefront to truly challenge structural and system inequities. In the section that follows, I present a discussion on the preservation of public education, informal educational arenas, and the importance of cultivating new spaces for critical engagement.

Imagining New Spaces

The section develops from a call to action for critical pedagogues to take a position of dissent and, in doing so, to challenge the attacks brought on by repressive historical forces, and contemporary neoliberalism (Giroux, 2006: 31). I draw directly from experiences of community activists who seek to transform their practices, and centre their reflection as candid lessons for critical pedagogues. In “Reclaiming Queer and Trans Safety” in *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence within Activist Communities*, Morgan Bassichis writes about institutional change. In 2007, Community United Against Violence (CUAV)¹⁵ began a phase of organizational transformation based on a shared recognition that the organization lacked effectiveness and cohesion (12). For purposes of restructuring and addressing systemic violence, CUAV began looking in to their organization and practices over the period of one year only to discover that ‘little did we know that the process would lead – and perhaps require – us to “fall apart” to reconsider some of the most basic assumptions underlying our work and our roles in it’ (Chen et al, 2011: 12). This reflection amplifies the type of dialogue that must be undertaken in spaces of resistance. Giroux (2006) describes the importance of pedagogical practices that connect language, culture, and identity to their relationship with broader physical and social spaces whereby pedagogy is rooted in the premise that it is not enough to teach students to detach from and deconstruct hegemonic ideas. They must also learn to actively and directly confront the threat of neoliberal hegemony (28).

I chose the example of CUAV because it is an organization that works against systems of violence and has named the tendency of resistance actors – I extend this to critical pedagogues – to reproduce harm. Additionally, the discussion taking place between CUAV

¹⁵ CUAV was founded in 1979, and is predominantly made up of, and serves, queer people of colour. Their work includes combating gender-based violence, promoting cultural competence in schools and criminal legal institutions.

workers focuses on organizational transformation and restructuring which, I argue, is a formative need for post-secondary education. These are conversations that ask difficult questions, and focus not only on dominant systems that affect us, but also how we reproduce these systems, and importantly what we can do about it. As my research shows in subsequent chapters, critical pedagogy can play a transformative role in facilitating and mediating difficult questions and processes of introspection.

A careful process of transformation asks critical questions of ourselves and of our educational spaces:

- What are we working towards?
- Are we striving for institutional change or transformation?
- How deep do we need to go in changing the institution/academy?
- What basic level of shared analysis and approach do we need along the way?
- How can we engage in processes of deep reflection while continuing to uphold teaching and academic/professional commitments?
- How can we simultaneously address the urgent need for healing, and the need for confronting the systemic conditions that create violence?
- How can we effectively push back on the state, institutional systems and violence given their scale, speed and impact on the academy?
- How do we negotiate backlash and painful mistakes that will challenge our credibility and capacity?
- How can we practice deeply the values of sustainability and accountability both inside and outside the academy that we are working toward in our communities?¹⁶

Imagining such resistances within the academy relies heavily on just that - imagination - as we have no roadmap, and few successful examples of strategies of sustained resistance and transformation. We must seek answers outside of the walls of the academy; we must seek them in our communities, from lived experiences, and organized resistance through social justice work. Bringing dissidence in to the academy may be one such tactic to subvert it. Existing as a marginalized actor within the academy may also be one way to subvert it.

¹⁶ CUAU asked these questions, and many more, of their organization when undergoing transformation.

Resistance in the academy takes many forms, but for critical pedagogues there are specific strategies and roles to be sought out and mobilized.

Borrowing from CUAV's 'Strategy for creating viable alternatives', I lay challenge to the violence that is exercised through the academy, and ask if critical pedagogues can take up the task of dismantling power, privilege and oppressions. We must ask ourselves if the following alternatives are viable, and if the lessons learned can fit a framework of pedagogical resistance within the academy:

- Supporting the wellness of individuals experiencing violence through support and healing
- Developing a leadership rooted in experience and in partnership with each-other to create a vibrant culture of safety and liberation
- Organizing our academic/activist communities into campaigns and alliances that challenge and transform power relations, including how resources and decision-making are distributed

Lessons learned from CUAV provide the following insight to the proposed struggles of critical pedagogues:

- Liberation is a collective process: recognizing intersectionality of issues, and the importance of working together to seek out change
- I've got your back: this includes actively engaging in support and accountability
- Many struggles, one movement: critical pedagogues can deepen participation in key local and national alliances and truly engage in praxis-oriented work by developing a mutually supportive relationship between community, activist, educators and academic spaces

- Recruitment: this requires a commitment to organizing, to training fellow educators in a core set of skills and frameworks for responding to, healing from, and preventing violence within the academy
- ‘Practice makes fabulous’: we are so often dealing with crisis that we don’t have time to reflect on our habitual responses. CUAV created a Safety Lab series to imagine and practice community based responses to violence through ongoing education. These can be held in conjunction with local organizations to build in grounded, non-shaming strategies to address harm and (un)learning. I strongly advocate for educators to adapt this model by partnering with community organizations to engage in education outside of the formal academy, but one that intersects with the academy in terms of spatial location, and participants
- Experience matters: there are many barriers that can affect full participation in social movements. For example, high rates of intimate, community and state violence that queer folks face and the barriers that violence can create to full participation in social movements. Educators must maintain a commitment to providing life-affirming support. As my research shows, this can look like providing resources, acting in solidarity with students, and addressing barriers head on
- Culture is a weapon: working with local groups and the power of creativity to ignite change

Safety labs: *These begin with a review of the common (often experienced as automative, defensive, or “knee jerk”) reactions to the act of challenging or harmful situations: **minimization** on one end (which can look like denial, silence, victim blaming), and **retaliation** on the other (which can look like punishment, isolation, shaming, vigilantism). Participants discuss how survival strategies can take care of us in the moment but have long term costs (such as damaged relationships, further harm, unchallenged community norms). Discussions assess the “middle path” that centered, grounded place called accountability, which is a practice of taking responsibility for our actions. Participants then use scenarios from lived experiences to practice each response, feeling out the difference between shaming, and non-shaming ways of relating to others who have harmed us or whom we have harmed. (Bassichis, 2011, p.18)*

Megan Lee (2010) takes up this project, and renews my passion for navigating tensions and seeking alternatives within, and beyond the academy. She encourages communities to work together to move past the question of what the academy is doing to us, and instead to start organizing around what we can do to the academy. We need to find ways to engage with the institution on our own terms, and to challenge the false binary of ‘professional’ or ‘qualified’

and the status of ‘unqualified’ (91). ‘We need to carry our roots with us, and not forget or whitewash where we come from’ (92). In doing so, we can challenge legitimacy, and amplify our voices in order to create spaces for those who come after us.

This chapter reviewed how, as critical social agents, we must imagine resistance, we must imagine possibilities for systemic and structural shifts, and we must imagine active/negotiated solidarity, and anti-oppression. With the academy constructed by the hegemony of neoliberalism which affects the role of the academy as well as the subjectivity of the pedagogues within, it is imperative for critical pedagogues to name, critique and connect these forces in order to subvert them. Finally, this chapter discussed how languages of democracy, anti-oppression, resistance, and transformation are difficult to achieve; yet, in seeking out these languages it is essential to centre grassroots community voices, and the voices of the most exploited in order to truly enact structural shifts. The chapter that follows examines my epistemological and methodological approach to this thesis. Chapter two extends the conversation developed in Chapter one and further explores the main themes of this thesis – neoliberalism, power, privilege, anti-oppression, and critical pedagogy in relation to data collection, participants, and analysis.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

A. EPISTEMOLOGY

Introduction

Epistemology is concerned with the relationship between knowledge and power, as well as the search for what constitutes authoritative knowledge or ‘true’ or ‘objective’ knowledge

(Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 151-152). The role of epistemology in this project is to provide a comprehensive critique of positivism, androcentrism, and objectivity. As Patti Lather (2009) contends, feminist research is ‘openly ideological, most feminist research assumes that ways of knowing are inherently culture bound and that researcher values permeate inquiry’ (91). So saying, advocating for the politically value-laden nature of feminist research also requires a specific methodological approach to issues of objectivity/subjectivity. This approach goes further than simply replacing objectivism with subjectivism. The methodological issue of objectivity/subjectivity relies on an epistemological grounding.

After deconstructing the ‘mainstream’ or normative hegemonic modes of knowledge creation, this epistemological framework provides an alternative approach which is rooted in dialogue and engaging with the ‘Other’ (Stanley and Wise, 1993). I do this by drawing on anti-oppressive epistemology, and difference-centered theories on race, gender, ability, class, and sexual orientation. I look at knowledge as not only understood as subjective and grounded in one’s lived experiences, but also conceived of as situated and subjugated (Brown and Strega, 2005: 66). Michel Foucault (1980) terms subjugated knowledges in relation to the development and institutionalization of ‘global and unitary knowledges’ that over time have come to suppress a whole set of knowledges and disqualify them as ‘beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity’ (82). Moreover, Foucault writes that privileging certain methods of science and unitary knowledges has led to the subjugation of previously established knowledge, and of community, local, and indigenous knowledge located at the margins of society. These subjugated knowledges have been exiled from the ‘legitimate domains of formal knowledge’ (White & Epston, 1990: 26). I present this section

as a dialogue among disciplines to engage in an interdisciplinary approach, while shedding light on the how feminist, anti-colonial, and queer epistemologies inform one another yet are certainly not uniform. One common connection derived from the disciplines is the task of seeking out subjugated voices that have been excluded or trivialized (Foucault, 1980), as legitimate forms of knowledge within the academy.

For my thesis, a sound epistemological framework seeks to legitimize experiences of interviewees, center subjugated voices (interviewees as well as in the literature) that deconstruct normative voices. In choosing an anti-oppressive epistemological framework, I interrogate knowledge, and power in highlighting tensions that exist; for example, by negotiating the voice and subjectivity of a queer, woman of colour interviewee who holds power in terms of class, and social/economic position within the academy.

Our experiences are some of the most valuable tools that we have and drawing on peripheral/dissident voices – combined with theory and practice – as educators, we can develop tools of resistance. Moreover, I make the case for centering anti-oppressive principles in extending the narrative to include solidarity work as a part of the ongoing (un)learning process in resistance to epistemological, structural, and systemic violence. Centering anti-oppressive principles is helpful in framing the epistemological approach as a dialogue that extends beyond the research process and continues to bring questions of ontology and epistemology into play by positioning them as necessary for any researcher seeking to work anti-oppressively (Brown and Strega, 2005: 3).

Personal Preparations for Research

Before engaging in this research, I underwent preliminary, intentional (informal) discussions with friends, colleagues, community members, and students. These included youth who are members of the marginalized communities I work with through my involvement with the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa's Young Women at Risk Program and acquaintances via networks at the University of Ottawa. Using writing, I also reflected on my experiences as a student and educator. Centering my question of anti-oppression, anti-violence, and critical pedagogical practices, I developed questions based on a need voiced by many to address epistemic violence that is perpetuated and (re)produced in academic and community spaces. Many folks I spoke with identified teaching practices, strategies of engaging with one another in an educational capacity – be it structured through post-secondary education or community workshops – as a way to address the (re)production of violence and oppression, by engaging in solidaristic, anti-oppressive, (un)learning pedagogies. I constantly struggle with the idea of giving back, of doing research that is supportive and identifies gaps in what links communities together, and that attempts to play some role (however minute) in reworking the fabric of communities of struggle to address the underlying pain of subversive spaces. I find that doing research is an often isolating and self-serving endeavor – a feeling enhanced by the structures of the Academic Industrial Complex. Thus, asking questions of myself, and of my communities, while being passionate about education pushed me to conduct research that was identified as a want, as a need, and as a tool that could be taken up by others as strategies that subvert the walls of the academy, and build connections with grassroots lives, and movements.

Objectivity: what qualifies as truth?

The work of Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (2005) has been a pillar in developing an anti-oppressive¹⁷ approach to research practices, in particular as a point of departure for the epistemological discussion, and namely their conceptualization of what qualifies as ‘truth’ in knowledge production with the intent to lay challenge to traditional and normative systems of education. A central principle of this project is to make space for exploited and subjugated voices. Brown and Strega (2005) define ‘marginalized’ as: the context to which those who routinely experience inequality, injustice and exploitation live their lives. Being marginalized refers not just to experiences of injustice or discrimination or lack of access to resources (6). However, I use the term exploitation drawing on a discussion brought by Robyn Maynard (2011):

Exploitation has always been a better term than ‘marginalization’, because where marginalization just means that people are pushed into, or exist already in, the margins of society, it doesn’t explain how or why. The process of marginalization isn’t intrinsic to the meaning of the word, and ‘margins’ seem to pre-exist, as a natural location for people to inhabit in a society. It seems like something that just accidentally happens, and needs to be fixed by pulling people into some kind of imaginary ‘centre,’ which I imagine is meant to be the middle class or something to that effect. It is a watered down description of the extreme hardships and daily violence experienced by those living in extreme poverty and facing the harshest realities of racism in our society, and it also disguises the reasons for why it takes place. [...] the ever-decreasing ability for the poor, racialized, and Indigenous to access the basic food and shelter needs that ‘marginalize’ people is not addressed and ‘marginalization’ seems to be a phenomenon that just is. The word ‘exploitation’ is clearer. The process of exploitation is inside of this word, it contains, in its definition, the fact that somebody is being exploited for the benefit of somebody else; it is describing a relationship. And this makes it easier to understand what is meant in stating that the status of racialized, Indigenous, and immigrant women today is structural. (115)

¹⁷ Anti-oppressive research is used as a catchall framework for engaging in intersectional approaches to research that draws from feminist, anti-colonial and – to some extent – queer disciplines.

A key point to highlight is the authors' insistence that this research push the edges of academic acceptability, not necessarily because I want to be accepted within the academy but in order to transform it (Brown and Strega, 2005: 5). This begs the question of what is knowledge (or what knowledge is of most worth), and who has the right to determine what is, or is not knowledge? Here I engage in a discussion on objectivity and neutrality, and make the case for a feminist, anti-colonial, and queer approach explored through an epistemology that informs my methodology and data production.

The point of departure for this discussion stems from Brown and Strega's (2005) critique that framing discourse about what constitutes knowledge within a positivist framework obscures crucial questions about how the development of knowledge is socially constructed and controlled, how knowledge is used, and whose interests knowledge serves (6). This illusion of neutrality or objectivity has come to be institutionalized within academia as the standard of assessment for 'good' and 'bad' research.

Objectivity: queer bias, or gay rigour?

Traditionally feminist research has denounced the androcentric nature of conventional objectivity (Ollivier and Tremblay, 2000: 45) and questioned notions of objectivity from a position that garners accountability and transparency in posing questions from the understanding that no research is neutral or objective. Therefore, feminist research looks for ways to mitigate bias from a position of accountability, and up-front honesty about our own socio-political locations and intent. This approach unites disciplines in opposition to those who would retrench positivism as the basis of research and practice, and instead explores transgressive possibilities (Brown and Strega, 2005: 6). In the context of this project, a feminist approach acknowledges that knowledge production has long been organized – as

have assessments of the ways of producing knowledge – so that only certain information, generated by certain people in certain ways, is accepted or can qualify as ‘truth’ (Brown and Strega, 2005: 6).

Many times throughout my academic experiences myself, or colleagues, have been accused of bias based on the argument that our own identities are inevitably leaking in to our analysis. This bias is almost always labeled as ‘feminist’ or ‘queer’ and the critique accusatory. Being a queer woman who identifies with feminism has become the location in which I am interrogated for tunnel vision in my analysis, and subsequently my methodology comes under exaggerated scrutiny. Instead of asking questions about power/privilege, and oppressions the academic critique is reduced to: ‘can you moderate your identities enough to do queer research in a way that does not invoke a queer bias formulated by your lived realities?’ A friend responded to this critique with the retort of replacing the offending ‘queer bias’ with the transparent and political intervention of ‘gay rigour’. This in itself feels like a disruption to methodologies, and contributes to what feminist, queer, and critical scholars advocate for: using standpoint, and reflection to insert oneself in the research while challenging objectivity in the process.

While feminist research has contributed the notion that research is gendered, and critical race theory has foregrounded issues of race (Brown and Strega, 2005: 8), indigenous research further challenges knowledge production and dissemination, rooted in a profound anti-colonial critique to highlight how indigenous knowledge has been silenced, discarded, and violently assimilated as a part of the colonial project of this country now known as

Canada¹⁸ (Dumbrill and Green, 2008: 489). In the context of a Eurocentric academy, disruption of normative knowledge systems is important, despite a commitment to diversity and inclusion, the academy continues to teach from a Eurocentric perspective in a way that perpetuates the colonization of not only Indigenous people and knowledges, but all other peoples and knowledge that falls outside the dominant European paradigm¹⁹ (Dumbrill and Green, 2008: 490). An epistemological approach that seeks to disrupt, should also seek to be solidaristic to exploited groups. In the following section, I speak to developing solidarity through research in the context of reflecting on privilege, power, and praxis.

Solidarity

There was no question for me about centering solidarity in the exploration of critical pedagogies, and experiences of critical pedagogues. Reworking privilege to contend for the enactment and mediation of power, locating the tensions of both reproducing power and oppression and working against it, while defining practical tools to be shared and cultivated demands a solidarity framework that actively takes into account difference. I turned to bell hooks and Chandra Mohanty who address notions of solidarity by mobilizing anti-racist critiques that engage in dialogue from a position within, and outside the academy. To further this discussion, I acknowledge the challenge to white feminists – and researchers – who have played a role in appropriating discourses for their own while abandoning the effort to construct a space for sisterhood (hooks, 1994) – a space for solidarities (Mohanty, 2003).

¹⁸ Traditionally known as Turtle Island.

¹⁹ Sir Ken Robinson explains that European schools are modeled along the interests of industrialism and in the image of it, while teaching and learning resembles a production line mentality. For example, separate disciplines, gendered facilities, youth grouped in batches by age as opposed to other important characteristics such as personal learning styles (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U>)

For example, citing Black feminist theory Stanley and Wise (1993) emphasize the colonizing role of ‘feminist theory’ – which is actually white feminist theory of white feminist experience – in replicating the dynamics of exclusion on grounds of race (224). Similarly, hooks has emphasized the epistemology achieved by the marginalization of black feminists within an implicitly white but rhetorically open and generic ‘feminism’ that contributes to subtle variances of racism (hooks in Stanley and Wise, 1993: 224).

I found that the best way for me, as a white, cis-gendered, queer woman, who seeks to be anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-oppressive has been to engage in these conversations via the connections I have with my community; self-reflection through self-education; and remaining active in struggles of liberation. Generally, seeking to be a decent human being. Connecting my ongoing lived experiences of (un)learning into academia is always a process marred by underlying insecurity of reproducing violence, silencing, misrepresentation, and failure. However, I have also found that self doubt is not only incredibly common, but also very useful in remaining attentive to the role of action throughout the research process, within my role in the academy and in my reflections as a researcher – this includes honest confrontations and challenges that extend beyond the marks I make on paper.

From Multiple Standpoints

A postcolonial feminist standpoint epistemology informs my approach as a location for discussion, and reflection as it has evolved in relation to my reflexivity and praxis. Standpoint generates space for discussion of the feminist/critical pedagogue subject, and their relation to the academy, and the tensions that play out in the ever-unsettling relationships that exist therein.

Sandra Harding (1987) developed key concepts of feminist standpoint epistemology

which strategically privileges the experiences of women as a vantage point for developing knowledge. As proposed by Harding (1987), feminist standpoint theories of knowledge focus on how social positioning shapes and limits what we can know:

A feminist standpoint, achieved through struggle both against male oppression and toward seeing the world through women's eyes, provides the possibility of more complete and less distorted understandings. Given the variety of women's experience in relation to culture, class, race, sexual orientation, etc., there are multiple feminist standpoints. Reliable knowledge claims, then, are those that arise out of the struggle against oppression, not in a way that romanticizes women's experiences but rather in a way that moves toward reflection on the conditions that make knowledge possible. (Lather, 2009: 93)

Thus standpoint argues that the (oppressed) women's vision in patriarchal settings has greater power and objectivity because of its subjugated status (Harding, 1986: 158). Patricia Hill Collins (1991) contributes to later re-workings of the idea of women's standpoints in order to account for differences among women (specifically experiences of white-supremacy and racism), while still privileging a gendered perspective. Building on the advances made by feminist reconsiderations of methods, and methodologies, I integrate queer theory and methodology in to this dialogue. I have argued against the use of labels as reductionist categorical thought and for queering standpoint from a position of inclusivity as opposed to essentialism to push this research and to rethink categories outside of and transcending dualisms (Hammers and Brown, 2004: 85). As argued by Hammers and Brown (2004) the 'the prolegomena of both feminisms and queer theory hold much potential in describing understandings of self brought about by social determinants and the individual's own construction of their reality' (86). Mobilizing epistemology in line with anti-oppressive tenets as outlined above challenges a universal understanding of feminist standpoint, and at the same time problematizes notions of identity politics or identity epistemology, and the dangerous possibility of essentialism.

Partial Knowledge

Black feminist, author, poet and activist, Alice Walker explains the concept of ‘unifying through immense diversity’ as a strategy to make space for disenfranchised groups to speak from their own standpoint, and to view and share truth as partial, situated knowledge that seeks to celebrate and centre difference (Hill Collins, 2000: 270). By furthering discussions on viewing knowledge and truth as partial, groups become more adept to consider other group’s standpoints ‘without relinquishing the uniqueness of its own standpoint or suppressing other groups partial perspectives’ (Hill Collins, 2000: 270). This standpoint of partial knowledge further enhances and strengthens notions of dialogue that contributes to perspectives that intersect and consider one another. These authors have addressed criticism of standpoint epistemology while continuing to identify their thoughts on knowledge as being part of this same epistemology. As a case in point, Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) associate knowledge from a feminist standpoint to describe knowledge that is always partial, in the sense of being not total as well as in the sense of being not impartial. I draw on the concept of partial knowledges to contribute to developing an epistemology that values the multiplicity of individual accounts, situated in different locations, and engaging in a shared conversation, as a narrative of reality. Diane Wolf (1996) provides a concise explanation:

This politics and epistemology is based on situating, location, and positioning, ‘where partiality and not universality’ is the basis for knowledge claims. ‘Situated knowledges’ are ‘marked knowledges’ that produce ‘maps of consciousness’ reflecting the various categories of gender, class, race, and nationality of the researcher. They reflect our locationality (historical, national, generational) and positionality (race, gender, class, nationality, sexuality), acknowledging how the dynamics of where we are always affects our viewpoint and the production of knowledge without privileging one particular position over another...Our positionality is not fixed, but relational, a “constantly moving context that constitutes our reality and the place from which values are interpreted and constructed” (Wolf in Geiger, 1990: 171).

As Haraway (1991) elaborates, feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, which allows for a multiplicity of viewpoints (188). This perspective not only allows and encourages feminist researchers to bring their own particular location and position to the research, it makes it imperative for them to do so before any discussion of another's reality can be introduced (see Bhavnani, 1991:97-98). An approach that engages with partial knowledges encourages researchers to think in terms of multiple perspectives and 'mobile subjectivities, of forging collaborations and alliances and juxtaposing different viewpoints' (Wolf, 1996: 14-15).

In *Sounds of Breaking Silence* Janet Miller writes:

The dream is reoccurring: quiet is everywhere. It surrounds my classroom, saturates the halls of the building in which I teach. I wait with my students for the sound of our voices, horrified that we might scream in rage, trembling that we may never whisper. (Janet Miller, 2005: 61)

Building on narratives of partial knowledges, she describes this silence that contradicts the belief that herself or her students have overcome historical, social, cultural, economic, racial, gendered, and class constraints that 'have denied us the power to decide about curriculum and what counts as knowledge' (Miller, 2005: 61). She explores her multiple identities as a woman, a teacher, an academic, an educational researcher as shifting and changing social contexts so that her intellectual history and life history are intertwined to challenge any given norm. She uses autobiography as 'cultural critique and social change' (Miller, 2005: 50), and seeks to attend to 'gaps and silences in current constructions and uses of autobiography in education' (219). I ask what pedagogical scaffolding must be in place in order to build a space where silences may be broken. Miller (2005) speaks of a fear in unnatural silences (of voices that are dominated by the hegemonic norm), this concept of fear resonates strongly throughout this thesis in the sense that when the academy perpetuates unnatural silences and

the work critical pedagogy may do to encourage us to break silences. Thus, I place value on partial knowledges as a way to look at how knowledge contributes to the production of discourse, and how discourses affect material realities, and lived experiences within and interacting with the academy.

B: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Methodology in social research is broadly concerned with procedures for making knowledge valid, legitimate, and a source of authority (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 9). In this thesis, I propose methodological approaches that connect personal experience and theory to material and social realities with a framework informed primarily by feminist, anti-colonial, and queer methodologies. While I do not discount the value of mixed methods and quantitative studies, the goals and constraints of this project are better suited for a qualitative approach.

What follows is an anti-oppressive framework that further complicates feminist research methodologies – such as praxis oriented research, a commitment to reflexivity, and open ended research questions – folded in to, and drawing on, anti-colonial and queer methodologies that center experience, self-reflexivity, and praxis. In doing so, I seek to unfold narratives, stories, and personal strategies that are documented via experiential knowledge. Before outlining my participant recruitment, interview process and data analysis, I will briefly describe feminist approaches to interview-based methodology to ground my analytic method in the existing literature.

Theoretical Foundations

Subversive Research and Praxis

In this section I outline ways in which feminist research practices challenge the academy to deconstruct oppressive research practices and introduce social justice, anti-oppression and praxis into academic research. Sandra Harding (1987) writes: ‘for feminists it is moral and political rather than a scientific discussion that has served as a paradigm – though a problematic one – for rational discourse’ (12). Brown and Strega (2005) argue for research that centers social justice in both the research process and the research outcomes (1). The meaning I make is to connect my research to the broader project of social change through praxis – succinctly put, the point is to change the world, not only to study it. Further, I support the complex project of questioning and problematizing what it means to do research, as well as engaging in the project of centering subjugated knowledge(s). These explorations are certainly exciting, but working outside the boundaries of accepted research and academic norms is also difficult and challenging given the extent to which we have all internalized dominant ideas about what constitutes ‘good’ and ‘acceptable’ research (Brown and Strega, 2005: 2).

Brown and Strega (2005) make a compelling argument for making the components of a research project part of an emancipatory commitment – seeking to move beyond a critical social science towards establishing a position of resistance (9). However, without the ability to understand anti-oppressive approaches at the level of praxis, applying these approaches during the research process and deciphering to what extent they may contribute to social justice can be challenging. Yet, this methodological approach is central to the entire project in order to elaborate on the practical tools of critical pedagogy.

The following list acted as a checklist and reflection piece as the project unfolded:

- Makes contribution to individually and collectively changing the conditions of our lives and the lives of those on the margins;
- Challenges existing relations of dominance and subordination and offers a basis for political action;
- Challenges the hegemony of current research paradigms;
- Centres processes of reflexivity and self-reflexivity; and
- Acknowledges how our ‘invested positionality’ shapes our research approaches and understandings (Brown and Strega, 2005: 10).

I address these components of research outlined in this section by further examining concepts of power and oppression in the following section.

Narrative Productions

All methodologies carry with them assumptions that shape both how the information – ‘data’ – is gathered and the kinds of knowledge that are constructed by and through information gathering and analysis (Brown and Strega, 2005: 5).

I mobilized the following as feminist research tools:

- 1) Semi-structured interviews;
- 2) Critical discourse analysis; and
- 3) Embedded in the entire project – reflexivity and personal testimony.

I approached the interview process with the reminder from Hesse-Biber (2007) that it is not the type of interview, but rather the questions asked in the interview that makes it feminist. For example, feminist research is research that seeks to:

Get an understanding of women’s lives and those of other oppressed groups, research that promotes social justice and social change, and research that is mindful of the researcher-researched relationship and the power and authority imbued in the researcher’s role. (117)

This assertion also extends to the epistemological and methodological framework of the entire project. Pointing to feminist research methodology on interviews and testimony, I am

able to root my work in theory that validates the use of experience as a legitimate form of research within the academy.

For using semi-structured interviews, I was informed by Kimpson (2005) as she explains that her experience in conducting structured interviews made her wonder if she was imposing structure on the women's experience in an effort to make sense of it, especially with the analysis and exercising power as a researcher in oppressive ways (86). Some structure appeals to me in creating a framework to work from that addresses the power dynamics discussed earlier in this section, while allowing interviewees and myself room to navigate questions in a flexible way; such as, an adaptable flow of questions, the possibility of adding new questions during the interview, and providing the participant with choice and opportunity to take direction on themes that arise.

dian marino (1997) writes about her use of oral testimonies for making participatory research materials and reflects on coming to consider an oral voice for herself by transcribing interviews she has participated in (119). Paired with tools of reflexivity, I worked in my own voice throughout this project by documenting this thesis in a research journal as well as incorporating my own experiences within the analysis. I worked in reflexivity throughout the data collective and analysis by inserting text boxes within the thesis, as well as taking time to reflect on my experiences throughout the research process.

Reflexivity and Objectivity

In addition to the importance of positionality and power relations between interview participants, feminist methodology recognizes that all projects are motivated and influenced by personal and political experience and convictions, and that these positions are often influential in all stages of the research (Ollivier and Tremblay, 2000: 43-45; Stanley and

Wise, 1990: 23). With this premise, feminist methodology then argues for dialogue, negotiations, and transparency as a way of deconstructing power relations, and generating validity, rigour, and accountability as a part of the research process (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 11). The dialogue taking place within this thesis is a key characteristic of developing a reflexive process throughout the study. In this way, it is crucial to address notions of epistemic power and engage an anti-oppressive perspective throughout the process, including the analysis. In doing so, I address the ‘who benefits’ question in the search for, production of, and dissemination of knowledge in the academy. I approach this question of ‘benefits’ not from an economic perspective, but epistemologically and methodologically by exploring power and privilege, damages caused through pedagogies, and academic work that reproduces hegemonic systems while further marginalizing and rendering silent non-normative experiences. I provide further examples in my analysis, writing on experiences of critical pedagogues where they must cater to the hegemonic status of androcentric science, while denying their own experiences and epistemologies in the process. Regarding academic research, for example, activist Kim Crosby asks how information is taken from communities of poor folks, folks of colour and 'at-risk' youth. She explains that, ‘community members are rarely compensated individually or collectively and those who execute the study end up benefitting professionally, academically or personally from our strategies, our resilience and our wisdom’ (Crosby, 2013).

Following in this tradition of transparency and dialogue, this methodological approach addresses the widely noted trend for women’s studies scholars to make the obligatory pronouncements of their positioning into the analysis without ever actually contending with difference *in* the analysis (Lal, 1996: 197). To account for this concern, and also to satiate my creative side, I made use of text boxes intertwined with ‘traditional’

academic writing to allow for the incorporation of my voice, and personal reflection as one method of reflexivity throughout the project and developed hands-on exercises to provide practical and adaptable strategies for educators as a means of giving back. Echoing Harding's (1987) perspective that a careful enunciation of a feminist standpoint is something that is *achieved* through political struggle rather than by merely claiming it (185), I engaged with my experience(s) as well as personal testimony rooted in the literature by disrupting the steady flow of text. This perspective afforded opportunities for me to approach this project – and what comes after – with a careful intent for reflection, displacement of binaries, and commitment to action within and beyond the academy, paying close attention to how power and privilege shape research practices, and discourse.

Power Relations

Michel Foucault (1978) radically addresses how scholars conceptualize power, he argues: 'all knowledge is contextually bound and produced within a field of shifting power relations' (Leavy, 2007: 89). Similarly, Brown and Strega (2005) note that principles of anti-oppressive practices to research highlight the relationship between researcher and the 'researched' (3). In this vein, researchers may conduct interviews, interrogate texts and discourse, and unpack marks of power relations that are produced within, including hegemonic reproductions and silences (89).

Hesse-Biber and Yaiser's (2004) writing on strong objectivity in feminist methodology draw from Sandra Harding who coined the term to theorize the practice of placing the researcher on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge (55). Building on this term, 'strong objectivity' equates to strong reflexivity, which Harding explains as:

The process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how her social background, positionality, and assumptions affect the practice of research. The researcher is as much a product of society and its structures and institutions as the participants she is studying. One's own beliefs, backgrounds, and feelings become part of the process of knowledge construction. The process of explaining and interpreting the data draws upon the researcher's knowledge and understanding, both of which have been influenced by society and one's location within its social structures. (Harding cited in Hesse-Biber and Yaiser, 2004: 115).

Extending this conversation, I draw on the work of Angela Davis (1988), who states that:

'politics do not stand in polar opposition to our lives. Whether we desire it or not, they permeate our existence, insinuating themselves into the most private spaces of our lives'.

This can also be true of the research process. Thus, as a researcher I pay close attention to the ways in which power, privilege and oppression shape my subjectivity, the research process, and my analysis. I recognize the locations from which I am writing and work to integrate literature that engages with themes of power and generate space in the interview process and analysis that enters into discussions on these themes.

My Position as Researcher

In this thesis, an analysis of power relations must also take into account my positionality and location as the researcher. I enjoy a certain degree of control over the construction, analysis and dissemination of this project, and in this way I hold power in terms of how knowledge is produced. However, I feel it also necessary to highlight the relationship between myself and the interview participants situated within the academy. The research participants are professors who hold a significant amount of power in many ways, in particular, in processes of knowledge production. Addressing power in her classroom, one participant speaks to this process: 'I know it's not a safe space because I produce a particular kind of knowledge that they all have to either regurgitate back to me, or write it down in a particular way for me. I'm very conscious of the infrastructure of the classroom' (Anna). These relationships of

power influence the research process, and complicate the context of power that I hold.

The relationship between the participants and myself provides certain advantages, which allowed for what felt (speaking from my experience in the interview) as collaborative conversations. Information from the informants, background research on the interviewees, and personal reflection established the assumption prior to the interview that we hold commonalities in terms of an affinity for critical pedagogy, and the personal/political initiative of critical thinking. Conversations became personal and held sentiments of developing resistance narratives together. Ultimately, employing this methodology fit well with my ambition to empower resistance in a way that is tied to an analysis of power relations, and recognition of systemic oppressions and epistemic violence. The following section draws on these theoretical foundations to approach data collection and analysis firmly rooted in an anti-oppressive, praxis oriented approach.

Data Collection

Snowball Sampling and Participants' Recruitment

Furthering my previous discussion on centering social justice/marginalized experiences/critical pedagogy, I will elaborate on my data collection process and how this process incorporates feminist/critical pedagogical practices. Primary sources of data for this thesis are three separate one to two-hour interviews with individual professors working at universities in Canada. As mentioned in the introduction, the professors' identities are important to the analysis and discussions on pedagogy, and therefore I sought participants who fulfilled specific criteria.

The criteria for participant selection is as follows:

- 1) A professor with experience working in a women's/gender studies²⁰ department or institute within a university in Canada in order to achieve continuity and homogeneity within the interview group (Hesse-Biber, 2007: 117) .
- 2) The professor must be active in community engagement, activism, and/or social justice work outside of/overlapping with the university.
- 3) The professor must identify with marginalized/exploited communities (racialized, indigenous, trans, having disability, queer etc.).

I relied on snowball sampling as a method of participant recruitment; that is, using the social networks of educators to select interviewees. Browne (2003) explains that one way to gain initial contacts is to speak to personal networks, friends, and acquaintances (49). To do this, I spoke to professors and community members and noted which names (suggested interviewees) were repeated. Snowball sampling is strategically employed in order to address the study of more sensitive subjects – critical pedagogy and/or activism within the university – and to access harder- to- reach individuals. Here I define ‘harder- to- reach’ as critical pedagogues who fit the above criteria due to their marginalized identities and/or activist work. This snowball method of recruitment relies on the important element of participants sharing the characteristics under examination – social justice, community struggle, and critical pedagogy (Browne 2005: 48).

Given that this research is committed to engaging diverse voices on the themes of critical pedagogy and identity, it was important that the interviewees reflect a diversity of identity: racialization, sexuality, (dis)ability, gender, ethnicity, citizenship status etc. The

²⁰ Throughout this thesis I use the women's/gender studies as a generic term to signify a women's studies and gender studies programs at universities in Canada. I use 'women's/gender studies' broadly in order to maintain anonymity of participants as well as speak generally about disciplines that may carry a variation of names.

goals and objectives of this project render it necessary to account for difference and to seek out diverse voices, as well as to avoid essentializing experience or requiring interviewees to self-identify. To achieve this, I approached the selection of participants in the following ways:

- 1: Within the process of snowball sampling, I requested that my contacts reflect on questions of marginalization/exploitation, diversity and representation during the interview
- 2: When selecting interviewees, I took into account all the information given to me from my informants (the community members/academics who suggested potential participants) in combination with information I uncovered by doing background research on the potential interviewee. I did not ask personal questions surrounding identity, or make assumptions based on appearance, name, position etc.
- 3: Discussions of identity came up in the interviews through specific questions that sought to create space for self-identification. When such information was provided, I made note of personal identifiers and accounted for them as relevant to standpoint, experience and location. I also took up identity as a theme for theoretical discussion in the analysis. For example, Razack (1998) explains how identity markers have material and/or experiential consequences, and warns against universalism and strategic essentialism (168). Her arguments inform my methodological choices in terms of data collection, reflexivity, and analysis. Similarly, Hesse-Biber (2007) explains that, ‘the research and the researcher come together for an interview with different backgrounds in terms of gender, ethnicity, and sexual preference. Class status and other differences might also affect the flow and connection of the interview’ (139). This author goes on to argue for the need for researchers to pay attention to difference – between interviewer/interviewee and within the selection of interviewees – that might affect or define the interview situation, in order to acknowledge the impact of difference and

try to minimize any potential negative effects (139). I may share insider characteristics with the interviewees that helped in opening dialogue; concurrently, I exercised active reflexivity to account for differences that might not have been bridged. In the next section, I outline some specific logistical considerations that I put in place to reinforce a rigorous method of participant recruitment.

Logistics

To maintain confidentiality, all individuals and participants whom I asked to provide participant suggestions were asked to provide *multiple suggestions*. I then selected final participants based on my criteria. By asking for multiple suggestions as well as taking measures of anonymity in writing I mitigated the possibility that those involved in suggesting participants would be able to identify the interviewee in my final work.

To respect supervisory or trust-based relationships, I did not interview professors from the University of Ottawa as I have a significant history in activism on this campus and maintain a visible presence in my academic, activist and professional work. To address accessibility, I conducted interviews in person as well as on Skype so as to not limit my potential pool of interviewees and to address barriers such as travel, while at the same time maintain visual contact with the interviewees.

Selected Participants

Following the logistics outlined above, and with snowball sampling as my starting point, I then selected three interview participants. In this next section, I introduce the interviewees, drawing on their interview responses to further describe participant identities.

Participant one is Anna; she is a tenured professor within a gender studies department. Informants (community, and social network members I spoke with) described Anna as a critical pedagogue and an activist. Anna describes herself as a ‘queer woman’. Moreover, she explains that her body ‘sometimes gets read as non-white’ and as ‘the daughter of immigrants’. All of these identities informed the interview and her experiences as a critical pedagogue.

Participant two is Adrian. Adrian is a professor within a gender studies department and a subject area in the humanities. Informants described Adrian as a critical pedagogue and activist. He self identifies as ‘a trans person’, as well as ‘vehemently non-capitalist’. His identities strongly inform his work, research, and pedagogy.

Participant three is Njeri. Njeri is a professor within a gender studies department and a subject area in the humanities. Informants described Njeri as a radical pedagogue, a critical pedagogue, and a community activist and solidarity worker. Njeri self identifies as an ‘African woman’ who is ‘seeking to be decolonial’, as well as ‘staunchly anti-capitalist’ and ‘uncompromising’. Njeri speaks to her identities as strongly informing her work, and pedagogy. All of these participants fit the criteria I outlined above in seeking interviewees to fulfill my research goals.

Identity of participants was a central theme to the interview questions, and subsequent discussions. Below I outline my method of formulating interview questions and analysis of responses.

Interview Questions and Analysis

Prior to embarking on interviews, I followed advice from Hesse Biber and Leavy (2007) who encourage researchers to check effectiveness of research questions by conducting pilot

interviews (121). I undertook three pilot interviews with colleagues to review the questions and to test the approximate length and resulting data. Interview questions have been derived from the literature review and document analysis. The questions are open ended to facilitate a feminist method of interviewing, with a focus on the personal experiences of the interviewees. The questions I posed are as follows:

1. Tell me about identities that you carry with you such as, personal identities as well as identities that relate to your work as an academic/professor?
2. How would you describe your pedagogy?
3. Do you interact with community activist/organizers as a part of your work, and personal life? Does this inform your pedagogy?
4. Thinking in terms of practical tools, what pedagogical strategies do you use in your role as a professor, to intervene in, or challenge oppressions that may be reproduced by/in the academy?
5. I'd like to talk about the concepts of ally-ship & solidarity in the Academy (classroom, seminars, individual sessions, hallways etc.) do you engage with these concepts, do they inform your pedagogy?
6. In my research I have noted the possible tensions that exist within the critical pedagogue... can you speak to this sense of tension, and any specific examples of barriers to engaging in critical pedagogy?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

All questions were covered, however, the order of questions often shifted to adapt to the flow of conversation in the interview.

All interviews were audio recorded. The interview times were:

- 1) 1:36:56
- 2) 1:02:21
- 3) 52:04

I transcribed all recordings verbatim. Following the transcriptions, I began the analysis as follows.

Coding

The first part of my analysis included coding the transcriptions of my interviews. I approached coding using a deductive formulation of broad conceptual codes and inductively, deriving codes of data by drawing from the process outlined by Gillian Rose (2012):

- 1) Familiarize myself with texts;
- 2) Identify key themes (keywords, recurring images etc.);
- 3) Code these key words & images while going through all texts;
- 4) Make connections between and among key themes;
- 5) Return with different codes/interpretations;
- 6) Identify contradictions within the discourse; and
- 8) Reading for what is not seen or said (invisible as well as visible) (210).

Using my research questions, I have derived a series of concept-based codes noting also that codes are apt to overlap and data may be applicable to multiple codes at once: the Academy; identity; pedagogy; and community resistance. The process I used to generate these codes is as follows:

- I first read through each interview separately making notes on themes and emerging key words.
- I grouped key words together to create overhead themes.
- I went through the interviews and colour-coded responses to correspond with the themes.
- Finally, I matched up emerging themes with my preconceived themes, continued with my analysis and entered the interviews in conversation with my literature review.

The three main themes which emerged from this coding process were:

- 1) The Academy: this theme looks at how the interviewees framed the academy, and the words they used to describe the university.

- 2) Identity: this theme looks at the personal experiences, and self-identity of the critical pedagogue incorporating specific words the participants used to describe themselves and their experiences.
- 3) Pedagogy and community building: this theme looks at pedagogical tools used by the participants, as well as the connection between pedagogy and community social justice work.

The interview themes were both preconceived and emerged from the interviews based on the questions asked, and the direction the participant chose to go with our conversation. The responses remained in line with the preconceived themes so that I mirror the three-theme structure in my analysis. The analysis then seeks to perform a critical reading of the themes to draw meaning and argument from the data.

From my critical reading emerged key words such as: violence; solidarity; racism; anti-oppression; privilege; power; neoliberalism; tension; critical thinking; and Academic Industrial Complex. These key words play an important role in the analysis in response to my research questions seeking to uncover the ways in which critical pedagogues engage with, and frame the academy, and the self-described pedagogical tools that they use as strategies of resistance to the (re)production of oppressions with the academy.

Syllabi

Included in the analysis is the incorporation of participants' syllabi. After the interview I asked each of the participants to send me a recent (from the past 3 years) syllabus from a course of their choice, preferably a course that they felt was relevant to the interview. I applied the same methodology of coding and CDA to the participants' syllabi in order to locate key themes evident in the messages to students and curriculum content. The syllabi

were used as a supporting document to the interviews. By this I mean, participants often referenced their syllabi and curriculum in the interviews and therefore I matched up the interview content discussions of the course content with the relevant sections of the syllabi. For example, bringing in the syllabus in question to further illustrate a discussion on anti-oppression and the use of a solidarity statement in the syllabus.

Queering a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Having centered my own positionality and questions of reflexivity and objectivity as key to the analytic component of my research, I will now return to my method. Following the selection of participants, the interview process, the coding process, and the emergence of key themes from the transcribed interviews and the literature, I proceeded to a critical discourse analysis of these key themes. Retrieved data, i.e. key themes, were analyzed using a feminist and critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice, and focuses on the ways social and political domination are visible in text and talk (Gee, 1999: 9). I further adapted CDA to fit this project by queering feminist CDA – using components of a feminist CDA in tandem with queer theory and methodology. A queer feminist reading challenges the main theories of CDA to expand its project of elaborating a fundamentally political research method. The work of Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (2010) advocates for queering social science research. Likewise, I argue that queering feminist CDA allows for the further exploration of difference, as well as the contestation of rigid categories and binaries (235).

According to Kearins (1997), ‘Foucauldians seek to look beyond the manifest and obvious exercise of power, to ask how resistance and expressions of dissent have been minimized or even eliminated’ (7). Drawing on Foucault’s work on regimes of truth, I kept

in mind how the academy reproduces certain ‘normative’ discursive trends and how educational administration frames disciplinary power within teaching practices.

Critical Discourse Analysis: an outline

A leading scholar in discourse studies, Norman Fairclough (1995), advocates for the use of CDA as a sound method for critical research:

To systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practices, events and texts, and b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (135)

A main objective of CDA, Fairclough (1995) argues, is to examine how power and dominance are discursively produced and/or resisted in a variety of ways ‘through textual representations of gendered social practices, and through interactional strategies of talk’ (10).

Expanding on the main tenets and political project of CDA, Michelle M. Lazar (2005) adapts this research tool to incorporate a feminist analysis. A feminist CDA recognizes that language is political, and all language plays a role in our world, cultures and institutions (10). Lazar (2005) defines properties of a feminist CDA as ‘ways in which taken for granted social assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, perpetuated, negotiated and challenged’ (2). A carefully constructed feminist CDA provides me with the tools and opportunity to recognize, critique and examine ways in which gender, power and ideology play out in texts to produce discourse that ‘sustains a patriarchal social order through the systematic privileging of certain gender identities over others’ (5). Lazar (2005) uses specific categories of ‘men’ over ‘women’. I borrow from this framework and queer her approach to CDA by integrating queer theory on discourse and identity based on the anti-normative frameworks presented by Browne and Nash (2010) on queer methods and

methodologies. Queering the research is additionally supported by anti-normative, queer, and anti-oppressive theories presented within my theoretical framework. Lazar continues to be important to this project as her approach elucidates patriarchy as the dominant social order. My explicit objective in using CDA to analyze data is in line with a main tenet of feminist CDA, which is effective social transformation, specifically, in terms of gendered power structures and mobilizing praxis-oriented research (5).

Integrating queer theory into a feminist discourse analysis enriches the goals of locating anti-normatives and binary disruption in that queer theorizing can, ‘use forms of discourse and textual analysis to consider how power relations are constituted and maintained in the production of social and political meaning’ (Lazar, 2005: 6). Based on my analysis and literature review, I found it useful to question the tendency for feminist theorists to reproduce power within resistance texts by reinforcing a gender binary using categorically gendered subjects. Therefore, integrating queer methodology into this data analysis provides further tools to deconstruct when a resistance narrative may be supporting a normative project.

A discourse analysis allows for interrogating how language works, in particular, when it is mobilized with intent for political action. Furthermore, CDA relies on Foucauldian conceptualizations of power – power that is discursive in nature (Lazar, 2005: 9). CDA is in itself a political act, an intervention in the apparently natural flow of talk and text in institutional life that attempts to intervene in dominant narratives. Highly central to this project is the intention of CDA to generate agency among students, educators, and activists by developing tools that illustrate how texts represent the social and natural world; in particular, to demonstrate how texts position interests and generate the very relations of institutional power at work that we seek to challenge. For example, Sherene Razack (1998)

has explored how the liberal, humanist discourse of justice, rights and equality simultaneously masks and constructs relations of domination and subordination along lines of gender, racialization and class. Thus, my use of this analysis fits with my political commitment to destabilize authoritative discourses and illuminate relations of inequity, domination and subordination centered on pedagogy, and the experiences of the critical pedagogue.

Ethics

The ethical engagement draws on a feminist, praxis oriented, and anti-oppressive approach that emphasizes that the researcher bear responsibility for their politics and practices (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 12). This engagement is concerned not just with ‘truth,’ but also with how knowledge is produced and authorized. This approach provides a critique of conventional ethics codes in what Brown and Strega (2005) describe as ‘the institutionalization of positivist research frameworks in mandatory ethical review procedures’ as they critique the *Tri-council policy statement: ethical conduct for research involving humans* guidelines as having Eurocentric biases often conflicting with non-Euro understandings of relationships with community (4). As discussed in terms of ‘who benefits’ (see methodology and Appendix A), I agree with authors Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) who opine that any ethical discussion and engagement must consider responsibility for what knowledge is produced and how, and to center accountability to participants and communities involved/impacted by the research (14).

My methodology centers anti-oppressive, feminist, and queer research tools and practices. The methodology is complex, and sought to enter various disciplines in conversation with one another to set up an analysis that amplifies personal experiences of

critical pedagogues within spaces of tension. The analysis emerging from the methodology seeks to provide voice to critical pedagogy, and the ways in which we may learn from critical pedagogues to challenge the (re)production of oppressions with the academy, and to build new educational possibilities.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS

The following chapter presents four locations of analysis: the academy, the critical pedagogue, critical pedagogy, and resistance narratives/strategies. Within each location I draw on the experiences of the interviewees as the central source of analysis, and take seriously the narratives they/we produced. As indicated in the introduction, the main themes of this thesis are: neoliberalism, violence, tension, critical pedagogy, and anti-oppression. The themes resonate through my research questions, and in the participant responses as they are tied to: narratives of identities as presented by the interviewees (critical pedagogues); illustrated in discussions of the academy; and interlinked with examples and conversations about tools, strategies and restrictions of critical pedagogy.

A. LOCATION 1: THE ACADEMY

For those on the front lines of post-secondary education in Canada, the political and institutional challenges demand serious and sustained attention. Characterized by neoliberalism, and as an ideological state apparatus, the following section explores narratives of the academy described by interviewees as an inherently violent space that places a hierarchy on bodies and the knowledge that inhabits it. Furthering this narrative, the experiences of critical pedagogues in the academy envisions the space as existing in competing and overlapping tensions of reproducing power/privilege, and engagement in

liberatory struggle. The section that follows provides an overview of the academy as situated and complex, and a location in which critical pedagogues exist and enact their teaching.

The Academic Industrial Complex and a Neoliberal Project

It has become standard, according to one of my participants, to frame the academy in the context of neoliberalism, further substantiating the characterization of post-secondary education as the ‘Academic Industrial Complex’ (Anna). This atmosphere is due, in part, to the ways in which the university operates, ‘and has operated for the last quarter century under this neoliberal model where education is approached as an instrumental frame, and not necessarily as something that’s key to the development of self,’ stated Adrian. All participants interviewed contextualized their teaching, learning, research, struggle, and identity in relation to neoliberalism. Adrian elaborates on this point by explaining that the current model of the academy plays a role in creating competing tensions in the classroom, and ‘the fact that students don’t necessarily care’. He expands on this concern by describing the current atmosphere as ‘anti-intellectual’ and argues that many students approach education with a strong sense of entitlement, and ‘as a stepping stone to employment’ (Adrian). Drawing from Adrian’s Argument, I do not want to represent what he describes as ‘stepping stone to employment’ and ‘the development of self’ as mutually exclusive, however, what is key here is a critique of capitalism and neoliberalism placing a container on self-actualization and the goals of higher education. Andrea Smith (1996) supports the imperative to deconstruct the AIC with an anti-capitalist lens in arguing that we must deconstruct the logic of the academic industrial complex to see how it has trapped us in to thinking that we must choose between being a legitimate scholar and building healthy communities (141). Moreover, she argues that we must recognize the academy as being an

ideological state apparatus, further enhancing the tension experienced by critical pedagogues situated there (Smith, 1996: 141).

Anna builds on this narrative of tension in describing a shared anxiety among colleagues of participating in the academy while simultaneously struggling against the hegemony of knowledge production taking place where critical and anti-oppressive teaching is marginalized, delegitimized and relegated to specific programs where it is ‘appropriate’ to have these kinds of conversations²¹. She describes the shared concern that if one critical pedagogue decides to quit as a response to the perpetuation of violence and oppression they will only be replaced by someone who will not be transparent and critical about the ever-present tension: ‘or talk about social justice issues, or teach [students] about white supremacy, or other systems of oppression, so I might as well stay in. I might as well continue being here, it is not a good strategy to leave, to quit [...] I don’t know what the best strategy is’. In fact, this sense of hopelessness for any structural shift in the academy is prevalent with all the professors whom I interviewed. ‘I don’t know. I have no faith in academics right now’ says Njeri, while Anna expresses feeling drowned out: ‘I always feel like no one is listening [...] I always feel like why am I doing all of this work, because no one cares, it’s pretty strong, the Academic Industrial Complex’. Adrian roots his critique in his disillusionment with the academy, and those in it, saying: ‘I feel like a lot of lip-service is paid to critical scholarship and politics’. I explore this sentiment as a poignant call to action for critical pedagogues to challenge the terms of debate within the academic system. As emphasized by Duggan (2003), we need a broad understanding of the neoliberal project in order to seize opportunities for resistance (3). Often a critical eye is turned to other

²¹ Anna is referring here to programs such as Women and Gender Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Interdisciplinary Studies.

institutions in society yet there is little to be said of the academy, which is situated as a neutral or benevolent institution that simply needs personnel changes or different policies and procedures. The point here, is that the actual structure of the academy is questioned — from tenure processes to grading systems to academic hierarchies— so that progressive and critical thinkers don't get trapped in the academy's meritocratic myth (Smith, 1966: 141). In response to the neoliberal structure of the academy, Duggan (2003) concludes that 'only an interconnected, analytically diverse, cross-fertilizing and expansive left can seize this moment to lead us elsewhere, to newly imagined possibilities' (xxii). This discussion is positioned as a critique of neoliberalism, the AIC, and the insidiousness of white supremacy as laying the stakes for success, and setting measurements of legitimacy. The section that follows further explores the ways in which participants discussed legitimacy and knowledge in the academy and the value placed on disciplines and programs that center lived experience as integral to informing rigorous scholarship.

(II) Legitimate Scholar(ship)

The following section looks at how the academy constructs and deconstructs what is positioned as legitimate knowledge (Njeri, Anna, Adrian). 'One of the pressures is that there is this notion that what we do isn't really scholarship' says Adrian.

As a women's studies student I can recall many times myself, or colleagues, have been mocked for our choice of discipline. More often than not by (male) business students, and engineering students. In an informal social setting, the conversation goes something like this:

Legitimate Scholar: Hi, what do you study?

Me: Women's Studies, what about you?

L.S: Oh... (awkward pause) I'm in engineering. I'll likely be making upwards of one hundred grand entry level when I graduate. What is it you do with an arts degree?

Me: ...

Adrian explains that this notion is reinforced from ‘more established disciplines’ that criticize work that centers ‘feelings’ or ‘personal experiences’, or ‘identity politics’ arguing that it is not really social science. Adrian’s reminder to students that their work ‘might be criticized by some or dismissed,’ is a warning to everyone taking up critical work in the academy that we must be on guard as our legitimacy is relentlessly questioned. This tension can be understood as both the material and the body being questioned and pinned up against normalcy, and what is considered valuable, based on the established hierarchy. This hierarchy not only excludes certain scholarship, but also works to further marginalize bodies whose experiences are rooted in this scholarship – if Queer Studies is illegitimate, then so is the queer student and teacher (Anna). Speaking on the growth of queer additions (in terms of professors, curriculum content, and research) to higher education, one author writes how queer scholars and practitioners described legitimacy via visibility within an accepted educational space as: ‘theoretically, exploration, dialogue, contestation, connection, empowerment, and ultimately acceptance would manifest. But first, we had to be in the space. Queer phenomena’s quantifiable increase and thus movement toward legitimacy in higher education came through quasi-institutionalization’ (Steward, 2007: 90). Thus, we must question how growth of specific programs (such as queer studies, indigenous studies, ethnic studies, women’s/gender studies etc.), which according to Daly (1990) transpire, in part, through assimilation, have affected the curriculum, content, and manifestations of these disciplines in the academy. Furthermore, Njeri reminds us that we must question the links

that exist between disciplines and the communities they seek to represent; ‘do they maintain grassroots connections to ongoing community struggle?’

Building on ways in which his discipline (humanities) can maintain a commitment to connecting education and politics/community struggle, Adrian explains that – ‘for the most part’ – he did not have much difficulty bringing critical literature and concepts in to the classroom, and it is in fact expected ‘to a certain degree’. Though his comment speaks to certain limitations of critical scholarship and a decided ‘acceptable’ amount and degree of critical engagement, in the context of the classroom, the limits of critical engagement are often delineated by action. Speaking about free, accessible post-secondary education or theorizing anti-colonial spaces may be acceptable, but mobilizing communities, changing policies, transforming pedagogy, altering physical structures of the university, or making space for diverse representations in decision making is seen as beyond the scope of academic possibility according to Anna. Furthering this discussion on community struggle and legitimacy, the following section explores the theme of violence and anti-oppression in the academy as experienced and discussed by participants.

Racism, Legitimacy and the Academy

The context of the following section explores violence and anti-oppression in the environment of racism in the academy, specifically looking at the experiences of Njeri as a professor and researcher. In a later section, Anna and Adrian lend voice to this conversation in speaking to pedagogical practices that seek to challenge white supremacy and oppression in their classrooms.

In *The Black Academic’s Guide to Winning Tenure Without Losing Your Soul*, Kerry Ann Rockquemore and Tracey Laszloffy (2008) narrative stories of racism as experienced by

black faculty members. In explaining how white students often critique the competency of black faculty as teachers, Rockquemore and Laszloffy describe how students ‘challenge their authority aggressively in the classroom, question their legitimacy as scholars, fail to show the most basic level of respect, and express overly familiar communication styles and greetings (as if interacting with a peer)’ (25). This hostility faced by black faculty differs ‘in both frequency and tenor from those experienced by white faculty and are grounded in a deep sense that a black faculty member must prove [their] competency in the classroom, as opposed to being given the benefit of the doubt that is so readily extended to white male faculty’ (25). During our conversation, Njeri provides an example of such an experience in a discussion with a student in her class ‘who has never showed up’. Njeri points out that the student is pregnant, and ‘I’m not trying to shit on women who are pregnant, and I’ve never been pregnant so I don’t know what she’s going through’; however, she has not made it to class for seven weeks. Njeri expresses that she is not trying to make it hard for this students, but decides to get in touch in order to discuss the feasibility of the student remaining in her class:

She comes to my office hours and I’m like can you stay in this class because I’m going to try and make it work for you, we’ll work it out. But instead of us talking so much about that she asked me, ‘oh! Where are you from?’ And I was like, ‘I’m from [a country in East Africa], its cool’ and she was like ‘oh you’re from [a country in East Africa], I didn’t know...’ Because basically she’s trying to say I speak good English, and I’m articulate, and I’m [...] you know, that’s how I’m going to take it. ‘Oh you’re accent is like, I wasn’t able to figure you out’. I’m going to take it as I speak good English because I hear that all the time, but that honestly Taiva that shit happens all the time. Right now I don’t want to cut anyone, before I wanted to cut people, but now I’m like, I’m just teaching this class and going, this is a temporary stop because ultimately, I don’t want to be engaged here.

Njeri further develops this conversation to look at the connection between other disciplines and legitimacy, and her experiences as a black woman professor in the academy. Using empire, colonization, and white-supremacy as the setting to this question, she describes an

experience of tension during her work as a teaching assistant trying to assert to the classroom of mostly male students ‘that their modes of [theorizing] are not the only valid mode of [theorizing] in the world’. She also notes that the conditions in which she is making this assertion are marred by the fact that the students are ‘located within a discipline that has absolutes’ and they are also ‘privileged as white men doing a degree’. Njeri is working in a context where there is an established hierarchy of knowledge, and of bodies inhabiting space, that is enforced by the normative standards of neoliberalism, sexism, colonialism, and white supremacy. To continue this example, Njeri describes an experience when a student takes issue with her critique of androcentricity within the discipline, and uses the power and privilege afforded to him to uphold this dominant knowledge system by appealing to a higher authority (the professor). The student then requests that Njeri not mark his paper ‘because he doesn’t think that I hold valuable his mode of [the discipline]’. Ultimately, Njeri responds to how she must address this issue to the course professor: ‘I’m like, you can mark his paper I don’t care, but I’m not here to validate that [this discipline] is only one mode of expression,’” and the professor replied, ‘no, in this class this is what you have to do’. Here we see a clear example of: a) her authority being undermined; b) the tension in which her pedagogy must prop-up knowledge systems that she is personally/politically opposes; and c) the perpetuation of violence, and the erasure of her experiences (along with many others) as a black woman in connection to modes of an established discipline within the academy. On the issue as to why her authority in the classroom was challenged in the first place, I look at the classroom as a normative space enacting standard hierarchical practices (the professor at the top and the students on the lower rungs). In this case, the contestation then is not independent from racism, sexism, and white supremacy just as it is firmly rooted in a prescribed notion of

authority (the professor over the T.A., or the white male student over the black woman T.A), and ‘correct’ mode of [the discipline] (androcentric).

Njeri brings up another example of her experiences in the academy that continues this conversation on legitimacy, and hierarchy of knowledge, as well as the authority that a privileged voice/body ascribes to knowledge. Njeri describes being required to read phenomenology²². She immediately questioned why this theory was presented as the most ‘radical notion’, and pointed out that it ‘gains legitimacy when it’s in a book by some French old man. Not when people are living every day within their bodies, and trust their bodies. Everything becomes legitimate when it is anchored in an institution that is a white capitalist institution, and [illegitimate] when it is not’. In this way, the institution plays a key role in legitimizing experience, while also deciding which experiences are more legitimate than others. It is of no surprise then, as Njeri states, that degrees are also hierarchized in terms of value, and legitimacy: ‘social work won’t be ranked as high as psychology but they’re still getting information from the same people’. For Njeri, the idea of legitimacy is unquestionably linked to the entire construction of academia, as a white, capitalist, hetero-patriarchal institution.

Further to this analysis of the academy, Njeri describes another example of the insidiousness of racism within institutional structures associated with academia:

Another experience was that I summarized my thesis [...] into an article and I submitted it to [a Canadian academic journal], it was interesting because of what their remarks were, [and] because of what happened. They said I forgot to look at one source, and they sent it to me and it was this sort of responsible minority discourse that was not as critical as the sources I used, and I was like, you know what lady if you don’t want to include my article that’s fine. And then I submitted it to another journal that was Black centered [...] and they’re going to take it. Nothing ever

²² Njeri describes phenomenology as ‘basically it says that people live with their body; all knowledge is contained in the body.’

changes; you have to create a space for yourself. Not that I'm saying my experiences are the same as African people who were in the Academy 30 years ago, but there are still these racisms that under guard the Academy and we shouldn't lie and say that we're fully welcomed here.

Njeri is speaking directly to who is welcome and unwelcome in the academy illustrating how academia can be a hostile space, specifically for black women.

In her article on surviving as Native scholars in the academy, Inés Hernández Avila (2003) describes how she has been 'knocked down many a time by the academy, by arrogant racist faculty who literally at times cannot even speak to me, who in committee meetings turn their backs on me, who cannot even begin to try to fathom what it is I do in Native American studies' (240). In the section that follows I discuss how neoliberalism exacerbates the logic of individualism by looking at themes of power/privilege and the goals of neoliberal logic in the academy.

Neoliberal Strategies: the enticement of hierarchy, salary, power and privilege

Call to mind the questions brought forward by the slam poet Shaunga Tagore. Who is welcome in the academy? During a workshop with community educator Kim Crosby²³ she explained that oppression and privilege were like a dam. If the dam held everything back the group of oppressed people would grow and swell, therefore, we should look at each other and recognize that we may all be oppressed in different and complex ways but we are all in a similar location. Eventually, she explained, we might work in solidarity with one another and the dam would break – but this is not how oppressive and privileged dams work. These dams let through streams of people, just enough for the people on the other side of the dam to think it is possible, and to fight against one another in hoping to achieve this ideal of

²³ A daughter of the diaspora, Arawak, West African, Indian and Dutch, hailing from Trinidad and living currently in Toronto, Kim Crosby is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist, activist, consultant, facilitator and educator (<http://kimkatrincrosby.squarespace.com>).

privilege. Anna affirms this analogy as a tactic and goal of neoliberalism, exacerbated by the AIC:

It's exactly – in a sense – because of people like me, because of our very presence. It's not a person like me as the individual, but what I represent because of the money that I make. Even if I'm a queer person, if my body sometimes gets read as non-white, even if I'm the daughter of immigrants, which would somehow mitigate against the power and privilege that comes with the professor who makes money, I still wield more power than most people and I get to teach courses about white supremacy. But, in some ways, the representation of what I am (not me personally) but what I represent as a professor who makes money, more than just a good salary, it's a privileged salary is actually the problem of white supremacy. It's actually what the neoliberal system wants. It wants people like me, it feeds on people like me, and it requires people like me.

From Anna's statement emerges a narrative of legitimacy paired with institutionalization.

Drawing radical ideas and bodies in to the academy, and placing certain restrictions and limitations on agency creates a culture of co-optation and results in watering down, exclusion or censorship of radical agendas which will be explored in the next section.

Institutionalization: Social Movements Meet the Academic Industrial Complex

As explained in Chapter two: Methodology, all participants for this study come from departments of Women and/or Gender Studies, and some have experience studying or teaching in other disciplines. Therefore, in the section that follows, participants discuss the reality of these disciplines with insights related to their connection to community struggle and social movements. Displayed in the introductory quote by Andrea Smith at the beginning of the chapter on Ethnic Studies, programs born out of social movements exist in great tension stemming from their aspirations for academic legitimacy and the desire to remain rooted in radical community struggles and experiences which are, as Anna observes, are often contradictory goals. An excellent example is Women's and/or Gender departments,

which Anna describes as ‘the worst culprits of institutionalization and the worst culprits of the Academic Industrial Complex’, she explains:

When they start they do so much to try to become legitimate, because the university is so against their existence, they fall off the cliff, and part of that falling off the cliff is that they completely lose trust, they cut their ties with community organizations, with women’s shelters [...] they cut their ties completely. In their rush to be legitimate without really critiquing what they are trying to legitimize themselves with, they fall off the cliff, so that they no longer have ties.

Anna continues to illustrate her example by describing a heated argument within the Women’s /Gender Studies department about supporting a student led initiative on campus:

One of the reasons why I tried to get myself out of [the department of Women’s/Gender Studies] is that I can’t stand them because you’ll get comments like we can’t support the [student led initiative], and I’m like why, why can’t we support them? Well because we don’t agree with their methods, and I’m like, what are you talking about? They’re using methods from the 1970s when the first rape centers [and the] quote on quote white women’s movement started. This was about peers, and peer support, that’s how it started, that’s how it started in Canada. So what are you talking about? What don’t you support? Well, [they say] we don’t support that students can be good peer support, so basically we’re the Women’s/Gender Studies department and we’re not going to participate in grassroots feminist organizing because we’ve decided that their methods are not okay. Even if the methods that they are using are the very same methods that we have taught them in class coming from the 1970’s women’s movement, but you’re saying now they’re wrong – that they’re wrong to have used the things that we supposedly taught them! And we can’t support them. In the end, well, we might get in trouble from the administration. So we have lost, do you see? So to me I can’t be part of that. If I choose to be part of the Academic Industrial Complex then I’m going to make sure that it’s under my [terms]. To a certain extent I am controlling some of the parameters of that. I’m not going to be part of a department that completely separates itself from a grassroots movement. You know, and the issue of sexual assault is not even controversial in the world of feminism, am I wrong?

Anna’s insight further informs the way in which critical pedagogues may conceptualize the academy, and support the premise that maintaining ties to grassroots community struggles strengthens the development of a transformative critical pedagogy. From the above example, Anna explains how institutionalization of women’s/gender studies has encouraged professors and students to remain in line with the administrative and governing principles of the

academy, and in so doing, curb grassroots action and activism. The section that follows continues themes of the academy, extending the narratives of legitimacy and who is welcome by exploring who is and is not represented in the academy, in particular, looking at student demographics.

Who is(n't) Here?

The following section enters in to a discussion that connects critical pedagogy and the imperative of questioning who is, and is not in the classroom. Anna takes seriously the experiences of her students and centers the complexity of those experiences in the way she engages with the space: 'they are survivors of rape, they are suffering from mental illness, they come from abusive [relationships]. Some of the women in my classrooms are being abused by their boyfriends the night before they're coming to a women's/gender studies class'²⁴. In this context, the critical pedagogue is asking who *is* here in the academy and taking lived experiences seriously for how students engage with the space and are placed on the hierarchy of legitimacy, access, and value. Acknowledging who is present in the academy is a crucial part of naming systems of violence and oppression that are experienced in academic spaces, and using critical pedagogy as a means to address these systems.

Adrian also questions the academy in terms of access in asking: 'how many people simply couldn't afford to attend, how many people whether its chronic health issues, or

²⁴ One in three women experiences violence in her lifetime. Overrepresented are: Aboriginal women (First Nations, Inuit, and Metis) who are 8 times more likely to experience violence than non-Aboriginal women and there are currently over 600 missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada; 60% of women with disabilities experience violence in her lifetime; young women are particularly at risk - 66% of women who experience violence are under 24. From a 2009 survey, 25% of women on college and university campuses across Canada and the U.S reported sexual violence from a male friend or partner. Queer and trans communities must also be recognized in experiencing violence and are further marginalized in accessing support and resources, as are immigrant women due to barriers of access, language, and criminalization by state and immigration policies. (Source: <http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence>)

whether its issues of safety' aren't sitting in university classrooms. I want to highlight here how Adrian takes the discussion on access further than financial access and elaborates on issues of health and safety. In terms of every day lived experiences regarding violence/safety, recent studies point to the fact that trans and gender-nonconforming students in universities have reported high rates of bullying due to their gender identity/expression (Singh et. al., 2011: 209). Speaking from his own research and experience that addresses access to education, Adrian explains that often underemployed and unemployed trans* people 'drop out of school at high school or university, but even at high school, so we don't necessarily have the same opportunities to come and to study'. His reflection provides important insights to further our understanding of the lived experiences of access, violence, and oppression.

Paired with this example, Adrian enforces the importance of understanding who is not present in the Academy:

Part of that has to do with [...] where people's experience does truly enrich knowledge and knowledge production, and so it's very hard. One does not have to be that voice, but that voice does have to be represented in a way that is genuine and that's often hard when somebody has particular forms of privilege. To get middle class undergraduates, or even graduate students, and faculty to think about what life is like amongst the working poor, you know it's very difficult because we're not in that position or if we were we've forgotten, right?

As I mentioned earlier, a vicarious experience is not an experience. Thus, one must question how disenfranchised and exploited voices are represented in the classroom. Addressing voice in the classroom I draw on what Freire (1985) terms a 'culture of silence' in which subjugated voices, or voices of the 'other', remain silenced (50). Writing on the construction of 'valid' knowledge emerging from the values, attitudes, opinions and/or ideas of the dominant practices of the academy Gibson (2006) explains that this construction leads to the exclusion of other forms of knowledge, resulting in the creation of 'outsiders' (317). This

same author further posits that, ‘the need to hear and listen to ‘other’ voices is further justified when exploring the political claims of social movements such as Civil rights, Disability Rights and Human rights’ (321). This conversation extends to thinking of students in the academy on the whole as perhaps a privileged group, yet there are many differences within that group relating to access and experience.

This section looked at the ways in which participants described the academy as characterized by neoliberalism. The narratives uncovered specific examples rooted in lived experiences that amplify a call to deconstruct the academy from a vantage point of experiences – particularly those who do not move easily in and through the academy. What remains at stake is further exploring the tensions that arise when social movements and community struggles interact and are integrated in to the academy. The section that follows further explores the identities of the three interviewees as an important location for illustrating tension and the development of critical pedagogy through personal experiences and the self.

B. LOCATION 2: THE CRITICAL PEDAGOGUE

PERSONAL IDENTITIES

What identities do you carry with you?

Identity is central to the politics and personal convictions of interviewees, as well as to their pedagogical practices. The connection between their personal identities and location within the academy and within various communities is profound in that these identities inform the way in which these critical pedagogues negotiate the academy and teach.

The Pedagogue as Political: identity politics and essentialism

Njeri begins by saying, ‘I’m an African woman who is seeking to be decolonial. That means in Canada recognizing that I am on stolen land, but that also means in a classroom setting not compromising because its easy for people in my position to compromise, because we’re not meant to be there, you know?’ This statement illustrates a profound self-reflection in terms of location. It strikes me as deeply connected to the infamous quote by Murri²⁵ artist, activist, and academic, Lilla Watson: ‘If you have come here to help me then you are wasting your time... But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let’s work together’. Njeri continues to intertwine her identities with liberation struggles in describing herself as ‘staunchly anti-capitalist’ and voicing hope that, ‘I express my Palestinian solidarity wherever I am, because I recognize that struggles are connected’. Finally, Njeri firmly explains an ever-growing intent ‘not to compromise [...] because if I’m waxing and waning on my position, it’s my people who die, you know?’ She further illustrates her identities by describing a conversation with a colleague, ‘a white man, a white ally’. This colleague tells Njeri that in his classes he is ‘not so definitive in his position’. Her response further illustrates the consequence of an identity as connected to community and to liberation struggles, ‘I can’t be anything other than non-compromising, because not only am I not meant to be there, but if I am compromising that’s another death. Symbolically, or physically that’s another death’. In juxtaposition, this statement also makes clear the position of privilege that her ‘white ally’ colleague– and other privileged bodies in the academy – possess.

As a white woman I read this from a standpoint of privilege and power as someone who is – to a certain extent – meant to be here. When Njeri asks ‘you know?’ I respond with ‘no, I do not know’. The “women’s movement” provided opportunity for the upward mobility of

²⁵ Murri are Indigenous Australian people who have experienced generations of colonialism. Many Murri children were a part of the Stolen Generation.

white women in academia. As a queer woman, as a woman who seeks to be anti-colonial, who seeks to be anti-racist, who seeks to work in solidarity with liberation struggles, and who works to deconstruct the AIC perhaps I am not meant to be here. But from my location of privilege as a white, able-bodied, cis-gendered, and middle-class woman, I am afforded space - and legitimacy - in the academy.

When speaking about her identities, Anna focuses directly on power, specifically in terms of the ‘social capital’ gained from her status as professor with a ‘privileged’ salary: ‘I have the kind of social, economic and political power, that most people in the world will never experience in their lives’. She chooses to address power while simultaneously speaking to socio-political locations of marginalization that ‘would somehow mitigate against the power and privilege that comes with the professor who makes money’. Speaking to her experiences as a ‘queer person’, the fact that her body at times is ‘read as non-white’ and being ‘the daughter of immigrants’ illustrates the overlapping and intersecting experiences of power, privilege, oppression and violence playing out in a location of tension: the academy. Anna highlights how her experiences of marginalization in relation to her specific identities do not mitigate the power she experiences. Here I again point to the previous discussion on neoliberal strategies of meritocracy and the example of oppression as a dam. Simplistically, Anna could be identified as someone who has been let through the dam, so to speak.

Adrian highlights the connection between his identity as a trans person being ‘important in terms of personal identification to bring into the classroom’. He also describes himself as ‘vehemently non capitalist’, and again explains that he brings these identities into the classroom. Adrian also addresses his approach to identity as not being an ontological question but a political question, in particular in terms of identities such as ‘queer’, or

‘activist’, or ‘feminist’. Further to naming identities, the participants contextualized their experiences in terms of power and privilege that emanated from a profound practice of self-reflection.

Keeping in mind the expressions of personal identity outlined above, I further this discussion by linking to concerns regarding the limitations of identity politics. Pinar (1998) draws on a compelling argument by Cindy Patton (1993), as she characterizes contemporary conceptions of identity and their political expression as ‘postmodern’ – described as perhaps more sophisticated than essentialized identities (7). However, what remains to be of interest to this thesis is her point that ‘when we abandoned essentialist positions we lost a degree of consensus and mobilization’ (7). Furthering this discussion, Pinar (1998) expresses that we must pay attention to how the social has been deconstructed with a focus on an identity-specific concept of ‘cultural’:

The crucial battle now for “minorities” and resistant subalterns is not achieving democratic representation but wrestling control over the discourses concerning identity construction. The opponent is not the state as much as it is the other collectivities attempting to set the rules for identity construction in something like a “civil society” (Patton, 1993: 173 quoted in Pinar, 1998: 7).

Pedagogical intervention on the subject of discursive acts of identity formation comes in to play within the complicated social, political, and gendered conversation that is the curriculum (Pinar, 1998: 7). I further draw on this narrative by inquiring about the way in which critical pedagogues teach students about the construction of, and their relation to the ‘other’, where critical pedagogues become the conduit for mobilizing identity in a way that informs, shapes, and simultaneously critiques themselves and their pedagogy.

Furthering this discussion, tension as a central theme plays the role of framework and subject for the discussion on identity, subjectivity, and resistance as a part of pedagogical

practices and praxis. For example, this thesis questions how we can find the concept of tension useful to engage in conversations about the limitations of identity politics, and respond to the concerns raised involving the deployment of identity politics within critical pedagogy. Moreover, I see narratives involving tension as an avenue to explore how a critically reflexive identity politic does perhaps more to engage in mobilization rooted in anti-oppressive notions of solidarities of difference. In the same breath, power and privilege, then, is seen as existing mutually and overlapping. A depiction that is crucial to counteract identity politics drawback of positioning the false dichotomy of privilege and oppression. Engaging in the pedagogical discussion of identity politics Pinar (2009) offers up the critique that in the divergence from *realpolitik*, ‘resistance becomes the quixotic cry of self-appointed representatives of victimized groups and of those jostling for leadership of a (never materializing) unified opposition’ (192). This critique continues questioning critical pedagogy in relation to the ‘impossibility’ of a postmodern praxis, in which Pinar (2009) wonders where and when critical pedagogy takes the embodiment of a ‘material force’ (192). In the section that follows I draw on explicit critique of subjectivity and resistance: ‘Only as the subjective and the social are acknowledged as embedded in and constitutive of the other, can the ‘I’- alone and in solidarity with others – undertake political action in the world’ (Pinar, 2009: 192). A crucial piece of this acknowledgement is exploration of subjectivity and identity using tension as a location in which to bring together the dichotomized experiences of oppression and privilege.

Naming Power, Challenging Privilege: critical thinking and identity

The following section explores personal reflections on power, privilege and identity in relation to the development of a critical pedagogy. Anna describes this process of self-

awareness as a part of critical pedagogy and as something that you are not doing to someone else, but something you ‘do to yourself’. She furthers this narrative by explaining that in terms of her subjectivity she sees herself as a ‘critical thinker’ that informs her activism, which is ‘just a tool or a vehicle through which I do that critical thinking’. In this sense, critical thinking provides tools to inform the critical pedagogue in their profession as an academic and also informs the questions they ask for their research. For Anna, critical thinking is also a means to inform her feelings around being rooted in a grassroots struggle: ‘I’d rather be depressed most of the time, but at least I’m participating in this protest, or I’m participating in this social organization [...] because the alternative of not doing anything is impossible, it’s intolerable’. There is a refusal happening here to separate identity, academic life, and critical thinking.

Further engaging with the themes of identity and the political, Adrian describes how his identity ‘shifts with life and experience’, but he consistently identifies ‘primarily as a researcher and a teacher’ and sees the two as intricately linked together. Ultimately, he points to critical thinking as a central piece to why he is drawn to the academy, ‘because it does have some spaces – although they are shrinking – for critical thought and for engagement with politics’. This last point emphasizes a common concern among critical pedagogues and further supports the movement of cultivating spaces of critical teaching, and the imperative of naming the shrinking forces that stifle critical engagement in the academy.

Legitimacy and location

A discussion on identity resonated with this thesis’ theme of tension and further developed the conversation to engage with concepts of legitimacy and identity. At a 1976 convention Black feminist, lesbian writer Barbara Smith asked, ‘is it possible to be a black woman

academic and live?’ As such, the body becomes the site of profound struggle and an indication that there are implicit and complex links between global power relations, local experiences in spatial location, and women’s subjective experiences within the academy (Mandoh, 2012: 1). Njeri describes a teaching experience that is an explicit example of the prescribed roles created by the academy through a hierarchy that is entrenched in white hetero-normative capitalist scholarship. From her experiences with an academic department, Njeri describes being both ‘foreign’ to this discipline , but also ‘very legitimate’. She attributes her legitimacy from ‘the fact that I would ordinarily be [an object for study] [...] [this discipline] has made a living out of studying my people. In this example, her legitimacy comes from being present, but she would be the subject. Instead, she is the instructor and ‘people are like, “what the fuck?” because I should be the subject. So, I’m legitimate in that I am within [a discipline], but my position in it is not legitimate’. Further to this question of legitimacy within a White academy, hooks (2003) asks how Black women and women of colour can ‘create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self- actualization?’ (15) In seeking to create alternatives and an oppositional worldview brings me back to the argument that the process is deeply involved with coming to a deep understanding about how social structures work to dominate one’s life. Working through the processes of developing critical thinking and critical consciousness, has the potential to invent ‘alternative habits of being, and resist from that marginal space of difference inwardly defined’ (Rodriquez, 2006: 1069). The section that follows explores the tensions in seeking critical consciousness which inevitably reproduce hegemonic systems within the context of the academy.

Tension

The next section explores the tensions that were named by participants using the overarching themes of power and privilege in the academy to contextualize their experiences as connected to the functions and goals of a neoliberal academy. Although Anna and Adrian did not speak to how they were informed by past experiences in the academy as students, or contract instructors, Njeri did. One reason could be in relation to their privilege as tenured faculty which removed them from those experiences. Anna is upfront about the privilege she has as a tenured professor. This status affords her choice in how and what she elects to teach and engage with the administration. Unlike Njeri, a contract instructor, who feels that she has little control over her location, teaching materials and practices. Njeri's experiences of tension can also be read as ways in which she – through resistance, awareness, and restricted choice – reproduces normative practices. As a contract instructor, she experiences constraints and surveillance that contribute to her reproductions of normative practices as required by the academy:

Every day as a contract instructor, you have tensions that are hard. It's a good position in that you can try and convey urgency, urgency in peoples lives, it's a precarious position because you can't call people on their shit as much as you could if that was not your position. Because part of your mandate is about respecting peoples diversity of views right? In theory. So, I can't just be like actually you suck and you need to work on your stuff.

This example expresses direct tensions with her assertion to be non-compromising. The fact that she is a contract instructor, that she is 'not meant to be here', and that she experiences racism and sexism both by the infrastructure of the academy and the students places her in a position of struggle to exert power and authority in the classroom, and an engaged pedagogy of difference.

Anna – though being a tenured professor – is certainly not immune from reproducing the normative mechanisms of the academy. She describes herself as ‘a tool that’s used to train the next labour force for whatever economic, political projects [...] whether they’re academic, national, or transnational’. She continues this critique in explaining that when she requests students to complete parts of the curriculum, she is actually training them in ‘the context of the academic industrial complex for neoliberal function’. Furthering this point, critics often challenge critical consciousness raising and critical pedagogy using this neoliberal logic arguing that students must be trained for a viable function in the economy, and prepare students to enter the workplace. As Giroux (2006) explains, part of the work of critical pedagogy is not only to support students in entering the job market, but also to teach them to contest workplace inequities, and to be a part of imagining new democratically organized labour that challenges injustice with sights on a more equitable future (29). In line with this call to action, Anna takes up the struggle characteristic of critical pedagogues who are also non-compromising and engaged: ‘but what I don’t accept is to say that means then that I can’t come up with forms of resistance through my research’. Resistance is also manifested in the act of naming this tension as a part of her pedagogy. Existing in tension and acting in contradiction to one’s desires and that of one’s community and hope for a more democratic vision of society yields feelings of self-detriment, and guilt.

‘I don’t think that anyone worth their salt as a critical pedagogue could go in there and not talk about that tension’ – Anna

For Anna, the tension ‘is huge, it’s major’, and she calls on other critical pedagogues to involve those feelings of guilt in their educational practices: ‘I think that it’s really important

[to talk about guilt]; and, if whoever else you interview say they don't feel guilt, I think they're lying to you'. She explains that the tension arises from:

Talking about social justice stuff in the classroom while at the same time knowing and always understanding you have power, is I think the hardest part of my job because it's couched in guilt, it's couched in sometimes a little bit of self hate, it's couched in doubting yourself, and so that's why I always feel like I have to work so hard to unlearn and rethink everything I do and everything I say. But it doesn't get resolved in the classroom, it doesn't get resolved in public lectures, it doesn't get resolved in my research... it's not resolvable. It's not resolvable, the tension.

By extending the narrative of irresolvable tension, the section that follows stems from participants' shared lack of faith in the academy as a space of liberation and transgression of hegemonic neoliberalism.

Losing faith in the academy

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare. - Audre Lorde

Existing in constant tension arising from experiencing exploitation and oppression, participation in struggle (both in the academy and in communities outside of the academy) as well as reproducing power and privilege takes a toll on the body and mind (Anna). Like many engaged in liberatory struggles and community work, Anna describes how she says yes to more things than she should: 'I'm burnt out, I'm exhausted, I don't want to get up in the mornings, I'm not necessarily a happy person'. Despite those manifestations of overwork and burnout, she also expresses a deep love for the things that she has chosen: 'I love doing the activism I do through the academic lens. I don't accept when people say you're a part of the academic industrial complex so how could you possibly be an activist?' In highlighting tensions and conceptualizing the academy as being both a place of struggle and an instrument in the reproduction of neoliberal ideals provides ways to support the critical

pedagogue and develop tools and strategies of critical pedagogy to broaden engagement in struggle:

I don't think that it is a place of quote on quote happiness, and I think that in the neoliberal context, that happiness becomes sort of, well, why are you doing it? If you aren't happy why are you doing it? Well I am doing it because I'd rather do it than not do it, the alternative is unconscionable to me. Which is part of the reason why critical thinking is so important to me, why it is so crucial (Anna).

Adrian also describes tension as a feeling of being 'disenchanted' with the university.

Drawing on Marxist work on alienation, Adrian explains how work and leisure are inseparable, and that 'we develop as humans through work, through labour'. However, within this narrative, Adrian identifies with certain spaces of the academy as locations to 'really push and develop oneself' yet, 'the tragedy is that we are circumvented through exploitation'. In the same tone, Giroux (2006) notes that 'neoliberalism reproduces the conditions for unleashing the most brutalizing forces of capitalism' within our systems of education, further highlighting the link between politics, power, culture, and the academy (24).

The section that follows builds on the themes presented in this chapter (identities of critical pedagogues as tied to their conceptualizations of, and experiences in, the academy) and takes up the call to connect pedagogical practices with a broader movement for social change.

C. LOCATION 3: PEDAGOGY & RESISTANCE

The Self as Text: challenging a hidden curriculum

The following section brings into discussion how critical pedagogues use the self as a pedagogical site by drawing on their own experiences and that of their students. Rodriguez (2009) explains how movement into cultural visibility, such as drawing on experiences of transgressive bodies, can work as a pedagogical and political act that may be added to other, similar counter-cultural practices that can work conjunctively to create the conditions for imagining new ways of being (178).

For example, Njeri speaks to the struggle of approaching subjects that can often be viewed as boring material (for example, her course on foundations). She explains that ‘to do this kind of work, methodologically I’m really drawn to Freire’s education that’s more dialogical’, though Njeri continues to challenge academic legitimization of knowledge by stating that it is important to recognize that ‘people were doing this long before Freire.’ Continuing the conversation, she explains that she is ‘really interested in engaging with [the students] and hearing from their experiences. And part of this is being honest and vulnerable, because I’m not just a talking head I’m a person with experiences’. This practice politicizes her pedagogy and the course material in a way that demands a challenge to normative knowledge systems by drawing on student experiences in contribution to course material, and making herself vulnerable.

Further to the importance of vulnerability, Anna is explicit in her conviction to address power as a cornerstone of her pedagogical practices. In using the self as text, Anna makes herself vulnerable to her students by naming her experiences as locations of (un)learning. For example, she makes a point of telling her students her salary ‘because I’m trying to critique the idea of privilege. It’s more than that, I have power’. The lesson she intends to transfer to students is: ‘privilege has become a way for people to say okay yes I have privilege now I can be part of your movement’, but to substantiate this statement, one

must also 'recognize that you have power' and that one constantly then has to 'account for that power, think about that power, understand how you're wielding that power, who that power is affecting, how it's affecting you, how does it shape you, who are you influencing [...] it takes on a much bigger part of your subjectivity'.

I have never, in my experience as a student, had a professor tell me their salary and enter in to a discussion about power from their own standpoint. This act of being vulnerable and using the self as text opens up the pedagogical possibilities of students to do the same: to be reflexive, to interrogate concepts of privilege and power, oppression and violence, and participate in (un)learning rooted in lived experiences.

In the same tone, dian marino (1997) argues that teachers must be open to challenging themselves if they intend to challenge their students. She considers the teaching value of making mistakes, the importance of uncovering explicit and hidden connections that serve those in power, and the inspiration of collective imagining of change (xiii). Anna explains that when she speaks about her power/privilege in relation to her socio-economic status, she notices that students respond in a way that questions why she then talks about solidarity from her privileged and powerful standpoint. This tension manifests as a question of who has the right to teach what, and how. However, this thesis contends that according to feminist anti-oppressive principles, naming your standpoint and being reflective on how it shapes you, and impacts those around you, opens up room for dialogue, and engages in a counter-narrative to the normative structures of the academy. At the same time, the professor cannot speak for communities and identities they are not a part of. Anna does, however, draw on her experiences giving examples of her involvement in her mid teens in the HIV/AIDS activism movement in Montreal. She talks to her students about protests in the streets: 'part of it was

laying in the streets and having someone do a chalk outline of you’ she continues to describe the experience, and how this type of activism works, what it feels like, and what the organizing was like, who was organizing, how many meetings she attended. ‘I think that allows them to understand that there is an actual political economy to being someone who is interested in social justice, who wants social justice’. According to Anna, talking about her experiences informs her approach to lecturing in the academy, and roots her academic work in her grassroots narratives. She believes that being able to relay to students what happens within community organizing spaces is integral to a pedagogy that values personal experience as legitimate knowledge in the academy, and encourages praxis:

‘[w]hat happens at a [No One is Illegal] discussion, sort of describing you know, last night I was at the NOII talk and this is what the speaker said, it’s interesting because these were the questions, and then we had the discussions, it actually helps them understand that there is a real infrastructure to activism’.

As Rodriguez (2009) explains, teachers must create the pedagogical conditions for enabling students to understand how their own social location can be used to ‘insert themselves into, and by all means make themselves felt in, the political realm’ (179). Anna also makes a point to draw on student voices as well as community voices to further inform her teaching practices in the classroom.

Tools and Tactics: community, humour, and a pedagogy of realness

Along the same sentiment of creating alternative knowledge and pushing boundaries, Njeri explains that the tools she uses in her classroom such as ‘hip-hop music vids, I use commercials, in a talk I did a few weeks ago I used a porn’. She explains that it is important that professors keep the material interesting and ‘remind[s] people that all knowledge comes from actual human interactions, and struggles by real people’. Njeri mobilizes a pedagogy

that draws on relationships, ‘I’m trying to establish relationships, I draw on humor, I draw on their experiences’. In terms of her syllabus content, she expresses the imperative to incorporate ‘community scholars [...] I’m more interested in work that recognizes that it is informed by community struggles’. However, I must highlight here that Njeri is the only interviewee to express the imposition of the academy on her curriculum in that, ‘I try and give that kind of material to the students, but again it has to pass the head of [her department]’. Ultimately she seeks to inform her pedagogy by ‘the conditions of a lot of people right now, and its important that I be honest about that, and that’s the only thing really that I ask of myself in the classroom really, is to be honest about the conditions that are facing people’. I would conceptualize Njeri’s use of lived experiences, community scholars as a pedagogy of *realness*, one that draws on community voices, personal experiences, and takes on the project of naming the constraints of the academy.

Anna connects deeply to bell hooks’ engaged pedagogy in a way that her methods could ‘come from a place of hope and could come from a place of power’. Ultimately she centers her work around ‘teaching your students – and you have taught yourself – to always see the issues of oppression, and repression, and hatred, and always thinking, not how to stop it or fix it because, that’s really bad politics, but to sort of understand it to be part of it’. In the same vein, Adrian works to design his courses and work with graduate students ‘in a way that would actually allow space to create alternative knowledge and push the boundaries of critical discourse’.

As evident in her syllabus, Anna works to engage voices who can speak from personal experiences and write from many different locations such as, community voices as well as

published academics; for example, one article in her syllabus comes from *INCITE!*²⁶. While some professors choose to bring in guest speakers to hear from communities first hand, Anna does not do this in her classroom because philosophically she feels that ‘if I bring in a speaker from the community [is that] it becomes voyeuristic for the students [...] they get this person in the front, they listen and take notes. Remember the classroom is a place where they think everything is on the exam, so they’re only listening because they want to do well on the exam.’ She expresses her aversion towards bringing speakers in because of voyeurism; alternatively, Anna uses documentaries, ‘the docs I choose are usually the ones where the people affected by an issue, be it water rights or land rights, are speaking’.

Drawing on responses from Njeri and Anna, I suggest that pedagogical resistance generated by collaborating and drawing on grassroots/community voices can contend with what Judith Butler (1990) calls the *heterosexual matrix* ‘the grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized’ (151). However, we must keep in mind that ‘hegemonic practices generally have enough ‘give’ to enable them to tolerate some deviance and remain structurally sound’ (Ramond, 1994: 116). Anna further explains the limitations to her power in that she can’t, for example, call up the Prime Minister and tell him to ‘stop it’, but that she does ‘have a lot of power in the way that I can influence the world around me, most people can’t’. With the objective of teaching about structural and systemic power, I point to a discursive example in how Anna structures her syllabus. In her course on intersectionality she begins the session with a unit on power, bringing into conversation scholars of racializations and anti-capitalism. In doing so, she is able to frame her course and structure the weeks to come by first examining power, whiteness, and anti-

[²⁶ INCITE! is a national activist organization of radical feminists of color advancing a movement to end violence against women of color and our communities through direct action, critical dialogue, and grassroots organizing (<http://www.incite-national.org>)]

racism. I read this as strategic and an intentional pedagogical move that attempts to position power as a concept we must deconstruct in all aspects of academia, and our lives. In the same sentiment, Adrian describes his syllabus as ‘living examples of an argument that I’m trying to put forward. Its like I said, it’s a delicate, complicated and often contradictory dance that we do when we teach’. In this instance, I am reminded again of the workshop I attended with facilitator Kim Crosby. Before she spoke directly to the workshop topic she spent an hour discussing an anti-oppressive framework in which to approach the space, and called out the structures that govern our lives: colonialism, ableism, heteronormativity, classism, whiteness-supremacy, cis-normativity, racism etc. This learning piece played a crucial role in setting the tone for the workshop by recognizing the multiple ways in which people engage with spaces. Extending this narrative, writing in the context of a colonized world, Frantz Fanon describes the connection between consciousness as an agency by stating that ‘the colonizer makes history, and is conscious of making it’ (Fanon cited in Thompson, 1997: 181). Thus, the social transformation, through exploitation, that the colonizer inflicted upon the colonized world was achieved through the combination of political power, in the forms of weapons, bureaucracies, racist ideologies, etc. and a consciousness about power relations which allowed them to exert control in a systematic way (Thompson, 1997, 181). In this way, the colonizer defines the usability of spaces and the acceptability of bodies to exist as normative.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, central to Friere’s pedagogy is the notion of critical consciousness as the foundation for social change in which humans have the awareness of socio-cultural reality that shape their lives and their capacity to transform that reality (Friere, 1985: 93). Freire emphasizes that conscientization is not simply awareness, but includes action based on a critical awareness of the individual and society. From the

discussions with interviewees, I contend that structuring the curriculum needs to take on a similar project of (re)framing and creating community in a classroom in a way that calls out power/privilege and knowledge systems that are (re)produced and subverted.

Love and Hard Work

Adrian speaks to how he could try to label and name his pedagogical approach from what he has learned from students, friends, partners, colleagues as coming from ‘feminist epistemologies’, but for the most part it is as he says, ‘your own political convictions [that] play a part in how you approach learning and knowledge’. He also is able to understand what his teaching practices are by naming what they are not: ‘I don’t assign memory exams, I mean I don’t want to have this rote memorization, nor do I ever tell students what I think necessarily, I mean sometimes I do through sarcasm or jokes or what have you, but I don’t say this is the way that I approach colonization’. Adrian approaches his classroom with an explicit connection to hard work. He is upfront with his students that ‘if you take my classes you’re going to have to work extremely hard and I’m extremely hard on them’ yet at the same time, he roots this approach in a Plato’s notion of celestial love. He tells his students that ‘it’s a project of love too’ and this takes up the understanding that learning and education is about teaching and imparting this wisdom or love of philosophy. For Adrian, this means ‘part of that caring is to not allow students to be slack, but to actually say here are your limits, here is where I want you to supersede, here are the standards that I want you to meet in order to be successful’. His approach takes up Lisa Duggan’s neoliberal critique, that one must be aware of the structures guiding our actions, and in this case our experiences of education. Adrian expands this narrative by recognizing that we can be critical of this notion of success and of the neoliberal entrepreneurial subject, but at the same time,

‘surprise! We are the neoliberal entrepreneurial subject and we can’t get away from that’. This standpoint takes up the argument that being a critical scholar is being aware of those contradictions. Adrian also argues that in this context one is taking up a profound responsibility not as ‘an economic subject and Canadian citizen’ but as the ‘radical that you claim to be’. He makes demands of this identity and consequent responsibility, ‘because if you claim to be that, there’s going to be a lot of ethical commitment that you need to meet and if you’re going to meet it you’re going to have to work double time’. This viewpoint translates into a strong commitment to vigorous scholarship and a very rigorous work ethic. He expands on this sentiment by explaining to students:

You’re going to have to work double time as post-structuralist, queer feminists, and not capitalist scholars. You’re going to have to work extra hard because not only are you not taken seriously, but if you really want to talk about world making and building a different society, and establishing a social, well you know that takes work! [...] You’re going to have to do a lot of work and be committed to doing a lot of work. It’s what are you working for that becomes the question, right?

Adrian remarks that in his home discipline, ‘we didn’t tend to think about pedagogy’. I find this statement profound in that for the most part, university professors are pitched as the expert, and their teaching practices are secondary to their status as a scholar. Adrian continues to reflect on where he derives his teaching practices and concludes that ‘a lot of my critical pedagogy came from the school of hard knocks [...] or it came from mentors that I’ve had’. This comment informs my argument that critical pedagogues garner their feminist/queer/radical/critical teaching practices from lived experiences, from being connected in some way to personal and community struggles.

Adrian passionately describes the experience of working with ‘the most amazing professor, one of the most incredible intellectuals’. This professor was very much influenced by the Socratic method, ‘so it was about drawing out knowledge, and for him capital “T”

Truth that resides within the student, so it was more a practice of questioning and pushing students to discover for themselves and I think part of that is very empowering’.

Importantly, Adrian is able to interject on his own weaknesses in the classroom, and describes himself as ‘quite heavy handed’. In the same tone, he states that he enters in to the classroom with a ‘quote on quote bias or an agenda, and I do tell students, often not in my syllabus, that I am unapologetically, uncompromising in the theories that I will teach you [...] that we will be learning from critical perspectives, plural, and not liberal apologetics or worse’. This disclosure leaves no question that Adrian’s political convictions inform his teaching practices, and course material. Though in saying that he does not put this statement in his syllabus pushes me to question whether this is due to administrative governance over syllabus content that would find such a statement too polarizing for a so-called ‘neutral’ classroom. This non-compromising approach helps to push back against the neoliberal rhetoric of ‘equality’ and ‘freedom of speech’ that permeates the academy. It takes up an anti-oppressive approach that has the potential to center disenfranchised voices.

Power and Privilege in the Pedagogical Space

Power and privilege are constantly at play in the classroom. Adrian describes how one of the ways it plays out ‘is often in affective response with those whose privilege is being challenged – they will often respond in a threatened or a hostile way’. We see evidence of this with whiteness, with masculinity, and with heteronormative privilege. From a pedagogical perspective, ‘we’re often met with the sense of needing to breakdown that defense’. Adrian supports the idea that part of teaching critical pedagogy is to deconstruct the individualized liberal notion that if you change your behavior, society will also change to ask questions about how you are implicated and to be able to ‘politicize those emotions and

say you know what, that's okay that you feel that way'. In this sense, the work of the critical pedagogue is about meeting those emotions where they are at and to acknowledge contradictions that arise from learning very complex, very nuanced things. It is also to say that everyone participating will be 'in ways held responsible for, to recognize ones privilege for example, while at the same time knowing that its not you completely, which can feed back in to that normative, hegemonic understanding of what it is to be privileged' (Adrian). Extending this conversation, Adrian explains that critical engagement with this idea of privilege in the classroom has to challenge what it means to take up power and privilege. '[I]f you're in a women's studies classroom it's about men trying to demonstrate that they are feminists [...] or about white anti-racist paradigms, where it's like look at us, we're so learned, or so capable to do this, which is not where we want to go'. Where we do want to go is engage in this 'delicate balance' and to learn what it means to challenge privilege in a way that affords a social space to learn from one-another. This approach means setting the context for students to 'begin to interact, debate, discuss with other students, that breaks down this barrier of isolation' says Adrian. It also forges not only intellectual bonds, but also those personal, collegial, or friendship bonds between students where they become interested in each other's lives and each other's political perspectives. Adrian expresses that:

Education – especially if you look at a bachelors of Arts degree – exposes students to different theoretical approaches, different methodological approaches, and hopefully different political approaches. By doing that you don't get this very myopic singular notion of what it is to have an education or be political. And I think that helps a lot in terms of engaging in political struggle because diversity is part of life, part of what they're going to encounter when they go out and get a job, which presumably won't be in the academy. It also prepares students to be able to engage with their future employers, or their present employers, because you can't presume that students aren't working, they certainly are.

dian marino creates exercises and curriculum aimed at identifying what she names the ‘hidden cracks in our consent’ to oppression, that work to forge the difficult but crucial ‘transition from consent to resistance’ (3). Using a Gramscian understanding of hegemony²⁷, these exercises deconstruct and uncover the ‘languages of persuasion’ (53). Using juxtaposition, marino stations connections as illogical and inaccurate. She explains that constructed associations are often consciously controlled in a way that proliferates hidden messages. For example, the statement that ‘education is neutral’ is a political position that is not presented as a political position, and therefore it is an equivalency that may not be operating in our best interest and instead may be operating to serve those in power. marino describes equivalencies as acting more often than not in a way to sabotage our efforts to change things (53). These exercises can be identified in Adrian’s course activity of deconstructing the academy. In describing his own pedagogy Adrian explains that he employs the Socratic method though ‘really not in that way [...] one of the practical ways was to get students to understand that they are central to their education and that they are central to resistance and/or (because its usually at the same time) reproducing social relations’. Adrian describes a class he taught in which he engaged students in the project of deconstructing the AIC:

Within this class I hitched on to that slogan “Education is a Right” and I critiqued it. I said “Education may be a right, but *university* isn’t right for everyone”. Their first assignment was a think piece, I asked them why they were here, so they had to go and think about why they actually occupied that seat in the university classroom. And for many of the students it was the first time they had ever been asked that. It was just assumed that’s where they would go – either they made the assumption, or family

²⁷ In *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci develops the notion of hegemony as the process whereby public consensus about social reality is created by the dominant class; whereby, those in power persuade the majority to consent to decisions that are disempowering or not benefiting the majority. Simply put, hegemony can be defined as persuasion from above (the dominant class) and consent from below (by the subordinate class) (cited in marino, 1997: 105).

made the assumption, and so to actually put this in to action I wanted them to think about why they are pursuing this education. Is it something they are pursuing consciously? Are they able to be reflexive about it or are they merely just an automaton who is moving through what they think is right because if it's the latter than they're not going to get a lot out of education because part of education is about challenging yourself.

I would also argue that it is important to think about the question of why students are occupying the seat in the classroom by asking who is not occupying the seat, and why. This exercise does a good job of questioning the structural forces that position post-secondary education in a neoliberal sense, as a meritocratic institution that we must interact with solely for job acquisition or fulfilling our duty as a citizen. Adrian continues to describe the exercise and explains that, 'what we did was that we looked at the AIC not as a top-down per-say, but looked at it in terms of different forces that were bearing down on them, and so we did look at the notion of everyone needing to go to university but the lack of resources within the university'. This piece is important in juxtaposing the neoliberal ideology of the importance of higher education with the reality of the financial inaccessibility of PSE. Adrian argues that 'getting students interested in the world around them as the primary text I think is huge'. His assignment also asks that students read publications from the administration, and observe their own behavior 'so we would talk about hyper-individualism and alienation, social isolation within neoliberalism'. This assignment is a radical pedagogical piece that begins to chip away at the violence that exists obscurely within the university (presented as neutral) by uncovering the policies, procedures, and structures that create the academy. As Adrian explains, this project also seeks to undermine neoliberalism by breaking down isolation of individualism:

Students would actually come and say to me, when we came into this classroom and sat down we might have known one or two people, but we didn't think we had to talk

to the people around us. And by the end of the semester, they were like ‘holy shit, this is what community means!’ you know, this is what world making means.

Further to the discussion on building community in the classroom, Marino (1997) argues that in North America the framing of learning and education is that they are neutral and not political, and that this frame obfuscates and weakens the link between words and action and distracts people from constructing questions and actions leading to empowerment (105). The important task for critical educators becomes not only to reflect on the persuasion aspect of hegemony, but also to investigate the consent aspect of hegemony, and review their own practices and patterns of interpretation (105).

Professor power and the pedagogy as political

Anna continues this discourse on solidarity by addressing the hypocrisy of talking about solidarity with people ‘that are not in the same socio economic situation’ as herself. As discussed earlier, the academy and the neoliberal project benefits from hypocrisy in creating rifts in a critique of power/privilege, and solidarity. What Anna is trying to do is to convey to students that a particular socio-economic status exists for the purpose of modeling something to strive for: ‘if there is proof that there are people that have my kind of power as a citizen than you’ll also want to strive for that too, which means eventually, you’ll have to take on these individualistic competitive sort of elements to their lives in order to get to it’. Likewise, Angela Davis (1994) also expresses this concern that the ‘premise that middle class women necessarily embody a standard their poorer sisters should be encouraged to emulate’ (424). Anna also tells me that she does not just use her salary as a way to discuss power/privilege/hypocrisy in the classroom with two-hundred to three-hundred students, but

also within her activist and community work in order to ‘critique the idea of privilege’ to extend the narrative to critique power in all the spaces she engages with.

With similar sentiment, Njeri explains how the ‘classroom space is premised on the instructor as the overseeing god, and the students are there to pretend to listen sometimes and get the grade and go’. In working to chip away at what she illustrates as a negative power structure, she describes how her pedagogical practices are about ‘this identifying and being vulnerable with students’ as a good way to start and to ‘just being honest about what you’re teaching, and not adhering to the same modes of instruction: making circles, having debates, having students teach or asking them random questions that you wouldn’t ask in the classical mode of teaching’. She also uses humour extensively to break down power dynamics that are supported by the academy and notes how she is ‘just making fun of things’. For example, she describes a class on Sub-Saharan Africa in which she joked, ‘did anyone fine Kony²⁸?’ In this way, she is using humour to provide an off-hand critique of the widespread neo-colonial campaign premised on a white-saviorist mode of humanitarianism. Njeri expresses how her humour is fun, but also does work to ‘gesture towards a common humanity’ that students need to politicize and critically analyze situations. She continues musing that ‘maybe I have grand illusions and shit but I think just maybe joking and looking at videos or letting students teach themselves and teach you’ as a way to subvert hegemonic power. However, ultimately – along the same sentiment as Cornel West’s *thin opposition* – she laments that the room is built in a way that all the direction is turned toward the teacher, and is structured in a way that sustains the status quo mode of power.

²⁸ The Kony2012 campaign was a campaign launched by the humanitarian organization Invisible Children to raise awareness about issues of child soldiers in Uganda. The campaign proposed the single solution of arresting Kony, a Lords Resistance Army rebel involved in child abductions (<http://www.genderacrossborders.com/2012/03/13/5-african-women-respond-to-the-kony2012-campaign/>).

Adrian discusses power and identity rooted in how he views himself noting that, ‘I don’t have a problem with saying that I am an expert within a particular area, I am’. He also explains that his understanding of power is ‘different’, which is to say that it is different than colleagues of his who also identify as critical pedagogues. Adrian is up front about this rift: ‘I am not ashamed to say I have a hierarchical understanding of power’. However, he also is clear in that despite this understanding, and positioning of himself as ‘expert’ he is also open to his students that he too reproduces oppression, violence, and neoliberalism and states that, ‘if I make a mistake in language [...] allowing the students to challenge me as well is important’. This is a critical piece to recognize and it cannot be stated without noting the contradiction between positioning oneself as the expert (which is already established and reinforced by the structures of the academy) and then asking of students to do the often insurmountable task of breaking down the hierarchy to challenge the professor. Anna, on the other hand, takes issue immediately with the word expert and connects this label directly to professors: ‘you have a person in the classroom who gets understood as the expert, which in itself is extraordinarily violent. It has a violent history the word ‘expert’. Who has power, teaching other privileged people’. Ultimately, the critical pedagogue must generate space for accountability, and demonstrate that it is acceptable to challenge them.

D. LOCATION 4: PEDAGOGY, COMMUNITY STRUGGLE AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

*Is the university prepared to teach us something new?
- June Jordan*

I never use the word ally: a pedagogy of solidarity

I'd like to talk about the concepts of ally-ship & solidarity in the Academy (classroom, seminars, individual sessions, hallways etc.) do you engage with these concepts, do they inform your pedagogy?

Anna and I spoke at great length about privilege and the word 'ally' in regard to seeking to be anti-oppressive in one's pedagogy, and personal life. She declares: 'one thing I absolutely never ever say, I never use the word ally in my classes. Absolutely not [...] and I lecture for three hours for thirteen weeks. Not one time. I cannot stand the word. It makes absolutely no sense. It reproduces white supremacy, [it is] sexist and hetero-patriarchal'. As blogger, Spectra explains, 'falling back on words and phrases that are intended to convey some sort of ideological purity won't ever trump the transformation you'll experience within yourself (and others) if you truly put yourself out there'²⁹. The discussion on allyship and solidarity is a call for people to be real, to dare to be vulnerable, admit wrongs, take responsibility and hold oneself accountable. Anna and I discussed solidarity in terms of an anti-oppressive framework, and putting this framework in to practice. From a pedagogical perspective, Anna pairs this teaching on power/allyship in connection to solidarity. A further example of how Anna actively engages in solidarity is using her syllabus as a pedagogical tool. She inserts a 'note to students' paragraph, in which she addresses notions of anti-oppression using a solidarity framework. Anna explains that most syllabi do not include this piece. She continues to describe the statement:

If you say anything that is racist, transphobic, the list [...] I will kick you out of the class. It's not tolerable, it's not conducive to intellectual exchange. I say it fancier than that but basically the message is that you are out, I won't tolerate it, you will be called out, because I actually start with that as an example of solidarity [...] What I do is I say to students I'm not just putting this in here, because then it gives me legitimacy to kick you out of my class if I don't like you and what you're saying. I'm putting it in here because what I'm saying is there are people in this room who are

²⁹ <http://www.spectraspeaks.com/2013/05/afrofeminism-labels-politically-correct-straight-allies-white-antiracissts-male-feminists/>

going through pain and it doesn't matter if you don't feel the pain, or see the pain, or understand the pain we have to behave in this way because this is an example of solidarity, right, when we are able to recognize that there are people in this room who have been beaten in the bathroom because they're transsexual and then we're prepared to reorganize our thoughts and our words so that we won't recreate the pain and trigger in their lives we are already doing solidaristic work. It doesn't have to look like the Idle No More movement for you to say its solidarity.

Throughout this conversation Anna is speaking very strongly, and her body language contributes to the urgency, and importance of this statement for her, and her pedagogy. The statement from her syllabus describes that students should conduct themselves in a 'respectful and open manner'. Furthermore, the note explains that the class address issues that can be experiences as controversial or be at odds with personal beliefs and views. Despite this, the message to students is clear in stating that the professor will not tolerate or support comments or actions that take away from fostering discussion and constructive exchange in the classroom. The note finishes by encouraging students to participate in discussion however no oppressive (sexist, racist, ageist, and homophobic remark) will be accepted in the class. There is an evident disconnect in the language she uses when speaking about the solidarity statement, and the statement itself. It is necessary, then, that she uses the syllabus and statement to foster discussions on notions of solidarity and a teaching piece on the significance of being challenged or called out. By this, she means she will stop the class and make visible oppressive acts and to the best of her ability she will not leave oppressive statements and actions unquestioned. This act of calling out is transformative as it brings in to question the overarching power of hegemony, and the many ways in which we consent to reproducing oppression. Furthermore, I question ways in which the educator may foster a sense of responsibility for students in their classroom to also

Always be passionately aware that you could be completely wrong (marino, 1997: 59)

challenge each other and to call each other out in a way that deconstructs oppressive power relations and fosters new ways of being.

Continuing this point on challenging, students respond to being called out or having their beliefs challenged in different ways, often reliant on their identity and socio-political location. bell hooks (1989) writes about challenging in her classroom:

Unlike the oppressed or colonized, who may begin to feel as they engage in education for critical consciousness a new found sense of power and identity that frees them from the colonization of the mind, that liberates, privileged students are often downright unwilling to acknowledge that their minds have been colonized, that they have been learning how to be oppressors, how to dominant, or at least how to passively accept the domination of others (102).

In this context, I draw on an example from Njeri, keeping in mind her experiences as a TA, contract instructor, and international student paying triple the tuition fees of a domestic student, and subject to further restrictions on her work opportunities³⁰. In saying, ‘but it’s my job. I’m an international student, you know, I’m not going to actively affirm what he says, but I’m not going to challenge people too much if they’re assholes and only want to affirm that mode of science’, she speaks directly to the tension on both her own experiences/body, and in enacting critical teaching within the context of the AIC. I connect this experience to a Foucauldian understanding of control over discourse which exerts a particular source of power, one that is imbedded in institutions and disciplines our way of thinking and acting through self-regulation. The enforcement of a systematic studying of an area of knowledge is a form of discipline, not only of the students but also of the professor who must adhere to this kind of teaching (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998: 335). The reality

³⁰ International students in Ontario were not allowed to work off campus until 2007, and by fall 2012 fees for international graduate students were an average of \$18 641, more than triple the fees paid by Canadian Citizens (Canadian Federation of Students, 2012: Fact Sheet)

that the academy is depending on the precarious labour of contract instructors puts into question the capacity of instructors to enact a critical pedagogy of difference.

Safe(r) Spaces

The following section addresses the theme of violence and anti-oppression as first presented by Adrian on building community in the classroom and connecting community to the idea of safe(r) spaces. Anna explains that ‘there are many violences that happen in my class [...] my classroom is not a safe space’, and we cannot avoid this violence. Anna explains that she does not describe her solidarity statement as ‘a safe space paragraph, I never use that word’. Going back to Anna’s solidarity statement as a pedagogical practice of social justice, she explains that in her classroom:

I don’t want to hear the word political correctness. You don’t say slut in this classroom [...] not because it’s not PC, that’s not why we do it, we do it to stand in solidarity with people in this room who have been called that, and who have had horrible experiences with that, who have been triggered [...] just because that person may not exist that doesn’t matter! We train ourselves to work that way. You know, we don’t say ‘lame’ [...] And I think it actually helps set the tone that this is a space that, speaking of terms... the idea of safe space? Stop it! First of all it’s been appropriated in a way that is completely wrong! It’s been appropriated by the Right! Taiva, we’re fucked! The Right is taking it on, and now they’re using freedom of speech and safe space in particular ways, dangerous ways! We’re screwed. No one understands the history, where that particular wording, phrase came from.

At this point in the conversation we are both laughing from personal experiences with the dangerous misuse of the term ‘safe space’. I first must point out Anna’s deconstruction of the term ‘politically correct’ and highlight the importance of an engaged anti-oppressive pedagogy of having the tools to explain how state sanctioned ‘correct’ ways of speaking does very little to address systemic inequities. In fact, as pointed out by Anna and other critical scholars, human rights discourse is often used to justify exclusion and oppression. For

example, Sherene Razak (1992) explains how rights rhetoric, in emphasizing individual freedom and autonomy, is one mechanism that helps to sustain denial, and to mask the patterns and consequences of domination. She argues that in order to work for progressive social change, we need to ground any discussion about rights in concrete social realities of oppressed groups and make visible rhetoric about justice that does not begin with exploited groups (1).

In *Anti-Racism Education*, George Sefa Dei explains that new solidarities must seek to rupture the political, economic and ideological status quo and challenge society to side with the forces of social justice, peace and human dignity. The personal risks taken in advocating for social change are real and insidious, particularly given the mounting organized resistance against transformative and progressive change (Stewart, 2008: 18). In her syllabus, Anna lists a section on accommodations and access for students with disabilities, religious accommodation, and pregnant students. Having a list on paper rooted in policy is certainly not enough, especially when the academy is not centered on diverse needs, and experiences. White, able-bodied, hetero-patriarchal, and cis-normative paradigm is the standard, while all other ‘deviancies’ must be accommodated to that standard. In response, Anna further develops a praxis oriented critical pedagogy by advocating for her students. She explains that she has refused to teach in inaccessible spaces ‘where I’ve had a couple of students who use wheelchairs, I’ve gone to the administration, and said I refuse to teach in that [inaccessible space]... so you can continue paying me if you want but either you find me another classroom or you continue to pay me for free!’ This refusal is a crucial piece in enacting a transformative pedagogy that seeks to be anti-oppressive. In this action, she does not rely on the administrative channels that may fail the student in making the classroom more accessible. She takes on the burden of challenging the administration,

taking in to account the power that she has as a tenured professor instead of letting the work fall on the student to fight to be ‘accommodated’. However, her student-centered advocacy has its limitations. She may be met with further barriers in advocating for a reorganizing of the academic structure to respect Muslim prayer, for example, or indigenous smudging traditions, or support for a genderqueer couple having a baby. She may be able to make some changes, but they are not structural changes in that the ongoing barriers continue to exist even if they are challenged, and chipped away at in her classroom. In confronting, for example, processes of legitimation, transgressive bodies can often expose the socially constructed nature of what has come to seem self-evident and apparently inevitable. For example, when Anna demands to relocate her class she challenges the belief that the classroom space is somehow transcendently created for a specific type of body. She did so by bringing forward one way in which the dominant power legitimates and sustains its domination over others by making particular practices seem ‘natural and universal’. This oppositional work can be constructed as what Cornel West calls an example of ‘thin opposition’ (Raymond, 1994: 115) in the sense that, where there is a challenge to a dominant practice, the structure remains sound.

A Pedagogy of Giving

Part of being critical, and teaching critically is to be conscious of the responsibilities one has. Njeri speaks to this idea of ‘giving back’ and connecting with community in that she uses her position in the academy to ‘hopefully do the research that benefits people’. She is not claiming to have found solutions:

I don't feel that the institution itself can ever ultimately give back because it's premised on hierarchy of attaining [a discipline] that is not anyone else's [...] it's a [discipline] that is very white, very male, very exclusionary, premised on probing and not sharing. So I don't think that the university itself can do that, but I mean it can, but in ways that it co-opts to look good. Individuals within can maybe do these things on their own; I feel that they can, maybe.

We must note the skepticism within this statement. *Maybe*, there can be change, and *maybe* individuals can play a role in generating change and participate in grassroots struggles. This skepticism resonated with all the participants. 'Maybe' became a location of tension that for Anna was 'irresolvable', and for Adrian was disillusionment with the academy. Njeri explained that the best way for struggles to remain informed by 'real urgency [...] is to not be in the academy'. She further substantiated her concern in highlighting that 'people are saying that things are changing but I don't know how much they are changing'. For Adrian, this skepticism and tension meant recognizing the ramifications of being employed within a university in Canada, which he linked to self-defining as a 'public sector worker of sorts'. The university is to a certain extent – and decreasingly so – a publically funded institution (at least it is framed as such) so for Adrian this meant that professors 'have an obligation and a responsibility to actually within our research and within our teaching, [give back] to the communities to which we belong, or to which we're interested in studying'. For example, he is working on a project of:

Interviewing [marginalized people], and I mean many of these people are very, very impoverished and I do have a responsibility to them to get that story and that experience out there, and to get it to be made public. To be able to say to students yes these people exist, and no you're not necessarily going to see them behind a service counter because they look like x, y, or z'. To be able to talk to policy makers, to talk to employers, and say 'you know these are the problems I can identify' from a demographic that, within a community that I feel like I belong to, and to be able to actually do some good to improve the living conditions and life chances of those people. I think that's really important.

Adrian is speaking as an academic who is also strongly connected to communities he is working with. His idea of giving back is about changing living conditions and putting his academic research into use by informing policies and informing students and society about life challenges of these communities.

Anna immediately acknowledges that ‘the classroom can’t be the only place where that critical pedagogy takes place’ and for her to negotiate her role as an academic within the AIC she finds the need to ‘pull out [...] to be part of this other community outside of the classroom’. The community work she does – predominantly around violence against women and queer issues – plays a central role in informing her work in the classroom, the ‘the actual grooming of social justice does not happen from a book, forget it, that’s not how it works. It has to do with actually learning with people in the community’. She also speaks to the hypocrisy of teaching social justice oriented material and not engaging in community struggle, and wishes to avoid that contradiction. Like Njeri, Anna also speaks to community work as building an understanding of how urgency ‘is informing everything that is being taught in the classroom, or everything that I am writing about, the research – [it is] the anchor of all this other stuff’. Urgency becomes a place of rooting pedagogy in experiences and staying connected, while opening up space for collaborations and giving back.

In a discussion at the Barnard Institute for Research on Women conference presentation (2011) *Expanding Feminism: Collaborations for Social Justice*, panelists spoke about how the academy can play a practical role in supporting grassroots community struggles focused on structural and systemic change. The panelists described using the resources of academic institutions as a crucial facet of collaboration. In turn, they described how activist and community initiatives enrich the academy by providing, as one speaker stated ‘real life feminism’, meaning experientially grounded examples of praxis. Panelist,

Sydney L. Mosley argued that activist academic partnerships are important because it takes the vision of feminist struggle out of the circles of the educated elite making it accessible, and ordinary amongst those who are acting and moving toward change based on their everyday lived experiences. Concurrently, academia can archive feminist history and contemporary movements providing a framework for feminist activism. In this vein, panelist Ai-Jen Poo describes how the academy can help put a gendered lens on the world, and be a physical location for activist work by providing meeting and conference spaces. She emphasizes that collaborations are about bringing the best of who we all are to serve a greater vision and purpose. Collaborations between community struggles and the academy speaks volumes to the importance of maintaining ties outside of university walls, and staying grounded in the realities affecting peoples lived experiences. Njeri draws attention to how she approaches her role as an academic:

I try and not carry these academic accolades on my shoulder and my mouth, but take part in real struggle and recognize that okay I have access to this computer, I have read this book maybe I can share it or, just using the networks that I have to align myself with the desires of the majority and not, academia you know? I recognize that individuals contribute to the institution but I don't know whether within the institution they can make the changes required. So I feel that maybe individually or collectively as people outside of the institution they can engage in learning and share education, and... if they have access to resources within the institution and they could appropriate them for the benefit of the majority, you know? But, just trying to work out how that will all be. I don't know. I have no faith in academics right now.

She expresses tension in such a profound and simple way. Carrying around the privilege, title, access, and everything else that may come with 'academic accolades' while at the same time recognizing and acting on ways in which her academic status may allow her to benefit communities representative of the 'desires of the majority'. hooks (2003) writes about how troubling it is to see academics become detached from communities outside of the academy (xv). Njeri repeatedly expressed her need to be uncompromising, thus maintaining

connections to her communities, and to broader community struggle must never be compromised.

Building Community

Living in hope says to us, “there is a way out, even from the most dangerous situations...” One of the dangers we face in our educational systems is the loss of a feeling of community, not just the loss of closeness among those with whom we work and with our students, but also the loss of feeling of connection and closeness with the world beyond the academy.
(hooks, 2003: xv)

Anna approaches the question of building community and of working in the AIC by asking ‘is it sustainable? [...] Is me being in this job, and being a critical thinker, and seeing the world as I do with all that epistemic violence, is it sustainable long-term’. Despite all the underlying concern and doubt she expresses that ‘right now in my life this is where I’d rather be. Even with all these tensions, this is what I’d rather do’. In order to remain in the academy and continue this role Anna describes having:

This desperation almost to hang on to the community, organizations [...] there’s a desperation there that I have to because I am petrified in becoming what that women’s studies department has become. Because it is the perfect example of what happens when you cut the ties and go over the cliff and you’re no longer part of the solution for lack of better words.

Anna refuses to ‘be that person’ and jokes that in her ‘fantasy megalomania’ she would ‘love to be the person who gets rid of the Academic Industrial Complex’. As this research demonstrates throughout, the tension involved in critical pedagogy in the academy may be challenged by continuing to cultivate sites of education outside of the academy and in doing so maintain connections to lived experiences as paramount. Njeri speaks directly to the prospect of education taking place in spaces outside of the academy by invoking the

example of how ‘people used to know an old person and go sit with the old dude or old woman and then industry was formed to indoctrinate people to live in in the new landscape that we have created’. Continuing this example, she explains that how communities grow and educate one another has lead to a ‘need to indoctrinate people to live in the landscape so education is a big part of that and these architectures of domination, the university is very daunting, the buildings are very daunting’]. In response to this indoctrination, Njeri declares ‘until we stop planning that, until we stop planning hierarchy and class I don’t know if much is going to change in the classroom’.

Building on the discussion of change, Anna reflects that she is at odds with using the ‘us/them’ dichotomy, but also notes that it is hard to build the language to talk about social locations in the academy that recognize tensions. marino (1997) reminds educators that ‘you’ve got to take care of the small things, because the big things are all fucked up’ (7). She continues to explain that languages of transformation are often complicated they propose an alternative and try not to reproduce relations of power over people or places or other species (marino, 1997: 7). For example, Anna is reflexive in noting that ‘there are moments when I’m being a successful critical pedagogue, but I know there are so many more moments when I’m not. When I’m not I’m very cognizant, I’m very present in it when I’m not being successful, which is hard’. This harkens back to Anna’s deep struggle with guilt and pain of reproducing power and violence within her role as a professor. Yet, just as community struggle informs her critical thinking/pedagogy, it also helps drive her to continue practicing her teaching in this way, and ultimately sustains her:

One of the reasons why what drives me to come and do what I do even if its flawed in so many ways is [...] that I come from a community of other academics who see their work like I see their work. That’s part of my community too; even if we don’t talk to each other every day, sometimes complete months go by, sometimes years go by before we see each other. We see each other at a protest or whatever. But knowing

that they're working as hard as they're working, I feel like I have to work hard too, because I know that when I'm doing what I'm doing I'm supporting them, when they're doing what they're doing they're supporting me. And so I feel a sense of responsibility to them even if I never speak to them on a daily basis. As long as I know that they are throwing that rock, I will always be throwing the rock because they need me to throw the rock and I need them to throw that rock.

Adrian's approach to community engagement takes up the connection between intellectual activity and activism and strongly resists the dichotomy between the two. There is, however, a big difference between activism and academic activity, but in terms of intellectual activity Adrian notes that he does not 'feel bad about not being a part of social justice organizations because I feel like what I'm doing is engaging in activist work, to be a teacher is extremely hard and it's a labour that is not necessarily reflected in the paycheck that we get, or in the amount of time that we're in the classroom'. I certainly take up this point and argue that critical pedagogy *is* about community building and engaging in struggle. In particular, sharing tools and cultivating the capacity of students to build awareness of their social locations in relation to community struggle, power/privilege, and oppressions. Critical pedagogues are 'constantly thinking about these issues, constantly trying to think about ways to engage' (Adrian). While Adrian does not identify as an 'activist' in that 'characteristic and kind of caricatured way,' he does engage in communities and uses his privilege/power to support struggles by taking on the role of a principle investigator on community projects or sitting on the board of a social service organization or helping organizations write grant applications. As shared above, these are tangible roles that academics may take on to support communities and help to chip away at the AIC by complicating the appropriation of community knowledge for academic gain.

This chapter has explored the ways in which critical pedagogues maintain connections with community, and the reasons for doing so. What should be taken away from

these discussions is that ‘meaningful, powerful insurrection of subjugated knowledge that is liberating and life-sustaining’ must be central to critical pedagogical practices (hooks, 2003: 7). Furthermore, maintaining and strengthening connections to community fosters opportunities to disrupt normative spaces in the academy and bring in dissident voices.

Conclusion

In ending, I will reflect on the process of this thesis and the analysis drawn from the data. I will also speak to potential contributions of this research, as well as the gaps and limitations of this thesis. Finally, I will reflect on possibilities for further research, extending the ongoing project of cultivating critical pedagogical strategies beyond the academy.

Critical pedagogy as a both a language of critique and possibility

This research first and foremost sought to be reflexive, self-critical, and center anti-oppression, subjugated voices, and praxis as a part of the research process and analysis. In doing so, I was able to emphasize the value I placed on lived experiences as worthy of analysis. This research sought to uncover narratives in relation to the main themes: neoliberalism, violence, tension, critical pedagogy, and anti-oppression.

The narratives produced via interviews with Anna, Adrian, and Njeri were firmly rooted in their lived experiences which focused on profiling the academy according the critical pedagogue and the documents they produced, critical pedagogy as tools of resistance. Much of this thesis was spent deconstructing higher education/the university/post-secondary: the Academy. I was predominantly interested in the academy as framed by Foucault, Giroux, hooks, Bannerji, and many community scholars as an instrument of state power and control,

with goals to generate knowledge and control discourses. What this research reinforces is the fact that the university functions in the interest of capitalist accumulation and class formations rather than addressing devastating inequities, and social and political democracy (Dardar and Mirón, 2006 11). Such an assertion seeks to address both the construction of knowledge and the control of knowledge at the heart of this phenomenon.

Further to the role of the academy was the notion of violence playing out ‘obscurely’ through the many channels of academia: research, teaching practices, curricula, policies, practices, infrastructure etc. I believe that further attention should be paid to this theme of violence, in particular expanding on nuanced understandings of violence from experiences of silencing, exploitation, and oppression through research and teaching practices to physical harm such as bullying, and abuse – all experiences that have taken place within the bounds of the academy. The following excerpt from “A Slam on Feminism in Academia” by Shaunga Tagore resonates within and beyond the conclusions of this thesis as a stark reminder to remain cognizant of the many stories that remain untold and written out of the academy.

Nothing could be wrong with the way things are/ because to change the rules would/ undermine what it means to receive a graduate school education/ and would leave me unprepared to compete for future jobs and faculty positions/let me ask you/ exactly which graduate student’s education are you concerned about here?/not single mothers who need extra time to look after their families/ not pregnant women who need a little more maternity leave/ not low-income folks who need to take 2nd or 3rd jobs/ to pay bills their funding doesn’t cover/ not racialized international students who don’t have access to most scholarships/ not the people with disabilities/ who don’t have access to comply with the way things are/ made to feel something is wrong with them/ instead of with the rules themselves/ not those who survive sexual violence/ and need extra time to grieve rage or deal/ not anyone with familial, historical ties/ to places and races always under siege/ living under governments set on killing their people/ who must spend free time at sit-ins or rallies/ where emotions and exhaustions run too high/ drumbeats and chants ring too loud/ to read a detached article due for class the next day/ not Indigenous students who are expected/ to read speak and engage with/ languages, theories, and knowledges/ that erase appropriate and colonize/ their land, cultures, and selves/ with the same ease as the colonizers/ not people of colour subjected to/ subtle and blatant racism/ making it impossible to participate/ the same way as their white peers/ not anyone who needs to spend every moment of their leisure time finding other ways of learning/ through art, community activism, collective therapy/ (or a mashup of all three)
(Excerpt from “A Slam on Feminism in Academia” by Shaunga Tagore, in Yee, 2011: 37)

With violence in mind, this research sought to uncover messages of hope, visions of potential for transformative change, and to reinforce a call to mobilize against the destructive forces of neoliberalism that have taken a global hold on education. From the mouths of critical pedagogues came stories of potential for change and personal strategies to ignite critical thinking within their classrooms; however, I feel among these voices there remained an overwhelming sense of isolation. I draw this conclusion as poignantly expressed by Anna in saying that she does not know if there are enough of us ('us' being critical pedagogues and resistance actors). Neoliberalism is a powerful force that exacerbates individualism, and perpetuates the destructive forces of burnout, hopelessness, and failure often experienced by those who struggle to survive daily and who seek to counteract the systems and structures of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy that substantiate global inequities. This level of hopelessness is tied to complacency and invariably linked to the tensions of reproducing the very systems we seek to dismantle. Adrian spoke to the great opportunity as a teacher 'to interact with students, to get them to think critically, and that means an awareness about themselves and the social locations that they're not only located within but are reproducing'. This meaningful work reverberates in ways that this thesis could not hope to explore and leaves further questions about the experiences of students with critical pedagogy. As Adrian expresses, 'I'm not under the illusion that what we do is changing the world by any stretch, but [there is] some incremental improvement'.

Limitations and Prospects for Future Research

One significant lament I have is the inability to concretely outline pedagogical strategies that could be transferrable between critical pedagogues and integrated in a number of curricula. While I did manage to document some reflections on practical strategies, I feel that the

responses were broad and, while they contributed to narratives of critical pedagogy and resistance, did not take shape as lesson plans. For further research, I would like to draw from the narratives explored, such as vulnerability, tension, violence, and anti-oppression to create lesson plans rooted in critical pedagogy that seek to build community and break down barriers of individualism and isolation. Other opportunities to expand on this research would be to explore the ways in which resistance narratives reproduce normativity, and what roles queering pedagogical practices could play in the further disruption of normativity.

The voice of the contract instructor was one that rose out of the narratives as explicitly relevant in today's climate of shifting educational priorities and an overreliance on precarious employment for faculty and staff. The provincial and federal post-secondary educational policies would have much to learn from this thesis and further engagement with narratives of contract instructors. In seeking out these narratives, I would encourage an intersectional analysis such as exemplified in this thesis as the experiences of contract instructors are further complicated by systemic and structural oppressions of racism, sexism, (citizenship) status, transphobia, ableism, homophobia etc. The narrative of Njeri, the contract instructor, allowed this thesis to further explore the theme of tension as playing out within the context of the proliferation of structural restrictions and requirements by the current political environment, and the nature – power, privilege and chain of command – of the academy.

Stemming from a desire to build community, this research has the potential to engage in conversation with community struggles that may rely on the academy for support and resources. A discussion on collaborations was very briefly touched on in this thesis and has much room to grow, especially in relation to the ways in which the academy exploits subjugated voices one might ask how may subjugated voices exploit the academy?

Mobilizing a Pedagogy of Realness

If we don't address disrespectful or oppressive behaviour among ourselves we will never be able to constitute any kind of unfuckwithable social force. – Queerriot 2011

This research has shown that tension often stems from the drive for social change that occurs – inevitably – within the context of existing power structures. Even within groups whose stated purpose is to unite against the injustices of dominant culture, the insidiousness of the matrix of oppressions and its deep level of programming in our social structures makes it difficult to come together without replicating the same oppressive hierarchies we seek to undo. I maintain the conclusion that one must bring dissident voices into the academy – in particular to conventional disciplines – to change the nature of academic discourse, and to disrupt normativity (hooks, 2003: 6).

At the outset, this research questioned education as it is at the heart of distributive, appropriative and hegemonic practices, while it is also at the heart of transformative struggle (Hernandez, 1997: xi). This conceptualization of tension invokes a conclusion rooted in the possibilities of education as being a vehicle and a means of generating languages of transformation.

Finally, the meaningful work being done by critical pedagogues is central to this thesis. I will conclude with what I have come to see as an expression of solidarity, and a call to mobilize in deeply troubling times:

I think that every time you do critical pedagogy you're taking a little stone and you're throwing it against that wall, and there's a little chip that's happening in that wall and if all of us who are critical pedagogues pick up a little stone and we keep throwing it – if the wall is the Academic Industrial Complex, the violence of the academy, if we all pick up those rocks and keep pelting them at this wall eventually the wall will have enough chips and cracks. But, there has to be a lot of us but I'm not quite sure we're there (Anna).

Each interviewee spoke to tension and an ever-present distrust, lack of faith, or disenchantment with the academy. This is not to say there is not meaningful work being done there, yet, it is also a reminder to maintain ties to community struggles, to the lives of people outside the academy, and to individually and collectively build alternative systems.

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Appendix

A: Academic Research, Who Benefits?

This is a response to an email requesting participation in an academic study. The example provides crucial lessons to researchers and questions researchers must ask themselves before embarking on a research project that seeks out exploited voices:

Where will this information be housed and how will it be made accessible to communities that are its focus? Too often I think research projects are done about our communities harvesting incredible knowledge and wisdom and community members broadly do not have access to the information and continue to lack the autonomy and support to make decisions about the content and/or recommendations. Does this study take into account the way other communities (i.e. through processes of gentrification) over exploit 'at-risk' communities? The term developing or underdeveloped when it refers to countries obscures the fact that these countries are in fact over exploited by the global north for labour, resources and as sites of waste. The use of this language for me suggests that there isn't an awareness of the ways that underdevelopment is intentional. The development of joint policies and action plans also means holding governments responsible for the ways in which they contribute to the pathology of sickness within urban communities as well the ways that health institutions in this city are homophobic, transphobic, racist and sexist. What are the levels of commitment from the various partners to engage in institutional transformation to make our communities safer? Part of the ways that privilege plays out is the ones in positions of authority are often exempt from perpetuating social inequity - this looks like pathologizing our communities as 'at-risk' as opposed to examining the systems that not only create it, but function based upon it. (Crosby, 2013)

C: Ethics Approval

File Number: 10-12-20

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Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice Social Science and Humanities REB

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(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

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N/A

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